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# Evangelism and the Work of Discipline in Congolese Perspective: 'Evangelism in Congolese Context'

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EVANGELISM AND THE WORK OF DISCIPLINE IN CONGOLESE  
PERSPECTIVE

“Evangelism in Congolese Context”

By Zalema Kuedituka

Seattle Pacific University

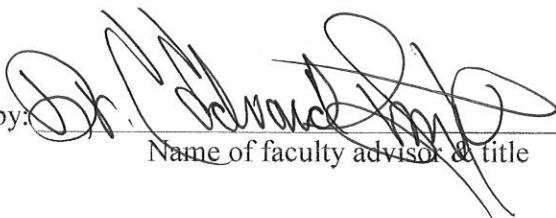
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EVANGELISM AND THE WORK OF DISCIPLINE IN CONGOLESE PERSPECTIVE

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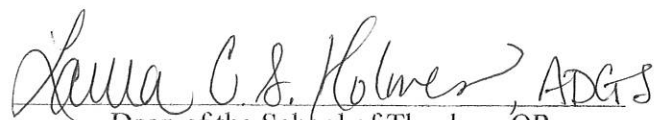
BY: ZALEMA KUEDITUKA

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS OF  
MASTERS OF ARTS IN CHRISTIANS STUDIES AT SEATTLE PACIFIC SEMINARY

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Dean of the School of Theology OR  
Associate Dean of Seattle Pacific Seminary

Date: Sept. 21, 2017

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## EVANGELISM AND THE WORK OF DISCIPLISHIP IN CONGOLESE PERSPECTIVE

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss the ways in which the Congolese people received the Gospel from Protestant missionaries from England. Also, I will discuss how the Congolese nurture the Gospel through their own perspective via teaching, discipleship, living it out, and practicing the Gospel's principles of power. This evangelism in Congolese's perspective goes together with the interpretation of the "Christus Victor Model" of atonement developed by Aulen. This model stands for a victory over the powers of darkness that detain humankind in bondage with sin, death, and the Devil <sup>1</sup>. Irenaeus has pointed out that the problems of sin, darkness, evil, curses, and death are real, and that they are the major enemies of humankind, which hold people slavery by the power of evil. According to the Old Testament, humankind could not help from sinning, and the divine intervention of God was needed to fix their problems. In Congolese culture, there are many stories of evil activities and confession of witches, also many young Christians witness demoniac attacks. Many Christians live in the fear of being attacked or being bewitched by friend or relative who is sorcerer. Congolese Christians take demoniac or evil attacks seriously and believe that their people suffer because they inherited sin from their ancestors who practiced witchcraft, sorcery and other evil things. They believe that these evil practices open doors to maledictions, such as incurable sickness that often happens when someone is attacked by witchcraft or sorcerer. When a person gets sick often physicians cannot diagnose or identify the cause of the sickness, and people die miserably.

Evangelism among Congolese Christians is nurtured through the disciplines of fasting, praying (sometime all-night prayers), confessing, and repeating the word of God so that he or she has

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<sup>1</sup> Aulen, Gustaf. *Christus Victor, an Historical Study of the Three Main Idea Type of the Idea of Atonement* (New York: The Macmillan, 1951),20.

authority to fight against evil forces. The practice of deliverance—the teaching of authoritative power of prayer—became central to Congolese interpretation of the Gospel. The practice of deliverance helped tremendously the Congolese people change their lives by becoming disciples of Christ individually and by living out the power of the Gospel in everyday life. The disciplines of fasting and authoritative prayers helped Congolese Christians see the powers of God in action, like what they read about in the Gospel and book of Acts, which dealt with the powers of darkness that detain humankind in bondage with sin, death, and the Devil.

Therefore, the work of evangelism, preaching the gospel, and discipleship, nurturing people in everyday life, is what is needing to be done in the Congo; therefore, the task of cultivating a faith that they can live with day by day without fear of evil or witchcraft will be the ongoing work and ministry of discipleship. The goal is to empower the Congolese Christians to live in community through the power of the Holy Spirit and to become disciples of Jesus collectively, and individually, who are being formed, trained, committed, and equipped to live and practice the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout each day.

## BACKGROUND

The purpose of my thesis is to show the power of the gospel to transform Congolese lives, setting them free from their spiritual bondage to become true disciples of Christ. This spiritual bondage comes from traditional practices that our ancestors established a long time ago and that opened the door to evil forces and brought curses on the Congolese community. Because of the history of these evil practices, some people suffered incurable sickness, poverty, and oppression.

Additionally, despite its natural resources, the Congo could not reach its economic potential.

I am not insinuating that all Congolese traditions are demonic; I am referring to specific evil practices that our ancestors performed in daily life to face the realities of life. They practiced witchcraft, which is the ability to use demonic force to cause pain, sickness, and discomfort—that can lead to death—to human beings.<sup>2</sup> Further, animism was the major religion of our ancestors before receiving the gospel. Animism is the invocation of the souls of our ancestors (who are gods) to seek their help with rain, agriculture, and sickness. These souls have been represented by statues and images that can talk.<sup>3</sup> Our ancestors believed the souls of those who died were still around to protect them, and sometimes, they needed to offer human sacrifice to those gods (ancestors).

Because I am originally from the Congo, I know the history of our ancestors and our country. I have experienced the realities of these evil powers, and I have seen how these evil powers can destroy people's lives. At the same time, I also know that the power of the gospel to set those who are captive free is real. The Bible warns us to have nothing to do with demonic activity or anything related to it. Leviticus 19:31 states, "Do not turn to mediums or seek out spirits for you

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, "Witchcraft: A Philosophical and Theological Analysis," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 21, no. 2 (2002): 127–145.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

will be defiled by them” (cf. 20:26; Exod. 22:18; Deut. 18:14). Deuteronomy 18:14 makes this point very explicit: “Let no one be found among you, who engages in witchcraft or cast spells. These are detestable practices.” It is very clear that witchcraft or any demonic activity and all its ramifications are detestable to God. In the New Testament, humankind is said to be bewitched when it replaces God for another false deity (Gal. 3:1). There is a clear prohibition of involvement in witchcraft, whether one takes part in demonic activity or gives verbal support to the activity. Disobedience of the clear teachings of scripture concerning witchcraft leads to catastrophic consequences (genocide, poverty, incurable sickness, death). Regarding the realization of the practice of evil, ancestral religion opened many doors to the suffering and misery that people in the Congo are now facing.

Missionaries came to the Congo to set the foundation of Christianity, but the Congolese understanding of the gospel needs to progress from understanding scripture to practicing the authority and power of the gospel to confront the evil legacy of our ancestors. I am talking about the gospel of deliverance from the power of darkness that still has a hold on Congolese people through the evangelism and discipleship that have been contextualized to unbind the Congolese. I have learned in the seminary that the power of the gospel is transcultural<sup>4</sup> because the God of Israel is the same God of the Bible whom Westerners preached to us about, and He is the same God of Africans, Asians, and the whole of humanity. The gospel’s power is not limited to one cultural context, but its effect is the same for the deliverance of the Congolese people too. I believe the same gospel that the apostles preached in the book of Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles should have the same effects on Congolese people, too. My conviction is that if

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<sup>4</sup> Roydon Olsen, “Transcultural Considerations in Teaching the Gospel,” *Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel* 7, no. 3 (2006). <http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/re/vol7/iss3/10>.



Congolese people practice and nurture the gospel of power, they will be free. My thesis will propose a practical theology that fits the Congolese context to free them from their bondage.

## INTRODUCTION

“Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age’” (Matt. 28:18–20, ESV). Evangelism is not an optional activity or secondary recommendation of Jesus, but a primary order for the church to execute what Jesus has commanded. It is called the Great Commission because the Latin Bible is translated as “supreme order,” which means the ultimate instruction above all recommendations in the Bible. Jesus himself received a mission from God, and that mission was to evangelize people and to make them disciples. One can understand the importance of Jesus’ mission because Jesus needed to spend three years with his disciples to teach, make, and equip them in the proper knowledge of the word of God.

The proper knowledge of the word of God includes living out the authority and power that God invested in Jesus and Jesus invested in his disciples to preach the gospel. The Bible shows many examples of Jesus exercising his authority: “When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:1–3). According to Luke 4:36, “All the people were amazed and said to each other, ‘What words these are! With authority and power, he (Jesus) gives orders to impure spirits and they come out!’ And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.” The gospel comes embedded with power and authority. Without these, the gospel would be pointless.

Power without authority is useless and authority without power is ineffective. An excellent example would be to picture a disciple as a police officer who has both authority and power

bestowed by the state. After undergoing proper training (being equipped by the word) and taking an oath of faithful service (or being faithful and committed to God), an officer is authorized to enforce the law. After completing the training, the officer's badge becomes the symbol of that authority. He or she is an agent of the civil government tasked with keeping the peace. One may regard the badge as the mark of Christ and the Holy Spirit as the source of our authority. In Ephesians 8:14–17, Paul talks about spiritual armor that can be regarded as a flashlight, a nightstick, a can of pepper spray, a firearm, or whatever equipment is needed to perform the duty or task. As stated in Ephesian 4:12, all the equipment and training is meant to give disciples the power to exercise their authority in the face of resistance. Therefore, the disciple who is not equipped, although he or she may have authority, has no power to back up that authority. In the same way, what happens if that authority is in the hands of someone who does not have the power to use it? Consider the example of the seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who tried to cast out demons but were not trained on how to do it; consequently, the man who was possessed by an evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding (Acts 19:16). It was dangerous for them to try to exercise their authority without knowing how to use it.

Jesus called the disciples together and then bestowed on them both authority and the power to enforce the rule of the Kingdom of God. He empowered them to deal with sin and confront evil, and to set people free. To be a true disciple in the image of Christ, one must be obedient, just as Jesus himself was obedient to God the Father until the end of his mission.

Jesus was sent to die on the cross to atone for the sin (the original sin) that held humanity in slavery through the power of evil and to liberate and reconcile people to God. This reconciliation was made possible only by evangelizing people about the work of Christ and inviting people

accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. This message is called the gospel, which sums up the story of the birth of Jesus, his ministry, his death, and his resurrection. The reason it is called the gospel of power is that it was by the power of Holy Spirit that Jesus was resurrected. As Paul says, “And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is worthless, and so is your faith” (1 Cor. 15:14). Our gospel would be pointless if Jesus did not rise from the dead. The central theme of the gospel is the power of God to free humanity through Jesus Christ. God sent Jesus to reveal the Father to humanity by preaching the gospel. Jesus in turn sent disciples to continue making disciples to keep the chain going. When Jesus sent out his disciples two by two to preach the gospel, he gave them authority and power considering Mark 6:7: “Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two at a time and gave them authority over impure spirits.” In Matthew 28:18–20, Jesus precisely talks about the authority that has been given to him to proclaim the gospel. Because of that authority, Jesus gives the same authority to those who are going to spread the good news of the Kingdom of God. Jesus says in verse 19 that because power and authority have been given to him, his disciples have the power and authority to go and make disciples in all nations. The purpose of that authority and power is to equip the disciples spiritually with power over evil spirits and to enable them to preach the gospel with liberty and without fear. Jesus knew it was necessary to have power to preach the gospel because he was dealing not only with intellectual theory but also spiritual power and the spiritual realm. As Paul states in Ephesians 6:12, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Jesus clearly states, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matt. 28:18). Christians (just as Jesus did) will eventually need authority and

power from above to preach the gospel. In addition, the gospel of power confronts evil spirits, heals incurable sickness, and delivers captives.

The disciples must be given authority because Jesus himself taught the disciples as follows: “But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting” (Matt. 17:21). Because “the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, ‘Why couldn’t we drive it out?’” he replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you” (Matt. 17:19–20).

