




The impact of charismatic phenomena in the establishment and growth of the Congo Evangelistic Mission in the Luba region



Authors:

Mayuka G. Bondo¹ 
Dichk M. Kanonge² 
Johan Kommers¹ 

Affiliations:

¹Department of Missiology,
Faculty of Theology,
North-West University,
Potchefstroom, South Africa

²Department of Ancient
Languages, Faculty of
Theology, North-West
University, Potchefstroom,
South Africa

Corresponding author:

Mayuka Bondo,
gasmayuka1@gmail.com

Dates:

Received: 25 June 2019
Accepted: 08 Nov. 2019
Published: 15 Apr. 2020

How to cite this article:

Bondo, M.G., Kanonge, D.M. & Kommers, J., 2020, 'The impact of charismatic phenomena in the establishment and growth of the Congo Evangelistic Mission in the Luba region', *In die Skriflig* 54(1), a2511. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v54i1.2511>

Copyright:

© 2020. The Authors.
Licensee: AOSIS. This work
is licensed under the
Creative Commons
Attribution License.

This article evaluates the impact of charismatic phenomena in the evangelisation of the Luba by the Congo Evangelistic Mission (CEM) between 1915 and 2015 (the centenary year of the CEM). The CEM is a Pentecostal faith-mission, founded in Mwanza, Katanga in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1915 by the British missionaries W.F.P. Burton and J. Salter. Several authors such as Burton, Hodgson, Whittaker and Womersley believe that the manifestation of charismatic phenomena was instrumental to the extraordinary growth experienced by the CEM throughout its history. They posit that the occurrence of charismatic phenomena such as healing, miracles and deliverances, to mention a few, has made the CEM's proselytising more effective than any other missionary organisation in the region. In fact, as observed by Garrard, miraculous healings and divine judgements played a significant role in the acceptance of the CEM missionaries by the indigenous people of the Luba tribe in Katanga.

Keywords: charismatic; phenomena; Congo Evangelistic Mission; Luba region; miraculous healings; judgement.

Introduction

This article evaluates the impact of charismatic phenomena in the evangelisation of the Luba by the Congo Evangelistic Mission (CEM) between 1915 and 2015. Several authors such as Burton (1933; 1967), Hodgson (1946), Whittaker (1983; 1984) and Womersley (1974), to mention a few, attribute the fascinating growth the CEM has experienced since its inception to the manifestation of charismatic phenomena. These authors opine that the occurrence of charismatic phenomena in the CEM had an immediate and indisputable effect on several villages and at separate times.

Interestingly, despite the acknowledgement of these so-called charismatic phenomena in the CEM, their influence on the growth of the mission has received little or no attention. The dearth of information regarding the impact of the charismatic phenomena on the development of the CEM, leaves a gap in knowledge that this study attempts to fill. To achieve this objective, this article presents a brief historical overview of the origin and development of the CEM. Thereafter, it defines the charismatic phenomena from the perspective of the Acts of the Apostles. Next, it discusses several occurrences of charismatic phenomena during the formative years of the mission, which were a replication of those in the Acts of the Apostles. Finally, it evaluates the impact of the charismatic phenomena on the growth of the CEM. It is important to note that, due to the limitations of this study, it does not engage exhaustively with the list of charismatic manifestation supposedly inspired by the Holy Spirit in the history of the CEM. Rather, the few examples discussed herein serve as a microcosm for the rest. However, for the charismatic phenomena selected in the CEM to be considered valid, an assessment of the relevant data was done.

A historical overview of the Congo Evangelistic Mission

The CEM is a Pentecostal mission established in Mwanza, Katanga in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1915 by the British missionaries W.F.P. Burton and J. Salter.

The mission's scope

Mwanza is a Luba chiefdom in the Malemba Nkulu territory in the present province of Haut Lomami, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Mwanza chiefdom is located on the western bank of the Congo River with its headquarters in Seya. It is considered the centre of the Luba people (Burton 1927:321–338). When the first missionaries arrived, the chiefdom was under

Read online:



Scan this QR
code with your
smart phone or
mobile device
to read online.

the chieftaincy of (Mulopwe) Mwanza Kajingu, whose administrative centre (Mwipata) was at Sope Kapumba. Chief Mwanza Kajingu was a proud and conservative traditionalist, who took pride in the high population density of his chiefdom. During his reign, he had four deputies (Mfumu), including Mwanza Bunda, Mwanza Ndala, Mwanza Kilumba and Mwanza Sope. The deputy (Mfumu) Mwanza Sope was responsible for four villages, namely Kapumba, Kanguba, Kakaya and Kaseba (Kalala Kayembe) (Burton 1927:330). On their arrival, Chief Kajingu directed Burton and Salter to Mwanza Kaseba (Kalala Kayembe) for their establishment in a small village, known as 'Kayembe lulu', situate at the foot of the hill.

The founding fathers of the Congo Evangelistic Mission

Before delving into the examination of the charismatic phenomena, as is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, it is important to present a brief biographical sketch of the founders of the CEM, W.F.P. Burton and J. Salter. James Salter was born in Preston in 1889, but was orphaned at an early age. He was well-known in England, the United States and New Zealand where he travelled with his father-in-law, Smith Wigglesworth, who was one of the greatest pioneers of European Pentecostalism (Liardon 2013:30). Salter graduated from the prestigious Preston Bible School and married Sidney Alice Wigglesworth, the daughter of Smith Wigglesworth. Before her marriage to Salter, she was the wife of Reverend S. Smith who died prematurely (Whittaker 1983:174). She was a missionary in the north of Angola at the Stober Mission, then in South America where she was a member of the British Bible Society with her former husband. Alice was a dynamic evangelist and a recruiter of young missionaries, and played a significant role in the evangelistic career of her husband.

