RESEARCH ARTICLE

EVALUATION OF POPULAR FUNCTIONAL CHRISTOLOGIES AMONG THE NDIA CHRISTIANS OF KIRINYAGA WEST SUB COUNTY IN KENYA

*Hezron Mwangi, Josiah Murage and Joshiah Osamba

Department of Languages and Humanities, Karatina University

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ABSTRACT

The study evaluated popular functional Christologies among the Christians of Ndia in Kirinyaga West sub-county, Kenya. Popular Christologies reflect people’s real understanding of Jesus Christ. The objectives of the study were to establish social, political and economic functional Christologies among Ndia. The target population comprised of all churches in Ndia, which comprised of 25 Catholic, 29 Anglican, six Lutheran, six Presbyterian, 40 Pentecostal and ten Afro-Pentecostal congregations with an estimate population of 11,600 faithfuls. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The data showed that social, economic and political functional Christologies were well balanced. The study recommends that churches in Ndia encourage people to appreciate the relationship between work and wealth and medicine and healing. It is envisaged that the results of the study will be useful to social workers, scholars, churches, other non-governmental organizations and government agencies intending to or already working with the Ndia people.

INTRODUCTION

Politics behind all church councils that came up with church doctrines concerning the Christ’s person and event indicate that popularity and politics influenced the construction of church doctrines more than did scripture and revelation. A crush of popular Christologies split the church. This study examines popular Christologies among the Christians of Ndia with the hope that theologians will take up the challenges arising from our findings to do more practical work in the formalization of the various popular Christologies identified so that the Ndia Christians may be in a position to fully internalize the Christian faith in their own contexts.

Statement of the Problem: Theological constructions are scholarly and only understood by the elite. There exist various popular and informal theological constructions among ordinary Christian which influence life in Christian communities more than formal theological positions held by churches do. The popular constructions among ordinary people ought to be the basis for church positions which is not the case today.

Popular Functional Christologies: Respondents were asked to state what Christ did for them and for others beyond saving them and promising them a better home paradise.

The responses given were categorized into three: social, political and economic functional Christologies. Data collected indicates that out of the functional Christologies 33.03%, 33.96% and 33.01% were Economic, social and political respectively. This data indicates that the balance of life Christian among Ndia Christians where society, politics and the economy are equally influenced by the Christian faith. These findings agree with Kenyatta (1989) that the political, social, economic and religious life of the Agikuyu is intertwined. The findings concur with Mbiti’s (1969) assertion that Africans are “notoriously religious”.

Social Functional Christologies

72 respondents equivalent to 33.96% of the sample gave social functional social Christologies. Tables 4.1 shows a summary of these responses. Data in Table 4.1 shows that 38.8% of respondents who indicated social functional Christologies regarded Jesus as a holder of marriages.23.61% regarded Jesus as defender of their enemies while 12.5% regarded Jesus as a giver of faith. Another 12.5% indicated that Jesus gave them children.6.94% stated that Jesus gave them peace. 13.8% perceived Jesus as their cleanser. Another 12.5% regarded Jesus as a giver of humility. Another 1.38% said Jesus was their destiny leader. Another 1.38% indicated that Jesus gave them wisdom.

*Corresponding author: Hezron Mwangi
Department of Languages and Humanities, Karatina University
perception of Christ as the one who removes poor leaders from power agrees with Kenyatta’s (1989) assertion that Jesus (though in the 1930s) was regarded as a savior from foreign religious domination and political and economic subjugation of Arathi, a GikuyuChristian group that was independent of Western missionary supervision. The findingsindicate that Reconstructionist ideologists such as Mugambi (1995) have already been overtaken by popular theological formulations that are able to combine both liberative and reconstructionist views and apply them to actual day-to-day survival.

**Economic Functional Christologies**

Table 6 shows a summary of the responses indicating functional Christologies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christology</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destroyer/Eradicator of Famine/Hunger</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Giver of food)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destroyer/Eradicator of poverty(Giver of property and money)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>88.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in Table 6 shows that of the 70 respondents who gave economic functional Christologies, 88.57% stated that Christ destroyed poverty, gave them property and money to them and the others. 4.28% stated that Christ provided them with food or destroyed hunger. 2.86% indicated that Jesus gave them rain while 1.43% indicated that Christ gave them soil. 1.43% also indicated that Christ was the grower of maize and beans and another 1.43% also said that Jesus was the keeper of livestock.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made

- Churches operating in Ndia ought to teach faithfuls such doctrinal positions as regards the humanity of Jesus and the divinity of Christ so as to avoid further drift into heresy.
- The cause-effect relationship between work and wealth and medicine and healing ought to be emphasized among the Christians of Ndia so that overdependence on religion which might not serve all the needs of the 21st century may stop.

**REFERENCES**