It is impossible to make disciples without teaching people about the power of the word of God and nurturing them in it. Preaching and teaching are a good introduction to the gospel and the way to have someone receive Jesus as Lord and savior. After the person receives Jesus, he or she needs to be equipped with the word of the kingdom. Therefore, the work of evangelism does not stop when someone receives salvation but continues as the person grows in his or her understanding of the scripture. It must include the proper use of the power and authority of the gospel lived out in everyday life.

## CHAPTER 1

### HISTORY OF EVANGELIZATION IN THE CONGO

The first missionaries landed in the Congo in 1878 and found colonists there. At the time, the Congo was called the Belgian Congo because it was considered the property of King Leopold of Belgium. Leopold had arrived in the Congo two years before the missionaries. In 1876, Leopold began colonizing the Congo as a private citizen and organizing the country as a private possessions company.<sup>5</sup> The missionaries began to introduce Christianity into the Congo in the late nineteenth century, with the first Protestant mission stationed in the areas populated by the Bakongo people.<sup>6</sup> These first missionaries faced a lot of struggle with the cultures, traditions, and religious groups in the region. When the missionaries began to evangelize, they hoped to bring to the Congolese people the true faith of Christianity. The Congolese were interested in this new religion because they perceived it as the best protection against witchcraft. Many Congolese were baptized after they renounced witchcraft or sorcery. Their families were also baptized, albeit without a proper understanding of Christianity. As a result, some Congolese people ended up believing in Christianity while also maintaining their previous witchcraft-inspired traditions. Protestant missionaries preached the gospel by challenging the reality of the witchcraft traditions and practices of the native people's ancestors. They also competed with Islamic religious movements, which had a tremendous impact on the northeastern parts of the Congo; Christianity, however, remained dominant. The Congo, with its geographically central position in the continent, became a vital part of each religious groups struggle to compete for the hearts and souls of the Congolese people.

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<sup>5</sup> Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Princeton: Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic, 2005), 117.

<sup>6</sup> David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People* (Location: Publisher, 2015), 8, 22.

The Baptist Missionary Society was the first group to begin a mission in the Congo. It then moved to Leopoldville (the former name of Kinshasa), establishing more missionary movements throughout the country.<sup>7</sup> By the early twentieth century, the Protestant missionaries' efforts to evangelize the Congolese people were being met with resistance from different parties such as the Belgians, and Catholicism was being granted more access to resources and people in the country. There was also a concern that French missionaries would cause political conflict; however, Leopold called on the Vatican for help, which, in 1888, created the Apostolic Vicariate of the Congo.<sup>8</sup> The entire country was now technically converted to Catholicism, although only a small amount of the actual population of the country experienced this conversion.

The result of this increase in missionary activity was the largest multinational presence that became associated with the increase of Christian activity in the Congo region. Soon, the nations of Belgium, Britain, France, Spain, the Netherlands, and Portugal were all represented in the Congo. The large numbers of white Europeans and Americans entering the country also brought their business interests with them. They brought their interest in oil, which, by the late twentieth century, was one of the world's most valuable resources. Thus, a wealthy service industry also grew throughout the country, and innovations were made in health and education.

The Christian missionaries found it extremely important to set up an education system for the Congolese people. The missionaries built schools to give the Congolese people enough education to make them useful as servants and employees of the white missionaries, in addition to some training in different businesses.

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<sup>7</sup> Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's ghost: a story of greed, terror, and heroism in colonial Africa*. (Boston: Mariner, 1999), 101.

<sup>8</sup> Van Reybrouck, Congo: *The Epic History of a People*, 75.

Despite the missionaries' work in teaching the locals languages, reading, writing, and ethics, the Congo continued to experience food shortages, illness, severe poverty, and other problems the missionaries could not solve on their own. The missionaries faced challenges due to communication gaps when starting to preach the gospel. They did not understand certain tribal languages, and so it was very difficult for them to communicate with the Congolese people. Under these circumstances, the missionaries found it advantageous to work together with the colonizers because the latter had more experience with tribal languages and with teaching Congolese. King Leopold tried to build schools in the Congo to sustain the economy of Belgium. The colonists also began to evangelize the Congolese people so that they would forever remain in submission to the white colonialists and never revolt against them. Additionally, the colonists used to make Congolese recite the following lines every day: "Happy are those who are weeping because the kingdom of God is for them." Here are some quotes showing Leopold's and colonists teaching philosophy to the Congolese and their recommendations on how to teach Negro Congolese:

Teach the niggers to forget their heroes and to adore only ours. Never present a chair to a black that comes to visit you. Don't give him more than one cigarette. Never invite him for dinner even if he gives you a chicken every time you arrive at his house.

They know that to kill, to sleep with someone else's wife, to lie and to insult is bad. Have courage to admit it; you are not going to teach them what they know already.

Teach the younger ones, for they will not revolt when the recommendation of the priest is contradictory to their parent's teachings. The children must learn to obey what the missionary recommends who is the father of their soul. You must singularly insist on their total submission and obedience, avoid developing the spirits in the schools, teach students to read and not to reason.



When the Congolese people—parents or children—did not obey these rules, their hands were cut off.<sup>9</sup>

The dilemma with the colonizers were in the Congo to exploit the land. They—especially King Leopold, who used the Congo as his personal property—built schools and hospitals to increase the level of exploitation of the Congo for the benefit of Belgium.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, the missionaries' goal was to preach the gospel, and their work was made difficult because the Congolese people perceived colonists and missionaries as one team fighting against them. The Congolese people called the colonists “mundele” in Lingala—a word from one of the Congolese languages that means “white man.” Eventually, the Congolese people began to reject both the missionaries and colonists and returned to their practice of animism and witchcraft to fight against the colonists and missionaries.

#### Evangelist and Prophet Kimbangu

However, the missionaries succeeded in converting some Congolese, who became true Christians. One of them was called the Prophet Samuel Kimbangu. He was born in Kimbangu, a village of Nkamba, on September 12, 1887. Samuel Kimbangu was nine years old when missionaries came to the Congo. His mother died when he was very young, and he was raised by his aunt, Kinzembo. He grew up within the Baptist Missionary setting and got married to Muilu Kiawanga. They were both baptized on July 4, 1915, when Kimbangu was twenty-eight years old. This was the day Kimbangu, a member of the Baptist Missionary Church in Bas-Congo, found the way of faith.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's ghost: a story of greed, terror, and heroism in colonial Africa*. (Boston: Mariner, 1999), 117.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>11</sup> C. Irvine, “*The Birth of the Kimbanguist Movement in the Bas-Zaire*,” JRA 6, no. 1 (1974): 36.

Kimbangu was forced against his own will to enter the house of Nkiantondo, a woman who was sick to the point of death in the nearby village of Ngombe-Kinsuka. Kimbangu laid his hands on her and prayed and healed her in the name of Jesus Christ. The news of the healing spread quickly. Kimbangu began to be called a healer, a magician, a miracle worker, and so on. This miraculous event, healing through mere prayer and laying one's hands on someone, made people wonder and marvel.<sup>12</sup> The Catholic missionaries and other business groups, such as groups of colonists whose businesses had been adversely affected by Kimbangu's success, started to mount pressure on the colonial authorities to stop him and his movement. The Belgian authorities started accusing Kimbangu of xenophobia—they claimed he was inciting people not to pay taxes and generally causing disorder in the province because of his movements. The whites considered Kimbanguism a pan-African movement and believed that it was not only religious but also politically inclined.

On June 9, 1921, barely two months after Kimbangu preached and healed someone, the Belgium government attempted to arrest Kimbangu. These attempts were frustrated by members of his group, and Kimbangu went underground. He finally gave himself up. On October 3, 1921, the Belgium government, convinced that Kimbangu's movement was a form of rebellion against the colonists, sentenced him to death. The Belgian King Albert, however, commuted the sentence of death to life imprisonment far away (about 2,000 kilometers away) from Kimbangu's hometown of Nkamba because of protests by a member of the tribunal and by some British missionaries and the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. Kimbangu died in Lubumbashi prison in 1951, after spending 26 years as an incarcerated man.

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<sup>12</sup> Welo-Owango, "The Impact of the Kimbanguist Church in Central Africa," *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 16, no. 1/2 (Fall 1988/Spring 1989): 126.

In Congolese history, Kimbangu is highly regarded as the first prophet to fight the good fight of faith, who not only preached the gospel, which he believed was right, but who also was a great Congolese leader. Kimbangu's loyalty and integrity prevented him from renouncing his faith amid persecution and allowed him to remain steady and faithful to God. One of the greatest legacies of Prophet Kimbangu is his powerful and miraculous acts. He used his authority and apostolic power according to the scripture in the Book of Acts. In many villages, people forsook their idols and began to seek the Lord. People used to come from different villages all over the country and carry idols with them. Idols and bags containing witchcraft (or sorcery) paraphernalia were thrown down and abandoned before him so that he could pray for their owner's deliverance.<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, the missionaries continued to build churches and attempt to regain the trust of the Congolese people. As the Belgium government continued to put pressure on the Congolese people, some of the Congolese people decided to maintain their ancestral traditions. However, the missionaries succeeded in addressing certain Congolese familial norms, such as family education, through a biblical perspective. Additionally, certain traditions, such as the practice of witchcraft, animism, and polygamy, were common among the native Congolese tribes. The missionaries attempted to teach monogamy as the normal form of marriage. Considering that the Congolese people had practiced polygamy as a formal form of marriage along with other traditions and rituals for many centuries, monogamy was presumably not an easy subject for the missionaries to convince the Congolese to adopt. It was regarded as a violation of Congolese culture.

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<sup>13</sup> J. Chomé, *La Passion de Simon Kimbangu* (Bruxelles: Presence Africaine, 1959), 6.

Missionaries in the Congo were supposed to preach the gospel and make new disciples; however, because of the realities of life in the Congo, they were also obliged to attend to the daily problems and needs of the Congolese, such as the lack of education (no schools), hospitals, health care, and community ethics—all factors which are needed for personal development, a healthy life, and the country's development. Some missionaries worked hard to achieve this development. Some of them lost their lives, and some had to change their ways of living because of the risk they took to preach the gospel and help the Congolese.

Lyn Lusi was a missionary in Goma in East Congo who died in 1971. She worked for 19 years in Goma in a church school, teaching villages to bind up their wounds and teaching them support each other and themselves. The Congolese people addressed Lusi as “Mama Lusi” as a sign of respect in accordance with Congolese culture. Lusi said the following before she died: “The lord hath sent me to bind up brokenhearted” (Isaiah 61:1). Additionally, she said that there was so much evil in the Congo because the Congo was a blessed country, but its resources were being traded by local strongmen for weapons and were being stripped away by corporations, leaving the people in poverty.<sup>14</sup>

Lusi's statement accurately demonstrates the situation in the Congo and the suffering of the people there. Going back in the region's history, the colonists found that the Congo was the richest country throughout all central Africa because of its mineral resources. Considering the natural resources that the country contains, it is practically impossible to conceive of the Congolese people lacking basic needs, such as access to education, health, drink, and food. However, the Congo is now the poorest country in the world.<sup>15</sup> Because poverty has reached a

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.economist.com/node/21551439>

<sup>15</sup> Fungwa K. Jesse, *Studying Pentecostalism Missiology: The Congo Evangelistic in Katanga Province, Democratic Republic of Congo* (Location: Publisher, 2014), 117.

level where it prevents people's access to basic needs, it is difficult for those people to receive the gospel, especially when the gospel is not responding to people's immediate needs. In the Congo, the poverty-stricken population expects the gospel to solve their social problems and attend to their basic needs. I will show how extreme Congo's poverty is and how deeply the Congolese are affected because of the lack of access to education, health, food, and drink.