W.P.P. Burton was born on 24 March 1886 in Liverpool, England. He trained as an electrical engineer at the Redhill Technical College and Liverpool University, respectively. He was also a carpenter, an artist and an amateur designer, and even learned the French language (Maxwell 2008:327). He was raised in the Evangelical Anglican Church by his parents and was confirmed (baptised) by the Archbishop of Canterbury. His parents dedicated him to God for missionary work in Africa at the early ages of 3 or 4 when Burton began to show interest in the mission in Africa. By the time he was 6 years old, his interest had become more intense (Moorhead 1922:2). Although Burton's passion was initially triggered after reading a book on the evangelistic ministry of Hannington, the bishop of Uganda (Womersley & Garrard 2005:22), it grew through his relationship with Thomas L. Johnson, a former African slave (who had spent 28 years of servitude in America) who, after his liberation, became an evangelist. W.P.P. Burton recalls that, during a visit by Thomas L. Johnson, the old African placed his hand on his head in prayer, beseeching God to send him to his people in Africa (Moorhead 1922:3).

When Burton and Salter first arrived in Mwanza, they were under the auspices of a branch of the Pentecostal Mission in the Belgian Congo. The Pentecostal Mission was supposed to support them, and facilitate their acquisition of legal authorisation, but it reneged on this commitment. Consequently, W.P.P. Burton and James Salter terminated their relationship and autonomously founded the CEM, which has grown to become the most predominant Pentecostal mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Womersley & Garrard 2005:112) and the oldest in Central Africa.

Historically this missionary originated from the Pentecostal movement that originate in Azusa Street on the 9th of April 1906 in Los Angeles, California. The CEM is a Pentecostal Christian association that was founded (under the name Pentecostal Mission) in 1915 in Katanga at Mwanza¹ in the Democratic Republic of Congo by the English missionaries, Burton and J. Salter (Anderson 2007; McGee 1988). It is the first and largest Pentecostal mission established in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) among a people, widely immersed in traditional religious practices such as divination, magic and several other spiritual practices. Despite the traditional (primitive) practices of the people, the CEM played a vital role in the establishment of the Pentecostal Church in the Katanga province (Barrett 1982:759). It has also been immensely instrumental to the proliferation of the movement in the DRC through its members who proactively proselyte the mission across the country and beyond. The movement has since spread to different parts of Africa, including Zambia, Angola and South Africa.

One outstanding characteristic of this missionary association is its strong espousal of the biblical practices of charismatic gifts (*charismata*) as is contained in 1 Corinthians (12–14). This pivotal quality certifies the churches as having a missiological objective (Whittaker 1984). Based on the missiological features of its practices, several people were converted and the spiritual beliefs in witchcraft and divination significantly declined. The natives recognised in accordance with Acts (19:18–19) that their fetish and cruel practices were an abomination before the Creator, and they renounced their past. By doing so, they abandoned their fetish practices and converted to Christ.

The charismatic phenomena in the Acts of the Apostles

The 'charismatic phenomenon' derives from the *charismata*, a Greek word for extraordinary graces, and a designation for the experience of the presence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The expression is used in this article in unison with the supernatural events recorded in the Acts of the Apostles

1. Mwanza is a Luba chiefdom in the territory of Malemba Nkulu in the province of Haut Lomami, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The chiefdom is located west of the Congo River (left side), and its headquarters is in Seya. It extends to the north towards Ngoimani; to the south it shares the boundaries with the Nkinkonja chiefdom, to the southeast with the Nkulu chiefdom, and to the northeast with the Mulongo chiefdom.

(Ac 2:1–37; 10:44–47; 11.15–17; 19:18–19) as direct consequences of the effusion of the Holy Spirit, and in reference to the charismatic gifts that accompany those who have experienced it. The charismatic phenomena are a replication of the miraculous events inspired by the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and the ecclesial community (Bauckham 1996:154). Paul encourages Christians to seek the manifestations of the Spirit and distinguishes between diverse kinds. He attributes the source to the 'same Spirit', the 'same Lord' and the 'same God' respectively (Ac 12:4–6). He insists that the gifts come from the Spirit of God, rather than from individuals. This is extremely important, because by emphasising 'the same Spirit, the same Lord and the same God', one must embrace the sovereignty of God, which cannot only be seen in the distribution of gifts, but also in their operation (Fee 1987:588).

In the CEM, these charismatic phenomena signify the manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and a duplication of the experiences that distinguishes the primitive community of the church in the Acts of the Apostles from contemporary communities. From a Pentecostal perspective, Moorhead (1922), Hodgson (1946), Burton (1967), Womersley (1974), Stanley and Eduard (2003), and Malcomson (2008) argue that these manifestations are a reiteration of the occurrences recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. In the Acts, divine healing was instrumental to the conversion of a great number of people to the Christian faith. As Ferngren (1992) remarks, the early church was considered a religion of healings.

In a similar vein, the Acts also discusses the judgements of God that serves as a protection of his work and his workers. The Bible speaks of the retributive justice meted to Herod who was responsible for the death of James and the imprisonment of Peter (Ac 12:2–7). Acts narrates also how Elymas, who was antagonistic to Paul, was struck with blindness. Such depictions of charismatic phenomena as will be demonstrated in this study, constitute the major catalysts for the growth of the CEM. Since there are multi valent variations and manifestations of the *charismata* in various forms and places, this study focuses on the charismatic aspects of divine healing, judgement and retribution.

Charismatic phenomena and growth of the Congo Evangelistic Mission

Apart from random occurrences of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit reported in the CEM, Burton (1967:103) affirms that other charismatic phenomena such as miraculous healings and divine judgements, characterised the fledgling mission. These charismatic phenomena were instrumental to the indigenous people's acceptance of the gospel and their subsequent conversion to Christianity. As previously stated, it would be impossible within the scope of this study to analyse all the supernatural phenomena that were contributory to the growth of the CEM. Therefore, this study focuses specifically on acts of divine healing, God's interventions on behalf of his missionaries as well as the ministry in the forms

of divine judgements and retribution recorded in a few villages as a microcosm for the entire Luba region.

The role of miraculous healings in the advancement of the Congo Evangelistic Mission

Virtually everyone is interested in the gifts of healing, especially because it is widely sought-after. In fact, the gift of healing remains the most beneficial gifts to humankind. In 1 Corinthians 12 (vv. 9, 28, 30), the gifts of healing are mentioned thrice, and in all cases, Paul uses a double plural form (*χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων*, *charismata iamatōn*; gifts for, or of healing). According to Van Oort (2012:2), the use of the plural form clearly indicates that there are diverse types of healing. The pertinent need for healing justifies its status as a focal aspect of Jesus' earthly ministry. It is in this sense that Peterson (2009:166) argues that charismatic manifestations remain signs of the promised messianic salvation and proof of its relevance in the present.

It is noteworthy then that, from its inception, the ministry of the CEM (even as a budding church) was remarkable for extraordinary manifestations of *charismata*. One notable incident occurred in Mwanza where Burton and Salter met a man named Mwepu Tentami. He was living in the village of Kaseba and was from the family of Chief Kajingu. Mwepu Tentami was a courageous and inspirational man who suffered from a deformity of the spine (Garrard 2012:12–14). The circumstances of their meeting are unclear. However, it is presumed that he was among a group of curious indigenous people who were gazing at the white missionaries. According to Garrard (2008a:151), as soon as Burton looked at Tentami's face, he felt a burden in his heart to pray for him. After the prayer, there was an audible sound of rattling bones after which Tentami stood up and was normal (Garrard 2008a:27). In fact, miraculous healing action was common in the Luba traditional of Katanga. In this tribe, the fetishists (*banganga*) healed diseases in several ways. In the case of tumours, excruciating pain and acquired deformities, they sometimes used the so-called '*Matentu*' system, which means to remove or detach. Tentami had been suffering from his malformation for an exceptionally long time. Apparently, the traditional system of healing failed to alleviate his condition. In the same way as in Acts 3:1–10, Tentami's healing was possible in the name of Jesus. By designating the name of Jesus, it was a challenge to the people, especially fetish healers. In Acts 3:11, the healing of the lame man instantaneously changed the perception of the crowd gathered around the Apostles towards Peter's preaching. In a similar vein, the miraculous healing of Tentami, marked the beginning of the several manifestations of charismatic phenomena in the Luba region. As Rochette (2003:216) rightly points out, Peter invited the crowd not to be fascinated by him, but to propel their belief towards Christ who made the lame man to walk again.

It is crucial to note that before the occurrence of these charismatic phenomenon through the CEM evangelists, there had never been any instance of divine healing, or an indisputable performance of miracles in the tribe (Garrard 2008a:151).

After witnessing the miracle, the Luba people began to regard the white missionaries as great healers, possessed by immensely powerful spirits. They sought to identify the source of their power. In this way, the indigenous people approached the missionaries who seized the opportunity to proclaim the message of salvation. Due to the evident works of the Holy Spirit, their people espoused Christianity with enthusiasm. During this time, approximately 500 people from Mwanza and the neighbouring villages accepted the message of salvation (Burton 1967:64).

In the Ngoymani chiefdom

Despite constant evangelisation prior to 1919 in this area, the entire population of Ngoymani lived under the direct supervision of the *Mbudje* (mystical secret society) and traditional healers (Garrard 2008a:146) who met the missionary's efforts with stiff opposition. As a result, missionary organisations made no headway with conversions until the Deputy Chief (*Mfumu*) Mwanabute Kalume was miraculously cured of his withered hand. The healing of this deputy chief resonates with several instances of healing, recorded in the New Testament, particularly the healing of a lame man by Jesus (Lk 5:18–26); the healing of two lame men (Ac 3:1–10; 9:32–35), and the healing of the lame man in Lystra (Ac 14:8–12). In Acts 14:8–12, Luke describes the man's healing through the power of Paul's spoken word. He ordered him to stand up after recognising the depth of the lame man's faith to be healed (Keener 2013:262). The healing at Lystra emphasises that Paul does the same kind of things as Jesus and Peter. Paul was capacitated to perform these miraculous healings, because he was empowered by the same Spirit (Bruce 1988:528). These miraculous healings aroused the curiosity of the crowds.