### Education

The lack of access to education for some children in the Congo has led the government to come up with a free education policy for primary schools in the country; however, according to [www.epsp.cd](http://www.epsp.cd), this policy has not been implemented because parents continue to pay school fees for primary schools. The government is still collecting a part of the fees paid by the parents. Apart from government schools, there are also private schools and those that are under the Roman Catholic Church. These schools offer quality education to children, but they are not for the poor. They are reserved for rich families. In most cases, children pay an equivalent of \$150 USD or more per month. These schools are also registered under UNESCO because of their standards in offering education in the province.<sup>16</sup>

### Health

According to [www.google.fr](http://www.google.fr), the Congo has health centers where workers are always on strike. These centers lack modern medical equipment, medication, and food for patients. The city of Lubumbashi (it is considered as second largest city of the Congo after Kinshasa the first capital. Lubumbashi counts approximately 1.5 and 2 million people.<sup>17</sup> for instance, has only five government hospitals. Several medical doctors working in government hospitals also have their

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.soulebaobab.bloguez.com>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.lubumbashicongo.com>

own private hospital where they refer patients whom they consult in government hospitals. Those who have the money go to private hospitals, where the treatment is costly, but the services are of good quality. Government health institutions cannot offer quality health services, and so the number of death cases is ever increasing, especially among the poor.<sup>18</sup>

#### Lack of Clean Water and Sickness

The lack of clean drinking water is another challenge in the Congo. Members of parliament and nongovernmental organizations have recognized this social need in the Congo. In one of its plenary sessions, the National Assembly had to propose to the general administrator in charge of water company, the REGIDESO (the name of water company in Congo). This issue was addressed on Thursday, April 14, 2011, by the Parliament. The Congolese assembly in charge of the question lamented in these terms: “it is not normal that people are victims of the continuous lack of clean drinking water, something which is indispensable for life.” We see, every morning, entire families moving with empty cans throughout the town in search for water. Water is life; this a slogan by the Congolese public company in charge of distributing water in the Congo. However, in Lubumbashi, the capital of the rich mining province of Katanga, water is synonymous with death. It is often the source of several waterborne diseases such as cholera or typhoid.

#### Food Shortages

A World Food Program report on the Congo demonstrated that 86 percent of people live without food in their homes. They must wake up early every morning, go to the town centers, and conduct some economic activity so that they can feed their families in the evening. This explains why there are a lot of street vendors in Lubumbashi city, because if one does not get something

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<sup>18</sup> [www.google.fr](http://www.google.fr)

to eat during the day, chances are that the family will sleep hungry. In other words, hunger is a challenge for most Congolese people, despite the efforts being made by the provincial government to address this issue by encouraging citizens to venture into farming. The so-called colonists observed a failure on the part of national leaders to provide for the basic needs of the Congolese people.

This aspect of the Congolese people's lives has been well described in the aforementioned report. The inability to go see a physician or obtain care is one of the most telling indications of poverty, as stated by a citizen of the Equateur province in the Congo. The results of an opinion poll indicated that 76 percent of households are not satisfied with the education of their children, while 82 percent are dissatisfied with their health care.<sup>19</sup> Several households throughout the country send only one or two children to school, and quite often these are boys. Some are obliged to send their children great distances to continue their studies. Further, some parents, because schools are poorly equipped and lack qualified teachers—insufficient personnel, underqualified or poorly trained staff—do not educate their children at all.

The Congo is clearly facing serious social, political, and economic challenges that require the attention of everyone, including the church. Especially a church organization involved in a mission in the Congo today can no longer ignore these issues, which are ever increasing with demographic growth. These issues can be solved throughout the proclamation of the gospel that can bring change to Congolese's life.

The missionaries who first came to the Congo faced challenges like the lack of electricity in villages. They were exposed to problems such as poverty and were obligated to begin helping the

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<sup>19</sup> Fungwa K. Jesse, *Studying Pentecostalism Missiology: The Congo Evangelistic in Katanga Province, Democratic Republic of Congo* (Location: Publisher, 2014), 117.

Congolese people improve their lives. It became difficult for the missionaries to just preach the gospel and leave, and so they began living with the natives.

The lack of access to basic needs has been one of the most visible manifestations of poverty among the Congolese people. It has been also identified by CEM (Congo Evangelistic Mission) members as one of the contextual mission challenges to be addressed by the church. This report also demonstrated that the Congo is one of the poorest countries in the world as I noted before.

Despite the missionaries' work and evangelization in the Congo, people are still suffering from a lack of basic needs. There are Congolese Christians who depend on God for everything; however, there are also others who, because of their suffering, still depend on witchcraft and idols and believe that their needs will be met by false gods.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE CONGOLESE PERSPECTIVE ON POWER, POVERTY AND THE GOSPEL

In chapter 1, I talked about the work of missionaries in the Congo and how missionaries tried to civilize the Congolese people with Christian truths based on the biblical principles, believing that Congolese traditions were based on evil practices. In addition, I showed how poverty plagued the Congolese people because they did not have access to the basic needs of life. In the first chapter's introduction, I mentioned that Congolese ancestors used to practice animism and witchcraft as part of their traditional religion to protect themselves and face daily tasks. Consequently, these evil practices opened doors to maledictions, such as poverty and incurable sickness, which often happen when witchcraft and sorcery afflict people, leaving them to die miserably.

In Congolese tradition and religion, the understanding of power within the culture is very important, and people should consider its influence in people's lives. In traditional social structures, communities need a wise man, or village chief, who can exercise power on behalf of the group. Each village needs someone who is going to guide them spiritually by predicting the future for them. In everything they do, they must consult a wise man to give them a word of wisdom and protection.<sup>20</sup> The wise person is not a priest or pastor, but he is the person who invokes spirits. In Congolese culture, the wise person is called the chief of village. Because of lack of biblical teaching, the people of the village consider the village chief a high priest, but, he or she is a servant of Satan invoking demons.

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<sup>20</sup> Miriam Adeney, *Kingdom Without Borders: The Untold Story of Global Christianity* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2009), 81.

The Congolese believed the chief was calling upon help from ancestors for assistance with rain, protection, healing, or any type of divine intervention to solve their problems. This kind of practice in Congolese tradition is common in many villages, and Congolese people take this practice seriously because they believe in the influence of the spiritual world. Additionally, they believe the village chief has the power to intercede for them and to communicate with the so-called spirits of their ancestors to solve their problems and respond to their questions. For instance, when someone in the family dies, the elder will consult the chief of the village to talk with the spirit of the dead person. They believe that the soul of the person can talk to designated people and say his or her last wish, for instance, requesting that people pay debts for him or for his children.

From the Congolese perspective, the material world has always been connected to the spiritual world. Therefore, before they do anything; they consult a chief to give them power and the capacity to fulfill the tasks they want to perform. They believe in High power, a divine force that empowers them in agriculture, fishing, treating people in traditional medicine, and protection. This practice had been used for centuries and shaped their way of life and became a religion. Therefore, the Congolese understanding of God is attached to this concept of their tradition of power and practice. As result of having this view of divinity, in their cultural context does not support theological understanding of divinity as the bible presented. So, the understanding of divinity in Congolese tradition falls into the category of idolatry.

Consequently, certain traditions opened the door to malediction and continue to be practiced by those who refuse the gospel and those who prefer to mix the gospel with Spiritism or mysticism. The historical effects and consequences of these unbiblical practices were poverty, sickness, and misery in the Congo.

The origin of the problem in the Congo is not only a worldly situation, such as poverty, incurable sickness, or political turmoil, but also a spiritual one. It has to do with the evil practice of ancestral traditions such as idolatry, invocation of ancestors, practice of witchcraft, and other unbiblical acts, including animal sacrifice and prayer to gods of the sea and forest.<sup>21</sup> Isaiah 5:5 states: "I will take away its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briers and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. Their root will be as rottenness, and their blossoms go up like dust." The consequence of idolatry and practice of witchcraft or sorcery is not taken seriously by Christians, but the Bible defines the reality of our daily life in terms of our practice of the word of God. The reality happening in Congo is that women are abused and raped; there are conflicts and wars, corruption, and a lack of access to basic social services. Poverty has been identified by the Congo as a major social problem. Most people believe in God but they don't believe that He is able to meet all the needs due to evils practices that I mentioned previously. They don't fully believe that the word of God is able to bring deliverance to their situation. For instance, if a child is sick, the mother or the father will go to the witchcraft doctor to see who has put the sickness in their child's body, after doing that the witchcraft doctor will do some rituals over the child and give them instructions on what to do. As a result, a lot of people have died because of these evil practices. First, they don't have money to take their child to the Medical doctor because they can't afford to and second, they believe that the roots of the sickness are some type of curse that has been put on the child. The bible said in Hosea 4:6a "My people are perished for lack of knowledge."

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<sup>21</sup> Paul B. Hiebert, "Spiritual Warfare and Worldview," *Lausanne Movement*, August 22, 2000, accessed June 4, 2017, <https://www.lausanne.org/content/spiritual-warfare-and-worldview>.

The high level of poverty in the Congo was confirmed by the opinion polls conducted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in September 2007. The results of those surveys on the Congolese perception of poverty indicate that 79 percent of the population was not satisfied with food consumption levels, 81 percent were not satisfied with housing, 82 percent identified the inability to pay for health care, and 84 percent said they have problems obtaining adequate clothing. The failure of the government to serve its people, as indicated to by the Congo Evangelistic Mission (CEM), caused suffering that seems to have no end.

Majority of the Congolese people suffering is evident and not debatable. Misery has become part of the daily life of most Congolese men and women in a context of inequality, which promotes the interests of only a few people, especially those with financial resources. Corruption stunts economic growth, discourages foreign investment, and inhibits access to vital public services.<sup>22</sup>

These evils of corruption also apply to the Democratic Republic of Congo and the CEM mission.

In other words, the entire population is damaged by corrupt practices. Not only is the country affected negatively from the inside, but its credibility to the outside world is also hampered.

Indeed, it constitutes a challenge for both the national government and the church that must represent a moral conscience to be a moral conscience for society. Therefore, the Congolese people have lost trust in the judicial system because of the rampant corruption whereby only the rich manage to survive the pressure of the law.

The 2007 IMF reports on the Congo indicate that the people are strongly opposed to the “culture of impunity” in which they live, which encourages corruption and injustice. This culture is regarded as a major factor behind the suffering endured by the Congolese: “Unlawful taxes are

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<sup>22</sup> Emizet Francois Kisangani and F. Scott Bobb, *Historical Dictionary of Democratic Republic of Congo* (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2010),11.

created to fleece merchants.” Merchants are never told the nomenclature of the taxes.

Consequently, tax collectors take advantage of this situation, and these practices are observed in other provinces.

The practice of injustice and witchcraft dominates the daily life of the Congolese people. As Congolese been living with these conditions for long times (lack of normal basic needs of life such foods, water led to young one to begin stealing, to be liars, even killing) becomes normal, especially for the younger generation. Their mentality has been corrupted without knowing the value of integrity, morals, or ethics. In this way, the situation poses a challenge to bringing the gospel to improve the people’s social conditions and the circumstances of their hearts.

I believe that the gospel is about more than understanding of doctrines which I do not underestimate the importance of knowing doctrine. As a seminarian, I know fully that when someone is not theologically correct, it empowers people’s lives. However, I also value the power of the gospel in experiencing the power of God’s word. An example of the power of the gospel would be the book of Acts 12:23–24 and Acts 4:32. The gospel brought about repentance illustrated there, with the social consequences outlined in the following passages (vv. 23–41).