Likewise, Mwanabute Kalume's healing sparked the population's enthusiasm towards the missionaries, and the people sought to listen more to the messages about Jesus (Burton 1967:65–66). The community recognised in the white missionaries the manifestation of supernatural powers similarly to those present in their traditional religious belief, but different. Just like the people of Mwanza, the Ngoymani people muttered among themselves that '*Bazungubadjina manga mapiteetu*', which means that the white people surely have a power that is mightier than theirs. Therefore, they identified in the missionaries the greatest power of the spirit world (Garrard 2008a:33, 38). Healing is an omnipresent preoccupation of Luke, related to the spread of the good news of the kingdom. Faith for healing in Acts 14:9 is presented as an essential purpose of the Gospel. It appears elsewhere in Luke (7:9–10, 50; 8:48, 50; 17:19; 18:42) as well as in Acts 3:16 and in the tradition of Jesus (cf. Mk 5:34, 36; 9:23; 10:52; 11:22–24; Jn 4:50; 11:40).

However, the missionaries asked them to divert their focus from them and their power, and to desist from venerating them. They urged them to look up to Jesus through whose power they performed the miracles, and informed them that they, too, would receive the power to perform miracles and

cure incurable diseases if they believed. Thereafter, as Burton (1967:68) notes, the indigenous people expressed more enthusiasm in listening to the message of salvation in Jesus Christ.

In the chiefdom of Kisanga

Kisanga is a chiefdom located about 60 km northwest of Mwanza. Although the gospel was introduced to the community in 1917, it yielded no fruits until 1921. The community was opposed to accepting the gospel and were hostile towards the missionaries (Garrard 2008a:55). Members of secret societies dreadfully persecuted the Christians (who were fewer in comparison) (Burton 1933:143). They tied them to trees so that the ropes penetrated the flesh of their arms, and they placed blazing embers between their toes. Using death threats, the *Bambudye* (members of a mystical secret society) forced young people to abandon their faith in Christ, and to join their cults (Whittaker 1983:177). Because of these malevolent acts meted against the converts, the community remained extremely reluctant to renounce their traditional practices of the *Mbudye* and other secret societies. Burton (1967:164–165) notes that if not for the persistent intercession of the children of God, the works of the missionary would have certainly failed in the Kisanga chiefdom.

Later, when Hodgson was sent to evangelise there, he held prayer meetings with the Christians and several miraculous healings occurred (Burton 1933:141). A considerable number of the people converted to Christianity and some were baptised with the Holy Spirit (Burton 1967:169). Because the preaching of the word was accompanied by charismatic phenomena, Whittaker (1983:179) reports that the *Mbundye* did not emerge for two years. The indigenous people renounced their fetish activities and Kisanga became the mission station that influenced the conversion of numerous occultists to Christianity.

In the villages around the Luvidjo River

Due to their involvement in the domain of traditional cannibalism, the indigenous people of this region were particularly averse to the message of salvation (Burton 1927:335). It is recorded that, when the young people desired human flesh, they would go into the forest and engage in life or death combats, after which the winner would feast on the flesh of the person that was killed in the combat. Even lepers were killed, cooked and eaten when the supernatural desire for human flesh occurred among this tribe (Burton 1967:138). In 1923, M. Taylor took the evangelism of the Good News near the Luvidjo River, which is approximately 60 km from Ngoymani (Burton 1933:117). Regarding the prevalence of superstitious and traditional practices among the people of this region, Whittaker (1983:165) indicates that neither the military operations of the colonial powers, the imprisonments, nor other cautionary sanctions could instigate change in the lives of the people.

However, the arrival of M. Taylor in the village, coupled with the divine healing of a certain abandoned woman, marked the

turning point for the missionaries (Burton 1967:139–141), as the leader of the witch doctors abandoned the sorcery and divinations that were his means of living and honour, and convert to Christianity. When the villagers learned of his conversion, they surrendered their fetish items and renounced their allegiance to 'Mbundyé, Kasanjiet Tupoyo'. Thus, the people who previously engaged in diabolism, became Christians and the churches in the area have prospered to date.

In the Kinkondja chiefdom

In 1938, Petelo Musamfidi gained enormous popularity in the Kinkondja chiefdom in Kipamba for his gift of healing. Noteworthy is the fact that of all the Congolese indigenous members of the CEM, Petelo Musamfidi remains the first (although others existed after him) to whom such extraordinary gifts have been attributed. Originally from the Mwanza chiefdom, he went to work in Kikondjain, the village of Sanga, and was baptised in the Holy Spirit in 1932 in Kabanza. He was sought-after, because of several healings and miracles that occurred through him (Garrard 2008a:152–156). Numerous sick people received healing; some people even abandoned the medical centres at the time, to seek healing from Petelo Musamfidi, and many of them received instant healing (Garrard 2008a:153). Subsequently they adhered to the Christian faith preached by the CEM.

Due to the miraculous healings, they confessed their sins, and because of the astonishing rate of conversions across the villages in the region, the secret societies lost considerable followership in the chiefdom (Whittaker 1983:180). There was an astounding growth of missionary work in the chiefdom, and by 1944, the CEM had about 106 local churches and 3 400 members in the Kinkondja chiefdom alone (Garrard 2008a:58).

In the Kabongo Chiefdom in Lusaka

In Lusaka (Kabongo), Kisonga Bweni Abel was instrumental to the growth of evangelising. He was a man of impeccable character, blessed with a wealth of spiritual gifts through whom diseases such as leprosy, epilepsy, goitres and other incurable diseases were instantly healed (Garrard 2008a:160). These manifestations of the charismatic phenomena propelled the most retrogressive and conservative members of the community to accept and believe the gospel. As Whittaker (1984:118) notes, the work of the CEM in the area continued to flourish exceptionally, the churches handled regular conversions and thousands of people converted.