The power of the gospel to transform lives was associated with, and illustrated by, healing, deliverance, and the confounding of false religion and witchcraft. Consequently, each reference to the word “growing” concludes a narrative about overcoming some great difficulty, either in the church or in relation to unbelievers.

This argument is vital to the study of the power of the gospel in the sense that it demonstrates more insight to the reasons why most Africans, who are oriented to an experiential way of life, identify themselves with Pentecostal Christianity. Experiencing the power of God becomes a testimony of social change and individual transformation. The gospel is the good news that God

is restoring our broken lives through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For Congolese's are expecting the gospel that is going to deal with their realities. Their problems include social limitations and evil traditions that have led them to corruption. In this context, considering the person who is going to preach the gospel in the Congo, she or he must know the history of the people and the spiritual realities of their tradition to live out the full gospel of Christ. The person would also want to know what kind of Spiritism or evil traditions they will be dealing with.

M. D. Strong, in his book, *They Walked in the Spirit*, argues that Jones was a theologian and missionary in India who tried to preach the gospel in India, but he did not understand the culture of India. Therefore, the result was ineffective.<sup>23</sup> Jones suffered a nervous breakdown, and becoming disappointed, he was required to take a sabbatical back in the United States. After praying and looking for the right approach to fit the culture of India, Jones returned to India with confidence and used the same gospel but with a different method. Jones realized that the right way for people to receive the gospel was for him to allow India to change him and to see things from their perspective, instead of expecting his theology to change India. Jones's religious experience when exposed to people who were very different from himself made him teachable and made his faith more dynamic.<sup>24</sup>

After Jones started learning the history of India, he discovered that in 1920, a Western missionary came to preach the gospel in India, but India rejected it because the way of teaching was very arrogant and selfish. The Indian people did not feel any connection to the missionary's behavior and to the character of Christ that was preached. Indian people did not find humility in the Western methodology of teaching Christ. Jones began to learn humility in the Indian context.

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<sup>23</sup> M. D. Strong, D. M., *They Walked in the Spirit: Personal Faith and Social Action in America*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 60.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

Living together with Indian people, he began to connect with them. In addition, he connected with Gandhi and found that he demonstrated the spirit of Christianity perhaps more than other Western man did. The realities that Jones experienced in India was like what Pastors brown and Smith experiences in Nigeria, Africa.

Pastors Brown and Smith are missionaries that went to Umuofia, a small village in Nigeria. After a few days, Pastor Smith started preaching the gospel, but the chief of the village rejected it by saying, “Our god called “Chukwu” is the highest that we go to and make sacrifices when we fail to other gods.” The pastor began to argue with the chief of the village, and the result was negative; the villagers refused to accept the gospel. Pastor Brown proposed to pastor Smith to learn more about their culture and to ask more questions about Nigerian cultural views and consider Chukwu. Interestingly, the conversation went better. Pastor Brown asked why sacrifices were made to Chukwu. The chief explained that Chukwu was the supreme God, and if he did not receive a sacrifice, he would be mad and kill people; he would withhold rain, plants would not grow, and wild animals would come out from the forest to kill women and children.<sup>25</sup> When pastor Brown understood why the people of Umuofia invoked Chukwu, he began to adapt the concept of Chukwu to that of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus was a perfect sacrifice of God, he explained that they did not need to make sacrifices to Chukwu. Pastor Brown added that one could develop a personal relationship with Jesus. The chief of the village was surprised to discover that one could develop a relation with a spirit. One may call upon any spirit for help, and the concept of polytheism is normal, but one cannot have a personal relationship with these so-called gods because it is forbidden. Therefore, teaching the people of Umuofia how to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as God was a great deal because people of

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<sup>25</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart: With Connections* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1990), 180, 182.

Umuofia village could not picture God as someone that could develop a relationship. Finally, the pastor had permission to start teaching people how to develop a relationship with Jesus Christ. Understanding their culture, Pastor Brown began teaching them about the love of God, the mission of Jesus on earth to save humanity, and that they do not need to fear evil because God through Jesus Christ overcomes all evil. The best part of his stay in the small village was that people began to trust him and received Jesus Christ as lord and savior. On the other hand, people who resisted or rejected the stranger god (Jesus Christ) attacked those who accepted Jesus, but the attacks were ineffective because Jesus protected them.

Consider the situation of Missionary Jones in India, Pastors Brown and pastor Smith in Nigeria when they first brought the gospel to those countries, they had hard times communicating it, until they learned those people's culture. Unlike Billy Graham (from the US), Teller Osborn (from the US), and Reinhard Bonnke (from Germany) when they went to Congo as missionaries, they connected with Congolese people first through their culture before preaching the gospel. They were successful in reaching Congolese people through the gospel because they study them; they understand their cultures and traditions.

As a result, Reinhard Bonnke's ministry in Congo has resulted in increase of churches in Congo. His dynamic ministry has become the greatest force for changing people's lives and empowering the Congolese to become great Christians. The culture will change when people hear the gospel and understand it in the light of their culture. In Psalm 119:130 says: "The entrance of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple". His ministry changed the people's mindset, broke down taboos, evil traditions. As a result, people received Jesus as their personal Lord and savior, Jesus healed them and delivered them from demons and they were filled with the joy of life, and they were empowered.



In the Congo, the gospel impacts every aspect of a person's life, not only spiritually or emotionally but also physically. Healing and transformation in people's lives should be concrete and visible because mysticism is a part of the Congolese culture, people can become victimized if they take mysticism seriously.

Congolese understand that God exists. He is almighty, but they also believe that there are evil powers. Most Congolese families value their culture above the word of God. They have a person who is considered as a spiritual guide for the family called "Ngunza" who is regarded as a protector of the family. "Ngunza" uses evil power to counsel, to guide, to protect the family, so each family must have this "Ngunza". Congolese ancestors practiced this tradition for a long time and they have passed it down to generation after generation. Sadly, some Christians who have not the full understanding of the gospel still practice this tradition. Some people go to their own village to meet with "Ngunza" to look for protection. On the other hand, in Western thinking, it is very hard to understand these practices. These practices are demonic because these Ngunza work with evil spirit which is against the word of God. However, from the Congolese perspective, those who are living under demonic influence are living in fear. Congolese people experienced demonic activities in their lives in such a way that they see concrete things happening to them. For example, if a father is not honored by his child, he will curse his child telling him that you will be hit by a car today and as the child goes out of the house, he gets hit by a car. Another example, someone who is dead, they take him to a witchcraft doctor who does some ceremony and the person comes back to life. There are so many demonic things that happen in Congo that I have not seen or heard about it anywhere else.

As Congolese people experience the power of evil, it shapes their mind and perspective to see the spiritual power in a certain way. Acts 14:12–13 states: "Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul,

Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.” Paul and Barnabas went to Lystra to preach the gospel, but the people of Lystra got into idolatry, and they believed Paul and Barnabas were gods. They brought them sacrifices, but Paul and Barnabas brought them the gospel to liberate them from their way of thinking (their perception of God) and the life of idolatry or witchcraft. The Lystra people used to see God in a certain way that was not theologically correct. By seeing Paul and Barnabas as missionaries in their land, they redefined their perception of God. In another way, the sacrifice was supposed to be addressed to God and not to Paul or Barnabas. In the New Testament, sacrifice is not needed because Jesus Christ is our sacrifice. So, just as the people of Lystra needed to redefine their view of power, the Congolese also need to redefine their view of power into a biblical context. As Congolese received the gospel, it made sense that the gospel needed to deal with power. In this context, the power of God is against the power of darkness. Ephesians 6:12 says: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

Therefore, the concept of power is so important in Congolese culture, not only for the demonstration of power, but to live out the authentic power of God in setting people free and seeing the gospel changing people’s lives in all aspects (communally, socially, and spiritually). The Congolese have experienced a lot of demonic activities in so many aspects of their lives, that’s why when they are presented with the gospel, signs and wonders must follow what is being preached for them to believe. That’s why Reinhard Bonnke was well received in Congo because He brought the Good news to Congo. The Congolese people felt that the word of God was above any demonic power, the word could heal, to deliver to set free, to change mind set, to

transform one's life to a higher standard with God. The word gave the people power over the power of the devil. For those Congolese who received the gospel, there was visible change in their lives. As result, witchcraft doctors were delivered from their demonic practices and received Jesus. Nevertheless, the concept of power is integrated into the faith because a gospel that does not deal with authentic power cannot liberate someone who is dealing with demons or someone who is possessed with an evil spirit. This person needs to learn how to use the power of the gospel to see results in their lives, that's what those Congolese who received the gospel experienced.

## CHAPTER 3

## THE GOSPEL OF POWER AND DELIVERANCE CONFRONTING WITCHCRAFT

The gospel of power seems to be understood as two words—gospel and power—but, it is one word which can be viewed and interpreted as the power of God.<sup>26</sup> Doing a little exegesis about the word “evangelism,” it comes from the Greek word “Euangelion”<sup>27</sup> which in the noun form; it means the “gospel” or “good news.” In the verb form, the meaning changes slightly to “announce” or “bring good news.” The word Evangelism in Greek word in appears fifty-five times in the New Testament. In addition, in Greek, the word evangelism can also be translated as “preach.” I have learned that in English, the word “evangelism” is significantly different from the original meaning. It mostly deals with sin, to minister salvation to someone. In the Biblical perspective, evangelism should be communicated as the gospel message that warns about sin and explain about confession which includes repentance and a call to evangelize all nations.

The Gospel also has the power to set someone, or anyone free from all the bondage (John 8:36; Matthew 11:28; Acts 24:25; Revelation 20:12-15). The gospel exposes sin and allows the person to repent, to be transformed and to have a new life with Christ. (eternal life). (Acts 8:35; Romans 3:21-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Evangelism includes the clear call to repent—to turn from sin and to come to Christ—and the gospel is received through faith (Mark 1:15; Luke 13:1-5; Acts 17:29-31; Romans 1:17; Romans 10:9-13). By fulfilling those steps (confession by faith), people will be able to accept Christ as their personal lord and savior which she or he will experience salvation. Moving from the saving power of the gospel and connecting to the reality of transforming a sinner to become a child of God that demonstrates the gospel is the good news

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<sup>26</sup> W. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953), 17.

<sup>27</sup> Kevin Jon Vanhoozer, Craig G. Bartholomew, Daniel J. Treier, and Nicholas Thomas Wright, *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 263.

of salvation in Jesus Christ as well as a public proclamation of the work of Christ.<sup>28</sup> This proclamation exposes and demonstrates the power of Christ through preaching. At the same time, it celebrates the victory of Jesus Christ through his resurrection. Resurrection is so important because without it, our preaching would be pointless. The reason I connect atonement with preaching of the gospel is that this model stands for victory over the powers of darkness that detain humankind in bondage with sin, death, and the Devil.

As Paul describes in Romans 1:16, “the gospel is the power of God’s salvation for everyone who has faith to believe”. We must understand the divine nature of God: God is omnipotent, and according to his power, God sent Jesus Christ to reveal his power to rule over all things, to bring humanity into salvation. Through the gospel of Christ, sinful creatures can be reconciled to God, and be restored from death to the life of Christ so Jesus Christ can be exalted. Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus Christ makes the gospel live in such a way that it demonstrates the power of God through the work of Christ. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:14, “If Christ has not been raised, our preaching (proclamation) is useless and so your (our) faith”; hence, the entire Christian faith rests on the demonstration of the power of Christ’s resurrection.