It is imperative to point out that intense and regular prayers as well as the teachings of the Word of God at the gatherings of believers, often preceded these manifestations of charismatic phenomena that led to the conversion of numerous people to Christianity. Garrard (2008b:6) adds that since the establishment of the mission, the missionaries encouraged members to exercise the gift of healing in the name of Jesus. At the same time, they emphasised the efficacy of the Holy Spirit in the life of every Christian in their teachings. This prompted the CEM believers to aspire

to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, mentioned in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 14:1, 12).

Divine judgement and growth of the Congo Evangelistic Mission

The concept of 'judgement' in the Holy Scriptures, is closely linked to the notion of God's justice. The Hebrew word (תָּרַם, *kherem*) and the Greek word (κρίσις, *krisis*) both refer to the act of placing persons or things under God's judgement, generally to the extent of their complete destruction. Thus, the term *judgement* is simply defined as divine response to human activity. In a purely technical sense, judgement includes God's approval of the acts he likes; but more frequently, judgement is understood as God's punishment to those who violate his commandments (Elwell & Beitzel 1988:1248–1249).

In the history of the CEM, several cases of divine confrontations with satanic powers and retributive justice against disruptors of the gospel are recorded. In all such instances, the church often triumphed, and the power of God proved supreme. When the indigenous people saw the supernatural occurrences happening to the witchdoctors who opposed the gospel, they were converted. A considerable number of sorcerers and members of secret societies were converted to the Christian faith in this manner. Consequently, they constituted the nuclei of the church in the villages (Hodgson 1946:69). The following section discusses some examples of communities with such historical records.

In Kiombe in the Mpyana Mbayo chiefdom

Kiombe is a village under the Mpyana Mbayo chiefdom. When Mudishi (the evangelist) first arrived there, he felt quite desperate, because there was initially no positive response to the message. The indigenous people of this region seemed unperturbed by their spiritual wickedness that was maintained by a widely feared woman called Nyemba (Burton 1947:160). She even issued a dreadful challenge to the evangelist in front of all the villagers. Despite the public opposition to the gospel, Mudishi was reassured by the promise of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of John 16:7–11: '... and when he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement'. Mudishi, his wife and a small congregation of faithful took the initiative to pray for Nyemba (Burton 1947:166).

One day while a crowd was waiting for Nyemba to perform, they were stunned to see her being mysteriously knocked off the ground (Burton 1947:167). When she awakened, she humbly knocked on Mudishi's door, and professed her willingness to receive Jesus Christ as her Saviour. Consequentially she lost her widespread fame as a spiritualist, and most of her followers converted to Christianity without hesitation. The period of this event was one of profound conviction: sins were confessed, wrong doings were forgiven, and people confessed to having stolen objects and possessing fetish items in their huts (Burton 1967:137). Similar events in several other villages of the chiefdom led to the conversion of

the witch doctors who previously opposed the gospel (Burton 1947:102–113). Following these series of events, the CEM won over several surrounding villages, including Kyala, Kilulwe, Mutombo, Kahia, Passion, and Kamina Lenge. The CEM has churches in these communities to date.

In Kamashi in the territory of Bukama

While the evangelists were struggling to spread the gospel in other villages, a man from Kabizumba named Mateo, decided to destroy the room that had been set up for the church's meetings (Burton 1933:133). He was mysteriously struck by an invisible force and fell to the ground. When he regained consciousness, he immediately converted to the Christianity and was baptised in the Holy Spirit (Burton 1967:155). It is recorded that, following this incident, more than 60 indigenous people were converted, and 25 of them were baptised and spoke in other languages (Garrard 2008a:54). From then on, the church was never empty. The meeting room was always packed with indigenous people who were eager to hear the gospel and seek salvation. Subsequently, the people experienced uncountable blessings – even the meeting place could no longer contain the enormous crowds that trooped to experience the wonders of God (Burton 1967:153–154). Several miracles were recorded, numerous people were saved, and new churches were established in Kabizumba, Kashololo, Luena, Sungu Mwana. Hence, the inhabitants of Kabondo Djanda, who were renowned brigands, murderers, savage and rebellious, and the *Bakaongangomba* (a rebel group of the Kabondo Djanda chiefdom who opposed the established authorities), became forerunners of the gospel across the region (Burton 1933:134).

In the Kabengele chiefdom

The community of Kabengele was notorious for secret societies activities. This community's area of specialisation was in witchcraft and sorcery. Men, women and children were duly mobilised for ceremonies and diligently honoured witchdoctors as demigods (Hodgson 1946:102). Because of the prevalence of witchcraft in the community, there was no initial response to the message of salvation. However, one day during one of the gatherings, with pots of beer arranged in a circle around the house of a witch doctor, he came out of his hut, but immediately groaned in pain, and cried 'God has struck me'. As soon as the excitement from the crowd subsided, an evangelist named Elakimi Musoka, seized the opportunity, got into the centre of the circle that had been prepared for dancing, and preached the gospel with great fervour and thereby converting souls from witchcraft to God (Hodgson 1946:69).