Why I am emphasizing the power of the gospel? Because it illustrates the power of God in salvation to defeat the darkness, and to restore a person’s life. A person living in a place where the power of darkness has dominion, such as the Congo, needs to embrace the gospel that delivers him or her from the power of darkness.

In the Congolese context, experimentation with evil power becomes a part of their mode of life, putting more emphasis on the power of liberation from evil because Congolese people experience evil power in such a way that even when the gospel is preached with good theology,

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<sup>28</sup>. Ibid., 263.

they must also address matters related to their situation. For instance, in some of Congolese villages, anyone going to preach the gospel needs to prepare themselves to confront the power of evil; he or she will find that many people are possessed with evil spirits or bizarre manifestations. For example, when a person suffers from a horrible sickness, he or she consults with a physician; however, the physician cannot make a diagnosis because medical science cannot treat the person. As I have experienced, when a person went to the hospital after being sick at home, after hearing the gospel, the sickness disappeared. When the person returned home, the sickness returned as well, starting an endless cycle. I have many relevant examples of supernatural sickness caused by witchcraft and voodoo, sicknesses that medical science could not cure. However, I have seen how the gospel has liberated people from their sicknesses. Seeing the transformation of someone who was a sorcerer or who used to practice witchcraft preach the gospel with emphasis on the power of liberation is proof that the gospel can save anyone, regardless of his or her evil power.

Before the person can be saved, he or she needs to receive Jesus as Lord and savior. Before the person can receive the gospel, he or she needs someone to preach it to him or her. What happens when someone is saved? When a person receives Jesus, the power of God is in action during that moment. First, the saving power convinces someone to believe in Jesus Christ, as the only way to salvation. Second, when the person subsequently receives the Holy Spirit, the power of God is released to free someone from his or her sinful nature and accept his or her new life in Christ. The evil power that detains the person in sin goes away, and the person becomes a new creature in Christ (according to 2 Corinthians 5:17). The person begins to experience the new nature of Christ, which means living a Christlike life; if the person was possessed, he or she must be delivered from demons and freed. As John 8:36 says: “So if the Son (Jesus) sets you free, you

will be free indeed.” Therefore, it is imperative that when someone sincerely receives Christ as Lord and savior, that person is set free from the bondage of evil or darkness.

Refer to chapter one, where I have mentioned how missionaries faced difficulties dealing with Congolese cultures and traditions as well as other realities because they did not know about Congolese practices of evil or witchcraft. They also were unfamiliar with other spiritual realities of the people, and they had to live among them to know what life meant to them. In addition, they needed to understand the Congolese viewpoint regarding the gospel because missionaries presented the gospel from the Western viewpoint. This does not imply that the Western interpretation of the gospel is wrong, but in some situations, it was not addressing the problem the Congolese were facing: the way they would perceive the gospel if it was written in their language or how they would adapt the gospel to fit their cultural understanding and their hermeneutics.

I want to tell a true story of one missionary who went to one of the villages in the lower Congo. My father used to travel with this missionary, and the missionary reported this tale in an unpublished book about evangelism in the Congo. My father, already established that he was a Minister was there when the event took place in September 1972. The missionary, Pastor John Pedro from Portugal, was preaching in a village named Sonabata, which is in one of the provinces in lower Congo. While he was preaching, Pastor Pedro saw a snake with two heads coming straight toward where he was preaching to kill him. The pastor, unfamiliar with this kind of thing, did not know what to do, but the people of the village, who were there listening to his preaching, started screaming in the name of Jesus. The serpent with two heads continued approaching the missionary, but before it reached him, one man from the village, who was also working with the missionary, got close to the serpent and said, “I stop you in the name of Jesus

Christ; return to where you came from.” Instantly, the serpent stopped and retreated. The next day, the person who had changed himself into the serpent came to confess and accept Christ. Pastor Pedro was astonished and stated, “I never experienced something like this before in twenty-seven years of preaching.”<sup>29</sup> In the village, people get used to this kind of situation where the unnatural happens daily because people grow up living with or experiencing evil power manifested on a higher level.

To understand, or even have an idea of this kind of evil force, the person needs to experience it by traveling to the Congo and preaching the gospel there. Otherwise, it is difficult to have a sense of what I am trying to explain. I think missionaries are equipped theologically for the mission field, but they also need to learn the specific traditions and expectations of the places where they go to minister to understand and be prepared for the reality of the spiritual problems in those places. Coming from the Congo myself, I have experienced many things there that I have not in fifteen years of living in the United States, such as dealing with deliverance (e.g., casting out demons) for people who are possessed or dealing with evil manifestations in the church. Pastors and preachers talk about it rarely, but they have not experienced these issues like I have in the Congo. During deliverance, I have witnessed how a possessed person becomes an animal and turns back into a person. Furthermore, I have seen the person disappear and reappear. These are the things that people in Western culture have difficulty understanding. These situations need to be addressed theologically, and a missionary should be prepared to know which levels of practices of witchcraft the Congolese are dealing with before they go preach in the Congo (or anywhere else in Africa).

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<sup>29</sup>. Barry L. Hopkins, *Diatungwa va Tadi. The Story of Evangelism in Congo* (Unpublished, 1972), 286.



In the Bible, there are multiple instances when Jesus deals with demons and other bizarre manifestations, such as in Matthew 8:28-34 and Mark 9:14-29. These are biblical realities that took place in historical locations and times, where Jesus dealt with casting out demons and using his power against the power of darkness. Interestingly, in most of the cases in the Bible when Jesus heals others (e.g., the blind man and infirmity [Luke 11:14-26], the Canaanite woman's daughter [Matthew 15:22-28, Mark 7:25-30], an epileptic boy [Matthew 17:15-21, Mark 9:14-29, Luke 9:38-43], the man in the synagogue at Capernaum [Luke 4:33-36]), Jesus also casts out demons, giving the impression that the individual's physical condition was reflected in his or her spiritual condition. Jesus deals with the person's situation by looking at the condition of his or her heart, looking deep into his or her soul, and localizing the problem, which could be spiritual, demonic, or psychological. However, Jesus does not separate the spiritual condition (i.e., sin of the individual from the physical; he took authority spiritually first to free someone. Matthew 9:6 says, "But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. So, he said to the paralyzed man, get up, take your mat and go home." The paralyzed man could not walk because of his sinful condition, but when Jesus took authority against sin, the man was able to walk.

Considering the accounts of the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), Jesus addresses the spiritual needs first before taking care of the physical needs of those brought to Him. As I mentioned previously, evangelism includes warning people about sin and its consequences and bringing deliverance (John 16:8; Acts 24:25; revelation 20:11-15). This involves both exposing sin and offering the solution by helping a person to turn from sin to God. Sin is regarded as the source of all problems of humanity. In the *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*,

“sin”<sup>30</sup> is defined as something that enslaves a person, dictating the direction of human life to the level of depraving life to its very marrow. In the Old Testament, because of sin, the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt for four hundred years (Genesis 15:13), and Moses plays the image of Jesus to free them in Exodus 14. Connected to the gospel, “Exodus” means to redeem, to liberate, or to depart from.<sup>31</sup> In the book of Exodus, God (Yahweh) uses Moses powerfully to confront Pharaoh’s evil power to free the Israelites from the bondage of slavery and evil forces. Similarly, in Luke 4:18, Jesus says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to set free the oppressed.”

The gospel comes with the complete package. Jesus was anointed to preach and to deliver and heal the brokenhearted in all aspects of life—spiritually, socially, and physically—so that humankind will live out the holistic power of the gospel. This was the Lord Jesus Christ; whose wonderful ministry of liberation was so gloriously foretold: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.” (Luke 4:18). It is not given only for one culture; it is for all entire humanity, including the Congolese: “Because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile” (Romans 1:16).

Why am I including Congolese culture? My mission in writing this thesis deals with the gospel that will fit the situations of Congolese people who are literally and spiritually slaves. Thinking

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<sup>30</sup>. Kevin Jon Vanhoozer, Craig G. Bartholomew, Daniel J. Treier, and Nicholas Thomas Wright, *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 750.

<sup>31</sup>. *Ibid.*, 212.

about my own experience with the gospel, I sometimes have difficulty understanding the theological part of the gospel that is disconnected from power and miracles. From the Congolese perspective, the gospel emphasizes the power of liberating someone. The gospel should be based more on signs and wonders. I believe Christians should habitually see miracles happening from healing to resurrection of the dead, as happened in the book of Acts. However, we are living in the twenty-first century, where technology and modernization have replaced the word of God, but in the Congo, the only hope people have is the gospel that delivers them to live day after day, that helps them to find food before they search for a place to sleep, that brings hope to children living on the street without parents giving them love, experiencing only violence and evil. I am not saying that those situations do not happen in the other parts of the world. As a Congolese, living in the United States of America for fifteen years, I have seen the gospel preached, dealing mostly with this national context. This context is not wrong in the western view; however, it does not apply to my experience as a Congolese or an African.

My background influences how I perceive prayer, miracles, and mysticism as well as how I see the gospel. My cultural background leads me to a different interpretation the book of Acts and one that differs from the Western perspective. This not exclusive to Africans; people who are Asian, Jewish, or European will also have their own perspectives. Because of the cultural distance between the biblical world and our contemporary society, we tend to inject our hermeneutics into the text.<sup>32</sup> In the Congolese context (and in most of African countries), we often pray through the night, and people fast for three days without drinking and eating—some may even go a week without any food. After doing this, we see many miracles happening. I rarely find this practice in Western culture. I am not being judgmental toward Western culture,

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<sup>32</sup>. E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* (Audible Studios on Brilliance Audio, 2016), 32.

but Asian, Arabic, Jewish, and Congolese cultures tend to value this practice of fasting differently, especially for religious reasons. Refer to Exodus 34:28, Matthew 4:2, and Matthew 17:21. This practice is emphasized in Congolese culture. Congolese culture has shaped them to interpret the gospel in the light of social context which is different from American or European Contexts. This interpretation makes more sense to Congolese, therefore strengthening the power of the gospel. The gospel that does not deal with power is not well received in the Congo because of the realities facing our people. Most seek deliverance often because their situation is desperate about witchcraft. In addition, children are dying more because of malnutrition and a lack of basic needs (such as water, food). Incurable diseases and unusual sicknesses like leprosy are common in the Congo, especially in villages. In general, people turn to the practices of witchcraft and necromancy and become hopeless.

How can I preach the gospel to a two-year-old child living on the street? How about the child who is sexually abused during war and experiences only evil? Someone who is possessed or tormented by demons? We often have these situations in the Congo. How can I preach the gospel in Congolese villages where a witch doctor or village chief (sorcerer) refuses to allow it?

As a pastor from the Congo, I have experienced many miracles when people commune, pray, and fast before evangelizing. In the next Chapter I will develop practical methods and strategies based on biblical discipleship for preaching the gospel in the Congo for missionaries who are not familiar with the Congo and its culture. I will describe how we pray in detail and interpreting biblical scriptures and why we do so.

The gospel should be preached with authority and power to impact the people and change their social and heart condition. If my gospel does not deal with the reality of the community or demonstrate care for people, how will people know through you, as the minister or pastor, that

there is a heavenly father who cares for them and loves them? The gospel should point out sin, but it also should demonstrate the love of God by dealing with practicality and reality in terms of becoming a disciple of Christ. The same gospel that saves is not just limited to saving a person at a point in time; but it also changes the conditions of the heart throughout a person's life as well as helping the person to understand themselves as a new creation in Christ. As Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). The proclamation of the gospel *is* good news and then nothing shall prevent that good news from being lived out entirely. That good news needs to be presented with fullness of authority, power, and liberty to see transformation in the person who receives the gospel.

## CHAPTER 4

### EQUIPING CONGOLESE DISCIPLES WITH THE GOSPEL OF POWER

In my first chapter, I have mentioned the struggles that missionaries encountered between cultures, traditions and religious groups when they began to evangelize Congolese. Missionaries faced traditions and culture that they had little knowledge about, especially dealing with the tradition that is attached to idolatry and the practice of witchcraft. The practice of witchcraft was so strong that some missionaries were attacked by demons, which caused them to abandon their ministries, and return to Europe. These missionaries were unfamiliar with witchcraft and unaware of this bizarre tradition. There were some Missionaries who stayed in Congo to continue preaching the gospel despite the demonic attacks.

This Chapter will be proposing practical solutions to overcome challenges that missionaries first faced in spreading the gospel. I will also talk about some critical “spiritual issues” that need to be addressed by prayer, fasting and practice of deliverance. Also, “critical physical needs” that must be resolved in relationship to what’s happening in Congo (such as lack of nutrients, training, lack of education and many basic needs of life). These practices will prepare ministers, pastors, and missionaries to be equipped in the pursuit of the gospel that would transform the life of Congolese. Especially, missionaries who are intending to preach into Congolese villages eventually will confront new cultures (or have cultural shock) for those are not prepared. The spiritual issues that exist in Congolese tradition which missionaries are unfamiliar such as witchcraft, animism and necromancy that still enslave people in some villages in Congo.

I will suggest biblical principles and practices that will equip Congolese people to be free as mentioned in the gospel of John: “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” John 8:36.

I will show biblically how prayer and fasting can change or transform someone's life. The motive behind prayer and fasting should be a fundamental practice as disciples based on understanding of this *pericope*, "But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21). When fasting is made by compassion and love to spread the gospel to save souls, the power of Holy Spirit will move freely to set people free. Understanding the passage of Matthew 17:21, the using of: "this kind" refers to demons possessed, but Jesus says, "this kind" will eventually get out only by prayer and fasting. It makes fasting in very significant and mandatory.

### 1. Why Prayer and Fasting?

Prayer and fasting in Congolese understanding are fundamental practices as Christians. I am not saying that it has different theological understanding in comparison to western view. However, Congolese view of prayer and fasting as the essence of one's Christian's life and experience is different. "Prayer and fasting" are regarded as fundamental elements necessary in terms of deliverance practice for the Congolese. Praying is always accompanied with fasting and all-night prayer. All night prayer is regarded as abstaining from sleep (as abstaining from eating) for the sake of seeking God's intimacy, just like our Lord Jesus Christ did in Luke 6:12: "Jesus went out to the mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God," before ministering to all the multitude. Also, as disciples of Christ, we are trying to be identified as Christ like.

First, begin teaching Congolese the importance of prayer based on the word of God (inductive bible studies according to Congolese understanding). Interpreting the bible in Congolese context allows the people to understand the fundamentals of the Gospel so that they can find their place in the scriptures. It is important to consider the cultural landscape of the land. Leben has pointed out that: "The problem facing the church in Africa today is a distinct lack of

ability to hear the text, first in its original language, its own sociohistorical context, and then second, in its consideration of the writer's intent, and in its unbiased approach to the African context.”<sup>33</sup> There are a lot of barriers of cultural understanding of the biblical text due to lack of theological support and interpretation from African (or Congolese) perspective. Congolese have a deep understating of the spiritual world, especially for those who used to practice witchcraft. Those who have converted to Christ after being in witchcraft, tend to interpret the bible better than someone who is unaware of spiritual world. They have discovered that the power of God is superior to the power of darkness. This takes me to what Paul explained about the spiritual world and spiritual warfare in the book of Ephesians 6:12. “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”. I will be explaining this more. Next, there is the issue of praying for deliverance, which is crucial in the lives of Congolese people. Congolese believe that the devil is an active force in the everyday lives of people, and the practice of deliverance is the natural way to deal with it. For instance, casting out demons in someone's life is taken seriously because Jesus's great commission was not only to teach the gospel but also to practice the authority that God has given us to heal the sick and cast out demons. Casting out demons is a vital part of the Great Commission for the whole church for all time.<sup>34</sup> (Refer to such passages as Matthew 8:16, 10:8, Luke 4:41, 11:14, 13:32, Mark 1:34, 5:8, and 7:26).

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<sup>33</sup> Gerald O. West, “*Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa*,” a paper presented at the Ujamaa Centre (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2008), 1-14.

<sup>34</sup> Horrobin, Peter J. *Healing through deliverance: the foundation and practice of deliverance ministry*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2008), 34.



The practice of deliverance is accompanied with fasting in a group of three or more people. It is not advisable to have one person perform deliverance because of some demonic manifestation that takes place. In some cases of deliverance, there are bizarre manifestations such as the person during deliverance is jumping, throwing himself down violently on the ground, sometimes even trying to hurt the person who is performing deliverance and then there are people who are being delivered who try to take off their clothes off due to the demonic manifestation. Therefore, people need to be trained and to be aware of all these demonic situations and manifestations. The Congolese believe the demons are doing this to intimidate the person who is doing deliverance to stop him.

This spiritual practice may look strange for different cultures, however, in Congolese (or African) culture this practice is considered as spiritual reality that Congolese face in their tradition. Manganyi argues that the significant practice of deliverance from evil spirits is made clear in African tradition because there is no coincidence or accident. “Nothing happens by chance”, therefore some Congolese are living through the manipulation of certain supernatural forces or spirits. These forces and spirits are also manipulated by the witches and sorcerers with evil intent or by witchdoctor who cure illness.<sup>35</sup> While these statements refer to the traditional African, the truth is, even some of those who perceive themselves as modern Africans, believe in evil spirits and witchcraft. I am not saying that there are no other psychiatric sickness symptoms wrongly attributed as demonic possession which could be the manifestations of mental disorders. However, in Congo even (Christians) physicians advised people sometimes to go seek spiritual

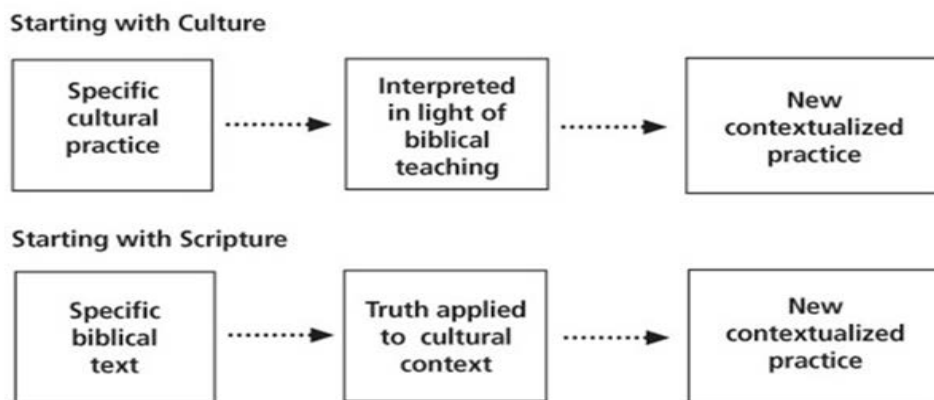
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<sup>35</sup> Manganyi, JS & Buitendag, *A critical analysis on African Traditional Religion and the Trinity*. (HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies, 2013), 69.

help such as prayer of deliverance because doctors are aware of spiritual illness caused by demons.

The Congolese (or African) view of the reality of spiritual world is mostly neglected as Gerald West has pointed out: “Interpreting the biblical text is never in African biblical hermeneutics. Biblical interpretation is always about changing the African context.<sup>36</sup> Most of biblical commentators interpreted bible with a Western mindset which is not bad but it does not apply in African context or reality. Congolese culture are serious about their spiritual realities which make sense to what they are facing. Their view of looking at situations might be different from western or Europeans. The Congolese realities shape the way they interpret their faith in reading scripture, which is different from western. They both hold different view and different experiences of God based on their culture.

#### Illustration of Congolese (or African) hermeneutics



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<sup>36</sup> Gerald O. West, “*Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa*,” a paper presented at the Ujamaa Centre (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2008), 1-14.

<sup>37</sup> Adeyemo, Tokunboh, Solomon Andria, Kwame Bediako, Isabel Apawo Phiri, and Yusufu Turaki. *Africa Bible Commentary*. 2010, 7.

African theology commentators can interpret the scriptures in the light of culture and their reality. In the case of the Congo, the gospel's interpretation should begin by cultural and community understanding of their realities, it also needs to be experienced to interpret it. The missionary or person who is preparing to preach in Congo, needs to have knowledge of the culture and prepare himself or herself to live among Congolese first.

This is a suggestion on how hermeneutics should be: It should start by understanding people's cultural practice and then move to inductive biblical interpretation. The teaching that is taught should allow people to make the gospel relevant to their realities otherwise it will be ineffective to them. As it is, the gospel should have an impact on how people think and act to set them free.

In Congolese culture, "the word of mouth" tradition is considered as one of the best methods to transfer information from one generation to another. As a result, Congolese value the word of ancestors and elders. When one becomes Christian, they also value the word of God and prayers. This oral method is so powerful in a way that if someone is to teach the importance of God's word, in this context it will be well received because of the power of the spoken word and prayer. This passage is often interpreted powerfully in Congolese culture; "Death and life are in the power of the tongue and those who love it will eat its fruit." Proverb 18:21. In most African and Congolese churches that I have visited, this passage plays a significant role in prayer because it goes with Congolese perspective of seeing the spiritual world being formed by the spoken word. This goes along with the book of Genesis 1, where these verses, 6,9,11,14,20,24,26,29 keep repeating: "God said", also in John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" and Colossians 1:16. "...all things have been created through him". In Congolese perspective, the spoken word has a significant power in the spirit world as well in the physical. Also, the spoken word can change the destiny of someone's life. In

Congolese culture, elders and ancestors always released the “word” of blessing (spoken word), before someone travels, before someone gets married, before someone begins a new job or moving to a new location. Culturally, the elders perform a ceremony without even being Christians but they believe that the spirit world listens to what they say. Therefore, when the teaching of the bible becomes clear to the person who receives Jesus as lord and savior, that person begins to learn about the power that resides in the word of God and will value the importance of prayer the practice of prayer will be easy for him because it’s customary to talk to higher beings (in the spiritual world).

## 2. Critical Physical Needs (Preparation)

James 2: 15-17: “If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,” but you don’t give them what the body needs, what good is it? In the same way faith, if it doesn’t have works, is dead by itself.” This shows clearly that the gospel does not dissociate itself with good deeds; rather it is connected or tied all together. As human beings, we need “spiritual food” and our flesh (physical body) needs things to survive such as good water, food, good environment, electricity, education, brief basic needs. Unfortunately, in Congo basic needs are the serious issues, especially for people who are living in the villages, they do not have good water, not enough food, in some places, there is no electricity, and many people are not educated (especially in the village) because the of lack of money and resources. Another critical point is there is not a good health care system; people are dying every day from sickness that could be prevented because there is no resources and money. More than ninety percent of the population living in the village in Congo lives in poverty.<sup>38</sup> So,

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<sup>38</sup> Mandryk, Jason, Molly Wall, and Patrick J. St. G. Johnstone. *Pray for the World: Abridged from Operation World, 7th Edition*, by Jason Mandryk; Advising Editor:( Molly Wall; Foreword by Patrick Johnstone. 2015), 21

“physical method” will prepare people who are preaching the gospel to come with basic needs such as water, foods, and medical kits to help them survive while going from village to villages to preach the gospel. In addition missionaries or evangelists need to be prepared psychologically for culture shock because the mentality of Congolese people who are living in villages influenced by evil experiences that happened in the land; wars, killing, sexual abuse (for women), unspeakable brutality and corruption.<sup>39</sup> As a result, every time people in the village see missionaries or a church group coming to the village, they get very violent by taking their stuff and sometimes fighting for food because some of them go days without eating. These people have been victimized by rape, misery and suffering, as a result, they have post traumatic slavery syndrome. Therefore, meeting their psychological and physical needs will allow Congolese people to open their hearts and received the gospel with joy.