In 1950 in Kisamba, another community under the same chiefdom, the opposition to the message of the gospel was maintained on the one hand by Kasumba, one of the leading witchdoctors, and by Lumema, a member of the Roman Catholic Church on the other hand. Several people from the region, including Hodgson (1946:93–94), testified that Kasumba was not just a witchdoctor, but he was also the leader of a secret society of cannibals. In his wickedness, he

boldly threatened everyone who indicated interest in the message of the gospel, while publicly ridiculing the evangelist. However, one day Kasumba was struck by malignant wounds. He sought the aid of other witchdoctors who was unable to heal him. Finally, out of helpless desperation, he humbly sought out the evangelist, Petelo Musamfindi, to intercede for him in prayers. His healing was instant and so was his conversion. Hodgson (1946:96) remarks that, through his conversion, the opposition were appeased and, subsequently, there was mass response to the message.

Similarly, Lumema, another native of the Kabengele chiefdom, claimed to be a staunch Catholic convert and therefore he fiercely opposed the Pentecostal message. Hodgson (1946:111) points out that he showed a strong aversion to all CEM meetings. Sometimes he pretended to be an expert drummer and dancer just to disrupt the services. One night a disease that made him completely blind struck Lumema. Being a Catholic, the priest was invited, and he sprinkled holy water in his house to exorcise the demons, but he remained in torment and the pain increased. Eventually, despite his hatred for Petelo Musamfindi, he resolved to call on him for prayer. It is recorded that, after Petelo prayed for Lumema, he regained his sight and he fell into a deep painless sleep. As the news of the indisputably miraculous healing spread, so did the indigenes of the community embrace the Christian faith (Garrard 2008a:155). Lumema went around the entire village testifying the greatness of the God preached by Petelo Musamfindi. Similar events were frequent and constant across several chiefdoms of the Luba people (Garrard 2008a:54). In Kabongo, in the village of Mpwidika, a pastor testified to an episode where the witchdoctor was struck dead and the villagers embraced the Christian faith.

In another related episode, an eminent witchdoctor of the village of Kibila named Numbi Umpose, died and the spirits (*Bwanavidye*) that inhabited his body during his life, continued to terrify the inhabitants of the village. According to the records, the *Bwanavidye* continued to appear in the bodily form of Numbi Umpose, using the voice of the deceased to utter threats such as '*Ko kimpityila pa makayabo*' [Do not walk on my salt fish] These spirits tormented men and women who came out at night to ease their bowels, and those who worked in their gardens even during the day (Garrard 2008a:156). By December of 2013, numerous villagers confirmed seeing the ghost and these paranormal occurrences gave Kibila a bad reputation, and people from the neighbouring villages dared not go there. The residing Catholic priest, Reverend Father Modeste Bulterius, tried to exorcise the village of the spirits by praying and sprinkling holy water throughout the length and breadth of the village to no avail, as the paranormal activities continued in the village undeterred. Witchdoctors were also consulted to drive out *kibanda* or *kizwa*, but that, too, yielded no results (Garrard 2008a:156). However, at this time Numbi Enoke was beginning to gain influence. He walked around the village, invoking the name of Jesus Christ. By August 2017, the community reported that the Holy Spirit had asked Numbi Enoke to destroy Numbi Umpose's grave. At the same time,

the village was to be demolished for the construction of a major road that would incidentally pass right above Numbi Umpose's grave towards Kipamba, the main village of the chiefdom. The divine order was executed, and a sign was erected close to the site that reads '*Pita talala Lezailusa*' [pass peacefully and without fear because God is love] is love'. The road exists to this day. This event attracted a substantial number of villagers to Christianity (Garrard 2008a:156). In this regard, divine judgements were catalysts for the immense conversion to Christianity.

The positive and passionate reaction of the indigenous people to the gospel is reminiscent of the enthusiasm of Simon, the magician, in Samaria. It is likewise attributable to the manifestation of charismatic phenomena. Simon was astonished when he experienced the miracles and great wonders performed by the apostles. He was even more intrigued when he observed the impartation of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands, and he sought to obtain this power by offering them money (Ac 8:13–19). In a similar vein, it is assumed that the indigenous people sometimes believed not necessarily because they understood the purpose of being in Christ. Rather, they did so out of curiosity of knowing the source of the power demonstrated by the missionaries. Notwithstanding this hypothesis, the missionaries quickly sought to eradicate practices that were incompatible with the faith preached. They organised lessons for new believers to extricate them from their fetish beliefs and practices (Burton 1933:107–108). During visits in 2015, it was discovered that these consolidation programs continue to be an immense source of support for members.

In the end, the indigenous people understood that the fetishes were powerless and incompatible with their newly embraced Christian faith. Hodgson (1946:85) points out that the indigenous people publicly denounced sorcery; thus, divulging the secrets of '*Bambundy, Tusanji, Tupoyo and Tambwe Bwanga*' [witchdoctors and secret associations of sorcerers]. It is important to remember that, while the police and the imprisonments could not transform the non-believers (witchdoctors, sorcerers, *Mbudje, Kasanji, Tupoyo*, cruel people, and drunkards) into upright members of society, the proclamation of the gospel and the presence of the power of the Holy Spirit did that effortlessly (Burton cited in Hodgson 1946:5). There is no gainsaying then that the Holy Spirit and manifestations of charismatic phenomena proved to be the most effective missionary strategy for the ground-breaking progress made by the CEM across the Luba region.