Biblical teaching is needed after people receive Christ as Lord and savior. By their transformation, they can renew their mind in the word, excel in society, and be a blessing to others spiritually and socially. As 3 John 1:2 says: “Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.”

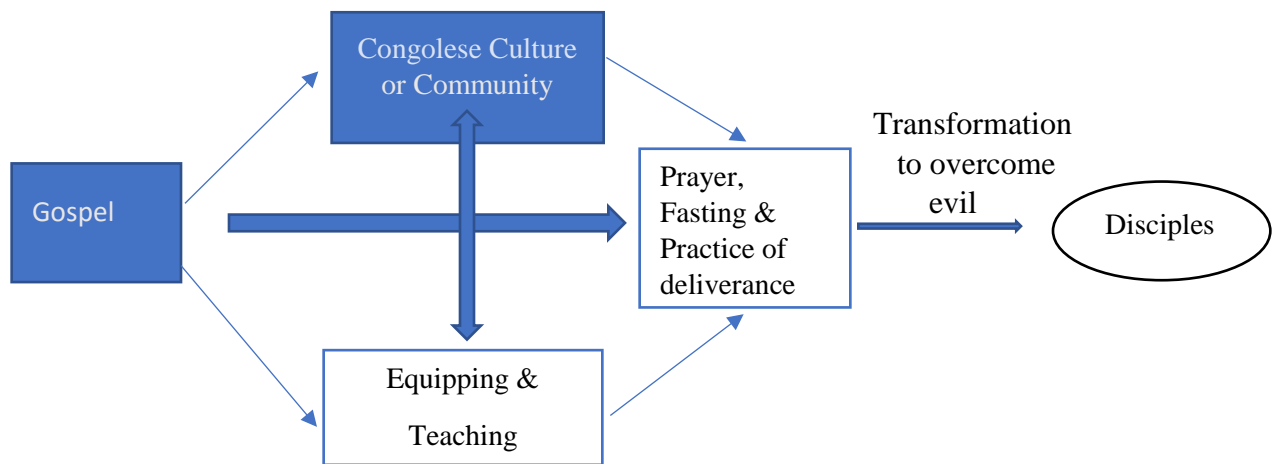
In daily life and living, they can teach others by showing them how to study the word of God and using the word of God to pray. Socially, they will be able to teach others in the village perhaps how to take care of themselves by having good hygiene, by preventing some transmissible disease, by drinking clean water. They can teach others how to pray for the sick people but it is good to prevent it by good hygiene or taking care of themselves. They can provide basic financial literacy by educating adults on how to cultivate or agriculture. Agriculture will help

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 9.

them to cultivate the land by growing their own fruits and vegetables, raising crop, feeding, breeding and raising livestock. They will have food and they can sell some if they have abundance. This will provide them with income to buy other things needed to survive. They can also show them how to create small businesses by using biblical principles. For instance: trusting God (Matthew 6:33; Mark 12:41-44), stewardship and wisdom (Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 16:1-15; Luke 19:11-27) and money management (Matthew 6:24; Luke 12: 13-21). Empowering Congolese with spiritual and intellectual knowledge will bring balance to their faith. After receiving Christ as Lord and Savior, these additional learning experiences will help them face the reality of everyday life.

#### Summary Illustration of Training



The goal of this training is to bring all communities the message of salvation. It is accomplished through the formation of discipleship to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in their lives. Referring to Jesus Christ himself, He spent three years equipping disciples to be ready for the work of salvation. As Bonhoeffer expresses in his classical book, *“Life Together”*, the community of

Christians springs solely from biblical message of salvation of man through grace alone; it is the basis of longing of Christians for one another.<sup>40</sup>

Congolese people can be reached by learning their culture and introducing the gospel in the light of their real-life experiences so it can be effective. Being aware of their spiritual and physical needs, the Congolese People will be equipped and better prepared to be transformed by the truth and power of the Gospel. The people's lives will be changed; therefore, they will be able to walk in the power of God in confidence without fear of evil.

As a result, these Congolese who have been transformed by the gospel, through prayer and fasting, and deliverance from demonic oppression, their lives will never be the same. They have experienced freedom from bondage. This impact will cause them to become disciples. Since, they have been equipped, in return, they will make other disciples. As the scripture says "you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. When people are walking in the freedom of the gospel with no fear of demonic, they will help others to know the truth.

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<sup>40</sup> Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together: A Discussion of Christian Fellowship* San Francisco:( Harper San Francisco, 1978), 23.

## CHAPTER 5

### REFRAMING THE GOSPEL IN A CONGOLESE PERSPECTIVE

In my introduction, I discussed the ways Congolese people received the gospel from the perspective of Protestant missionaries, which provided a good foundation of faith. However, the gospel was not fully explored in a Congolese context (dealing with their realities) due to cultural and language barriers. For example, the missionaries preached through interpreters and presented the Bible through a Westerner's view point, which did not necessarily address Congolese spiritual problems such as demonic possession, incurable sicknesses, and witchcraft. Because the gospel was preached from the missionaries' perspective, it did not deal directly with Congolese traditions and, therefore, people's lives were not changed. Tradition binds Congolese people to continue living under generational curses that derive from the ancestral practices of witchcraft, necromancy, and animism. As I have illustrated in this thesis, those practices keep the Congolese from coming true disciples of Christ and continue living in bondage.

The spiritual method of deliverance from the Congolese perspective was developed to deal with people possessed by demonic spirits. I have considered cases of demonic possession that exist, often in villages, and the victims need prayers for deliverance. This practice of deliverance was nurtured through their own perspective via teaching, discipleship, living it out, and practicing the gospel's principles of power. People fasted and prayed, and used special biblical scriptures to deal with demonic forces.

By going back to ancestral historical realities and the developmental psychoanalysis of Congolese society, I have found that the lack of biblical teaching has led the Congolese to lead mentally impoverished lives, which contributes to preventing them of knowing Christ. Tradition has indoctrinated them with myths and worship of ancestors for many generations, and they need



the power of the Holy Spirit to set them free. Therefore, understanding the gospel in the context of its power to liberate people in bondage reminds me of what Jesus said in the Gospel of Luke (4:18–19): “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

Jesus’s mission was to liberate people from bondage. According to John Howard Yoder’s *Politics of Jesus*, this means that Jesus talks about its authority over the devil, principalities, and powers also of thrones and dominion.<sup>41</sup> The same authority and anointing was invested in us as Christians to exercise in terms of spreading the good news with authorities to set the captive free. The practice of deliverance starts by preaching so that people believe in the power that resides in the gospel at the same level at which Jesus operated. Moving from captives (prisoners) to recovery demonstrates that the power of the gospel can confront any traditional bondage. In the case of the Congolese, there are spiritual, structural, economical, and social bondages.

In the Gospel of John, 18:36, Jesus says “My kingdom is not of this world” and Yoder comments that authorities and dominions can be regarded as using political and spiritual language as Jesus expressed; “my kingdom”.<sup>42</sup> My interpretation is that the political system and structure of the Congo prevent people from living their liberty in Christ, and the system should be confronted by the authority of God invested in Christians. The exercise of that authority will probably come with a price, as shown in 5:17–42 in the Book of Acts that notes that members of the primitive church were persecuted, but they continued to spread the good news that

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<sup>41</sup> John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: vici Agnus nosier*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 137.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

challenged cultural traditions until the church established its authority. And postmodern churches have inherited this legacy).

The church in Congo should stand up and use its authority to follow the example of the apostles in the Book of Acts. They faced persecution but did not give up their faith and pursued the work of evangelism. Evangelism always comes with a price, and to engage in revolutionary work such as preaching the gospel that would change and liberate the Congolese, the church needs to be prepared to experience persecution that often time produces a great testimony and legacy for the church and perhaps even, then, the Congolese church. When it comes to revival, and especially when taking a position of faith, the church leaders and pastors are often attacked by persecutors (demonic, systematic, or political). However, when the church stands firm and takes appropriate action through spiritual warfare and realizes its authority to establish the kingdom of God on earth comes from heaven, nothing will successfully oppose it. I am talking about the gospel of power that can conquer the work of enemies in Congo. Each Congolese person needs to accept the responsibility for considering the authority and power that Jesus has invested in him or her.

In his book *Healing Through Deliverance*, Peter J. Horrobin explains what takes place when a child of God decides to take a position of faith (in this context, I am picturing Congolese people who are trying to change their lives by living out the full power of the gospel). The devil will control the mind of the person to act contrary to God's plan so that the person will be completely unresponsive to the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>43</sup> The plan of God is to have all human beings (including Congolese) learn about his son, Jesus Christ, and accept him as lord and savior.

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<sup>43</sup> Peter J. Horrobin, *Healing Through Deliverance: The Foundation and Practice of Deliverance Ministry*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2008), 144.

As a result, people will be free to proclaim the scripture: “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

This is the freedom that I am hoping to see happen in Congo when the gospel of liberation will be preached around villages to free kids, women, and men from demonic possession, corruption, tribalism, evil traditions, poverty, and any sort of evil bondage.

The gospel represents hope for the Congolese people. As Paul stated in Romans 1:16, the gospel is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.” The gospel is more than words of confession—it is also the power of God to grant salvation through faith. The same opportunity for salvation is given to all people and is intended to help all cultures and nations on earth to be part of the body of Christ. The only condition is to receive the gospel by faith. As Paul said, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). And Hebrews 10:38 says that “but my righteous one shall live by faith.” This faith comes from hearing the word of God, so one of the methods of teaching the Congolese will be to have them memorize Bible verses that will empower them to deepen their faith and allow them to confront and overcome their everyday reality of fear, poverty, and the power of darkness by accepting Christ.

Biblical memorization is fundamental to spiritual formation. Memorizing scriptures will help the Congolese develop faith as their spiritual muscles grow in the knowledge of the word and to act accordingly. This recommendation is based on both the Old Testament and the New Testament (Joshua 1:8, Proverbs 30:5, Psalms 1:2–3 and 119:11, Isaiah 29:12, 51:16, John 15:17, Colossians 3:16, and 2 Timothy 3:15). The passages in which Jesus taught his disciples to know the word of God before he sent them to cast out demons (Mark 6:1–7, Luke 10:1) will help the Congolese nurture their identity as children of God and as disciples of Christ.

I have witnessed how the Congolese have neglected the word of God, which is one reason I would emphasize Bible memorization. It is a fundamental way of filling their minds with what they need—the word of God (Joshua 1:8).

John Piper, one of the great theologians of our time, noted in his article that “the most helpful practical method I have ever run into, *is* memorizing scripture passages.”<sup>44</sup> The discipline of memorizing the word of God (i.e., the Bible) would eventually lead to something practical in terms of fulfilling the will of God or preparing Congolese disciples to share the word of God with confidence and exactitude.

In the Congolese culture, people have great respect for the word of ancestors based on oral tradition (transmitting information to generation after generation by telling stories). By knowing this practice, sharing the Christian discipline will always be rewarding. Also, the practice of speaking or memorizing scripture will strengthen their prayer life. They will be much more effective at serving as witnesses because they have already been shaped by the word. This practice will change their attitudes and the way they look at their community and the world. Finally, because faith comes from hearing the word of God, people’s minds will become alert, and they will develop confidence through the assurance of a better life.

Reframing the gospel in the Congolese context simply means that formation emphasizes supporting biblical principles and memorizing and meditating on holy scripture often as noted in Joshua 1:8 which is already the practice of their culture. Memorizing scripture is not something that is limited to memorizing for intellectual practice but should lead to the concrete application of the word of God in the discipline of sharing the word (preaching the gospel) and the transformation of living out the power of the word. As Mark 16:20 shows, “Then the disciples

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<sup>44</sup> John Piper, “Spiritual Formation in Christ for the Whole Life and Whole Person,” *Vocation* 12, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 7.

went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.” Jesus confirmed the same word that Congolese Christians will be reading, memorizing, and nurturing to live out the power of God. I understand that the written gospel works together with the spoken word. It is the power of God for salvation. When someone is saved, he or she becomes free. The same power of God that saves the person, is the same power that sets the person free. The person is only the instrument that God uses to save others by preaching the gospel. So, God himself is in control of saving the person, and the same God is confirming his word.

I have noticed that evangelists or missionaries in the Congo sometimes tend to reduce Paul’s view that the power of the gospel will set people free. They separate salvation and the transformation of the person. When someone is saved, it looks like the work is done, but the person continues to struggle on earth and still has limitations that could be overcome (I am talking about sickness, poverty, oppression, misery, and spiritual bondage). To me, it looks like salvation is to believe in Jesus as Lord and savior, so that you can go to heaven when you die. This is true, as far as the scripture emphasizes the liberation of the individual in all aspects, both spiritually and humanly, because salvation deals also with character and changing someone’s social status or improving his or her life. The same power that frees someone from sin can transform someone’s life. By the power of the Holy Spirit, this is the kind of change that the Congolese are looking for: the gospel that deals with the entire being—the spirit, soul, and flesh. When the gospel deals with those three levels, people will see transformation and complete change.

I believe in the truth of this passage, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The person

is a new creature both spiritually and physically (physical changes occur gradually). Initially, the person should learn to discipline him- or herself through the word of God. The same word of God that holds all the creation is the same word that changes the person whom discipline him or herself to see complete transformation. In the book *Salvation Means Creation Healed*, Howard Snyder states that “the more we exercise ourselves spiritually in biblically sound ways, the more we grow spiritually. The more we grow spiritually, the more disciplined we grow.”<sup>45</sup> There is no other discipline except the one that comes from the powerful word of God that nurtures people to become like Christ, empowered by the Spirit of God, not only for our own good (Congolese) but also to form a strong Christian community.

In conclusion, memorizing the scripture according to the realities that envelop Congolese people will allow them to deepen their faith. And using that faith as a disciple of Christ to share the gospel to his or her friends to enjoy the liberty that Christ offers for all Christians. Trusting in God, in His wisdom, I believe God will free people, open many to deeply understand the plan of salvation, and let them live out the freedom that He has called them to live out.

A word of hope for Congo:

When we are all ill, we hope to be healed, not just so we can survive, but so we can continue to develop, to create, to grow in wisdom, to help others, to more fully glorify God. To flourish in all the ways God intends.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Howard A. Snyder and Joel Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed: The Ecology of Sin and Grace: Overcoming the Divorce between Earth and Heaven* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2011), 106.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

#### The Gospel That Will Change the Lives of Congolese People

My motivation for writing this thesis is that I want to see the power of the gospel change the lives of the Congolese people. I have noted that a major problem of the Congolese derives from their ancestors' history of practicing witchcraft, necromancy, and animism. These practices open the doors to malediction. Leviticus 19:31 states, "Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be dishonored by them" (cf. 20:26; Ex. 22: 18; Deut. 18: 14). Deuteronomy 18:14 says explicitly, "Let no one be found among you, who engages in witchcraft or cast spells. These are detestable practices." Witchcraft, or any demonic activity, is detestable to God. In the New Testament, humanity is said to be bewitched when it replaces God for another (Gal. 3:1). In brief, this practice is regarded as the practice of idolatry.

Idolatry continues to play a negative role in the lives of the Congolese people. Currently, in the Congo, there is a large group of people living in extreme poverty, both spiritually and physically. The Congolese need to deal with these spiritual issues—either by using prayers, fasting, or practicing deliverance—to live the life of liberty that God has called them to, using spiritual power based on Paul's view of spiritual realities. "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12). Paul identified the problem that derived from spiritual forces of evil and confronted them through the power of the gospel.

Paul's gospel talks about the power of resurrection. When Jesus disarmed the powers and authorities of the devil, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them through the

cross (Col. 2:15). Proclaiming this gospel in the Congo, confronting the powers of darkness, will set the Congolese free. As N. T. Wright states in his book, *Surprised by Hope*, power lies not in the offer of a new spirituality or religious experience but in the powerful announcement that God is God, that Jesus Christ is Lord, that the powers of evil have been defeated, and that God's new creation has begun.<sup>47</sup> Once this gospel of power is taught in the Congo, it will change the Congolese mentality, little by little, inviting them to discover their future (or hope) based in God's destiny. Because acceptance of the gospel deals with present and past sin, it will eventually deal with the problem of the sin (e.g., witchcraft, necromancy, animism, evil traditions) of the Congolese ancestors and teach the modern-day people how to renounce these practices. However, to live out that power and liberty in Christ requires formation of disciples who can teach the word of God. In the Congolese context, they (the Congolese) will not exclude themselves from biblical history but will learn that scripture is not only something that they believe; —it is also something that transforms them and can be shared among them. The Congolese will learn that application of the word of God to their culture will facilitate the gradual process of coming together, touching and changing lives.

The power of the gospel will help the Congolese in building up a community for people through shared biblical history, which will nurture new generations and new traditions. As the word of God continues to nurture the Congolese, the Holy Spirit will ensure that they will hear Him (God) each in their own language so that they can marvel at His majesty and His love for them (Rev. 7:9). Kwame Bediako states in *Africa Bible Commentary* that our mother tongue is the language in which God speaks to each of us.<sup>48</sup> God does not speak in sacred language but in

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<sup>47</sup> N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York, NY: Harper One, 2008), 227.

<sup>48</sup> Tokunboh Adeyemo et al., *Africa Bible Commentary* (Place: Publisher, 2010), 4.



ordinary language so that we may hear Him and realize that His gospel is about us and that we have been invited to join a company drawn from all peoples, tribes, tongues, nations, and languages. This formation of disciples will increase the faith of the Congolese people, helping them set themselves on the path to salvation. To learn that God loves them and knows their names—and that God placed them into the Congo for a purpose, regardless of suffering—will give them hope that the gospel of salvation will improve all aspects of their lives.

The key element of that formation will reside in prayers, fasting, and the practice of deliverance. After the Congolese dive into the knowledge of the word of God (inductive Bible studies), it will equip them to pray according to the scripture. Jesus said to the disciples, “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:40). In addition, for fasting, Jesus said, “This kind (refers to demons) does not go out except by fasting and by prayer” (Matt. 17:21). Thus, fasting is not an option but an obligation for all Christians to live out the power of God. As a spiritual discipline, true fasting should always be combined with prayer and repentance. Fasting without repentance is fruitless (fasting as an expression of humility and adoration). It is not only abstinence from foods but from sin as well to praise God through our bodies. Because the practice of fasting has fallen out of favor, we must spread the truth that fasting combined with prayer is the best way to reflect Christ in our lives. Therefore, prayer is good, but without fasting it is incomplete, especially in dealing with complicated cases, such as deliverance or casting out demons. The true disciples of Christ need to be always ready, mentally and spiritually.

Unfortunately, I did not see much teaching about fasting, not even in US churches. But in Africa or the Congo, the teaching of fasting is crucial, and it is taken extremely seriously. Fasting is important because, before Jesus began His ministry, “He fasted forty days and nights” (Matt.

4:2) and Moses also fasted for forty days in Exodus 34:28. Considering the example of Jesus, Moses and other prophets, it shows how fasting is crucial not only for the Congolese Christians but for all Christians.

Another practice important to Congolese Christianity is the prayer of deliverance. By reading the New Testament closely, we see that Jesus had encounters with demonic spirits (and people who were possessed by demons). Jesus dealt with many cases of demons, and this enlightens us on how to deal with demonic power, as well as how to overcome that power. The scripture clearly shows that we can learn from Jesus's ministry. Refer to Matthew 8:16, Matthew 8:31, Matthew 9:33, Matthew 12:24, Luke 4:18–19, Luke 4:35, Luke 11:14, Luke 13:11, Luke 13:32 Mark 1:34, Mark 3:22, Mark 5:8, Mark 9:29. These scriptural passages demonstrate that Jesus spent a great deal of time casting out demons and freeing captives, which is now rarely found in Western practice. Peter Horrobin comments in his book, *Healing through Deliverance*, that most religious people now tend to dismiss the important domain of deliverance in the church.<sup>49</sup> Mental hospitals are full of people possessed by demons, and no one takes their claims seriously. In the Congo, I have seen and experienced deliverance of people possessed by demonic powers on the streets. Even in hospitals, I have seen people delivered by the power of God. Some Christians take this spiritual practice (prayer of deliverance) seriously by believing in the power of the gospel to set the captive free, not only for salvation but also to allow the children of God to live out the power of God in their everyday lives.

I take demonic influences and possession seriously by discerning spirits to distinguish between mental disorders (caused by normal facts of life) and demonic manifestations (caused by demons). Regardless of the causes, these afflictions have a negative effect on people's lives.

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<sup>49</sup> Peter J. Horrobin, *Healing through Deliverance: The Foundation and Practice of Deliverance Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2008), 143.

If Christians do not take responsibility to deal with these issues, they will remain a problem; however, I believe that sicknesses or diseases, as well as their causes and symptoms, are known. They are not part of God's plan; therefore, they are evil doings conducted by bad influences beyond the natural, actuating themselves through visible manifestation. These kinds of situations continue in the Congo because many people are still living under demonic influence and possession. For myself, I witnessed such instances for twenty-one years while living in the Congo, but I rarely find these situations in the United States. I was born and grew up in the Congo, then left when I was twenty years old. Compared to what I have experienced in the United States, having the privilege to use theological knowledge, I have concluded that the goodness and love of God can be spread throughout the power of gospel equally. God demonstrates to all His creatures, including the Congolese, His grace, love, and mercy. Ultimately, I want to return to the Congo and preach that gospel of grace, love, and power to the Congolese people to let them know that Jesus is still working. The power that sets people free in the Bible is the same power that will set the Congolese free.

I will finish with this passage from Matthew 28:18–20: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Jesus was the greatest missionary the world has ever known. He came to establish the Kingdom on Earth and destroyed the power of Satan, the enemy of the gospel.<sup>50</sup> The Father sent Him, and Jesus sent us to do exactly what He has done, to model Him as an example, from teaching to discipleship. The gospel must be preached to the whole world, and then the end will come. Therefore, I want to contribute to the expansion of the gospel. I believe

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<sup>50</sup> Nina P. Ross, *God at His Best: A Mission Challenge* (Memphis, TN: Emmanuel Ministries International, 1999), 29.

God sent me to start teaching and training the Congolese or foreign missionaries to carry out the gospel, which will bring hope to the Congolese people, releasing them from their bondage. On the day of my graduation, Dr. Steele handed to me a paper saying this: *Zalema, from the Congo you have come, and to the Congo you shall one-day return. We (Seattle Pacific University) send you to bring the word of God to your beloved people, your war-torn homeland.* I felt that I have a responsibility to fulfill my mission as *a sent one* from God, from my school (SPU seminary), to preach the gospel to my community and homeland. Also, to teach them what I have learned and been equipped to do in my spiritual formation.

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