Evolution of the Congo Evangelistic Mission from 1915 to 2015

2015 marks the centenary celebration of the CEM. As is evident throughout this article, this missionary association attained a 100 years of its existence in the DRC in this year. Therefore, it was essential to evaluate the impact of charismatic phenomena in the church since its foundation in 1915. Before the establishment of the CEM in the Luba region, some missionary establishments already existed in that part of the country. One

example is the Garenganze Evangelical Mission (GEM), which was established in Mulongo in 1910 as the first Protestant mission in the region by two German missionaries, Zentler and Clark. The GEM was followed by the Fathers of the Holy Spirit who settled in Kongolo in 1912. They established a mission in Malemba Nkulu on the left bank of the Lualaba. The CEM was established in Mwanza three years later (Garrard 2008a:135).

However, before the arrival of the missionaries, the indigenous Luba people had a peculiar way of living. They were African traditional believers who practised fetishism, witchcraft, sorcery and diabolism for healing, defence and protection to gain sympathy and for vengeance. The Luba people particularly attached great importance to their traditional beliefs and fetish practises (Burton 1961:68–70; Theuws 1958:26), as their religion was grounded in traditional institutions and expressed through rites, secret activities, and rituals. They ferociously resisted the introduction of the message of the gospel to the people and persecuted the earliest converts among them.

To circumvent these barriers put up by the traditionalists, the CEM missionaries strategically focused on proclaiming the message of salvation in conjunction with manifestations of charismatic phenomena. As a result, they were able to convince the indigenous people that the missionaries had more powerful fetish (*manga*) – one that surpassed that of the traditional healers and all the members of the various secret societies (Garrard 2008b:20). As the missionaries presented Jesus through their messages as the progenitor of miracles, the Luba embraced the Christian faith with enthusiasm. The result was that they renounced their belief in spirits. Repentance became an expression of their separation from their previous heathen practices. The indigenous Luba people realised that their superstitions, sorcery and traditional practices were an abomination to the creator. As a result, they embraced the new faith which they believed would guarantee the protection, peace, joy and prosperity they sought. By doing so, the CEM experienced unprecedented growth more than any other missionary establishment in the region. The data in Table 1 can also be represented as seen in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

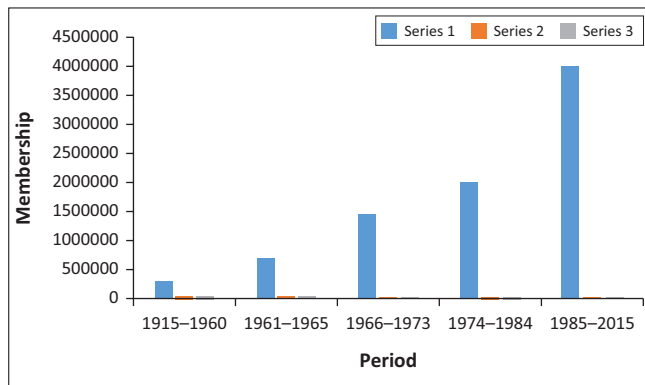
Conclusion

As the discussions in this article have shown, the charismatic phenomena played an indispensable role in the fostering and evolving of the CEM's growth and development into the phenomenal church that it is today. This is especially evident concerning the confrontation and demolition of satanic powers and proselyting of the gospel in the Luba region. It is evident that the effusion of the power of the Holy Spirit is a paramount part of the mission bestowed on the disciples. In other words, the testimony of salvation is contingent on receiving the power of the Holy Spirit through whom missionary work is effective (Ac 1:4, 8). Because the Holy Spirit is the agent of renewal and revitalisation of the mission of the church, it is through his power that the disciples can faithfully proclaim the message of Jesus and propagate his work. The Holy

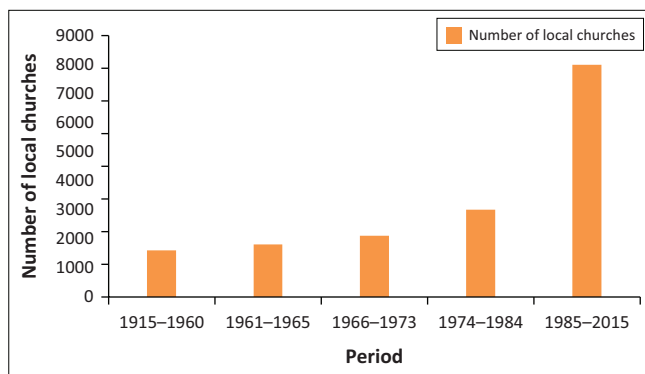
TABLE 1: Summary table of the evolution of the Congo Evangelistic Mission from 1915 to 2015.

Period	Number of local churches	Number of members
1915–1960	1 600	300 000
1961–1965	1 800	700 000
1966–1973	2 100	1 450 000
1974–1984	3 000	≈2 000 000
1985–2015	± 8 000	± 4 000 000

Source: Bondo, M.G., 2017, *Recurrence of charismatic phenomena in the Congo Evangelistic Mission, 1915–1976: A comparative evaluation from the Book of Acts*, MA Dissertation, NW University, Potchefstroom Campus.



Source: Bondo, M.G., 2017, *Recurrence of charismatic phenomena in the Congo Evangelistic Mission, 1915–1976: A comparative evaluation from the Book of Acts*, MA Dissertation, NW University, Potchefstroom Campus.

FIGURE 1: Number of members.

Source: Bondo, M.G., 2017, *Recurrence of charismatic phenomena in the Congo Evangelistic Mission, 1915–1976: A comparative evaluation from the Book of Acts*, MA Dissertation, NW University, Potchefstroom Campus.

FIGURE 2: Number of local churches from 1915 to 2015.

Spirit ensures the continuity of God's salvation through the mission of the church. For this reason, the contemporary church requires a paradigm shift in its mission. Hence, it is pertinent that the Pentecostal church continues to give cognisance to the role of the Holy Spirit by prioritising the charismatic phenomena as a fundamental catalyst for the continuous growth and perpetuation of the *missio Dei* in the church.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express profound gratitude to Professor J. (Hans) Kommers and Professor Dick Mwamba Kanonge for their valuable guidance.

Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exist.

Authors' contributions

All authors contributed equally to this work.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for carrying out research.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

References

- Anderson, A., 2007, *Spreading fires: The missionary nature of the early Pentecostalism*, SCM, London.
- Barrett, D.B., 1982, *World Christian Encyclopaedia: A comparative study of churches and religions in the modern world AD 1900–2000*, Oxford University Press, Nairobi.
- Bauckham, J., 1996, *James and Gentiles (Acts 15:1–21)*, in B. Witherington (ed.), *History, literature, and society in the book of Acts*, pp. 154–184, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Bondo, M.G., 2017, *Recurrence of charismatic phenomena in the Congo Evangelistic Mission, 1915–1976: A comparative evaluation from the Book of Acts*, MA Dissertation, North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus.
- Bruce, F.F., 1988, *The book of the Acts*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Burton, W.F.P., 1927, 'The country of the Baluba in Central Katanga', viewed 11 June 2015, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1782058>.
- Burton, W.F.P., 1933, *God working with them: Eighteen years of Congo Evangelistic Mission history*, Victory Press, London.
- Burton, W.F.P., 1947, *Mudishi, Congo hunter*, Victory Press, London.
- Burton, W.F.P., 1961, *Luba religion and magic in custom and belief*, Musée royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Belgique.
- Burton, W.F.P., 1967, *Quand Dieu travaille avec eux*, Grezieu la Varenne, Association viens et vois, chemin de la garde, Craponne.
- Elwell, W.A. & Beitzel, B.J., 1988, 'Judgment', in W.A. Elwell (ed.), *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Fee, G.D., 1987, *The first epistle to the Corinthians*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Ferngren, G.B., 1992, 'Early Christianity as a religion of healing', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 66, 1–15.
- Garrard, D.J., 2008a, *The history of the Congo Evangelistic Mission/Communauté Pentecôtiste au Zaïre from 1915 to 1982*, vol. 1, *The Colonial Years 1915–1959*, Mathersey Hall, Mathersey.
- Garrard, D.J., 2008b, *The history of the Congo Evangelistic Mission/Communauté Pentecôtiste au Zaïre from 1915 to 1982*, vol. 2, *Post-independence 1960–1982*, Mathersey Hall, Mathersey.
- Garrard, D.J., 2012, 'Burton's early years of ministry and doctrine under the auspices of the PMU', *The Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 32(1), 7–18. <https://doi.org/10.1179/jep.2012.32.1.002>
- Hodgson, E., 1946, *Out of the darkness: The story of an indigenous church in the Belgian Congo*, Assemblies of God Publishing House, London.
- Keener, C.S., 2013, *Acts: An exegetical commentary*, 3:1–14:28, vol. 2, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Liardon, R., 2013, *The Smith Wigglesworth prophecy and the Great Revival of all time*, Withaker House, Sarasota.
- Malcomson, K., 2008, *Pentecostal pioneers remembered*, viewed 11 October 2019, from <http://www.pentecostalpioneers.org/WilliamBurton.html>.
- Maxwell, D., 2008, *The soul of the Luba: W.F.P. Burton, Missionary Ethnography and Belgian Colonial Science*, viewed 16 October 2019, from <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ghan20>.

- McGee, G.B., 1988, 'The Azusa Street Revival and twentieth-century mission', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 12(12), 58–61, viewed 08 November 2016, from <http://ibm.sagepub.com/content/12/2/58>.
- Moorhead, M.W., 1922, *Missionary pioneering in Congo forests: A narrative of the labors of William F.P. Burton and his companions in the native villages of Luba-Land*, viewed 05 June 2016, from <http://www.archive.org/details/missionarypioneer00burt>.
- Peterson, D.G., 2009, *The acts of the apostles*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Rochette, J., 2003, *Regard et guérison, présence nouvelle du Christ à son Église dans la «diaconie de l'apostolat» (Actes 1, 25)*, viewed 20 December 2016, from <http://www.nrt.be/docs/articles/2003/125-2/565Regard+et+guérison,+présence+nouvelle+du+Christ+à%C2%A0+son+Église>.
- Stanley, M.B. & Edouard, M.V., 2003, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and charismatic movement*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Theuvs, T., 1958, 'Croyance et culte chez les Baluba', *Présence Africaine, Nouvelle Série* 18(19), 23–32, viewed 01 November 2016, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24345512>.
- Van Oort, J., 2012, 'The Holy Spirit and the early church: The experience of the Spirit', *HTS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies* 68(1), #Art. 1154, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v68i1.1154>
- Womersley, H., 1974, *Congo miracle: Fifty years of God's working in the Congo (Zaire)*, Victory Press, Eastbourne.
- Womersley, D. & Garrard, D.J., 2005, *Into Africa: The thrilling story of William Burton and Central African Missions*, Central African Missions, England.
- Whittaker, C., 1983, *Seven Pentecostal pioneers*, Marshall Morgan & Scott, London.
- Whittaker, C., 1984, *Great revivals*, Marshall Morgan & Scott, London