

Ezra Chitando, Masiwa Ragies Gunda, Joachim Kügler (Eds.)

PROPHETS, PROFITS AND THE BIBLE IN ZIMBABWE

Festschrift for Aynos Masotcha Moyo



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edited by

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DEDICATION

This volume is dedicated to Dr Aynos Masotcha Moyo on his retirement from active academic service. Dr Moyo taught New Testament Studies at the University of Zimbabwe (and its numerous Associate Colleges) for so many years. His commitment to academic excellence, acknowledgement of the role of the Bible in the lives of communities and mentorship of students and colleagues is appreciated by many. Academics never retire; they carry the quest for knowledge in various other ways! Together with so many colleagues and disciples the editors and contributors of this Festschrift wish to express their deep gratitude.

AD MULTOS ANNOS!





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CHAPTER 1

Ezra Chitando, Masiwa Ragies Gunda & Joachim Kügler

Introduction

Back to the Future! A Reader on the Bible, Prophets and Profits in Zimbabwe

From about 2009 to the time of writing, Zimbabwe has been under the grip of a ‘prophetic craze.’ Young Pentecostal church founders emerged on the scene, preaching the gospel of prosperity and having miracles of varying levels of sophistication attributed to them. Operating predominantly from urban centres (especially Harare, the capital) and having Pan-African connections (‘spiritual fathers’ from West Africa), these young prophets transformed the religious landscape in a fundamental way. Although responses to their presence are often diametrically opposed, with some acknowledging them as being ‘truly of God’ and others dismissing them as ‘gospelpreneurs’ who are after money, there is a general consensus that scholars from biblical and religious studies must invest in studying them.

This volume is a response to the need for African scholars in biblical and religious studies to be contextually relevant by focusing on religious phenomena found in Africa. It is incumbent upon African scholars, especially those operating from publicly funded institutions, to seek to clarify phenomena found in their contexts. Zimbabwean scholars in biblical and religious studies answered to this call by submitting chapters on the theme of prophets and prophecy in the contemporary period. Although their chapters are by no means definitive, given the complexity of the issue under investigation and its capacity to mutate quickly, they have provided a valuable entry point into scholarly discourses on Zimbabwean Pentecostalism, the prophetic phenomenon, the deployment and interpretation of the Bible, the media and prophecy, prophets and gender, and other related themes.

How, then, does this volume further knowledge on prophets in Zimbabwe? First, there is a clear appreciation of the centrality of the Bible to debates on prophets in Zimbabwe. Fundamentally, this is because of two related processes. In the first instance, the young prophets present

themselves as standing in the line of the prophets of old, specifically those in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. They deploy the Bible as a defence and maintain that their exploits are “biblical.” However, the term “biblical” is elastic and has been appropriated to support varied beliefs and practices. In the second place, they insist that their exploits are based on the New Testament promises that the followers of Jesus would be able to accomplish stupendous miracles. The Bible, therefore, looms large in discourses on prophets and their attendant miracles in Zimbabwe (and elsewhere).

The Bible is one of Zimbabwe’s most popular texts. Its value can be seen in how some people swear by it in ordinary conversations; “*Bhaibheri kudai!*” (I swear by the Bible!). It is regarded as a repository of sacred truth and its invocation is designed finalise arguments. The Bible provides solace to those in mourning and its promises are recalled to students writing examinations. The Bible is not an ordinary text: its reading fortifies new houses and protects those embarking on journeys. When the Bible speaks, Zimbabwean Christians listen intently. It will not matter that it will speak in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways: the Bible would have spoken! Popular musicians such as Paul Matavire will cite the Bible to show how Eve brought sin into world and wonder why Adam did not put up a stronger defence when his charge sheet was being read out to him. Gospel musicians such as Fungisayi Zvakavapano will cite the Bible to remind Zimbabweans that they are God’s chosen people. Politicians such as President Robert Mugabe will remind hearers of the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, while the Highlanders coach, Kelvin Kaindu will placate restless supporters by reminding them that the Bible proclaims that “it shall be well.”

Can the miracles attributed to the prophets be from God? Are they true prophets in the first instance? By the way, is it possible for false prophets to accomplish mighty deeds? Can the upsurge in the gospel of prosperity be consistent with the original message of Jesus? Must Christians take keen interest in how their tithes are used, or should they simply trust the “men of God?” What does God say about touching His anointed ones? Why are the young prophets almost exclusively male? Is the wife of a prophet (called) a prophetess? Should Christians pray for political leaders, even when most citizens feel stifled? To answer these pressing and other questions, most Zimbabweans would “download” their Bibles from the highest shelf and ask it to speak. This volume rec-

ognises this centrality of the Bible by prioritising chapters that examine the role of the Bible in explicating the prophetic phenomenon in Zimbabwe. Other chapters also have this background in mind, even as they explore additional but relevant themes.

Second, this volume highlights the value of embracing multidisciplinary perspectives to the study of religion. The study of the Bible must be accompanied by a patient and systematic examination of the larger context in which the same text, the Bible, is read. One's interpretation of the prophetic phenomenon, for example, is likely to be informed by the media's approach to prophets and their activities. Consequently, it is vital for one to be aware of the media's stance towards prophets. How newspapers, creative writers, theatre practitioners, cartoonists and other communicators portray prophets will influence one's understanding of prophets. One, therefore, does not come to the Bible empty: one already possesses a prior reading of the prophets, well before one reads what the Bible says about prophets! Chapters in this volume address this reality by providing details regarding the larger context within which the Bible is read in Zimbabwean discourses on prophets and prophetic activities.

Third, chapters in this volume touch on most of the topical issues relating to prophets and prophecy in Zimbabwe. These are connected to the contestation around the authenticity of the prophets, their age, miracles, prosperity message and the political dimension. The authors have provided illuminating summaries of the discussions relating to these issues. They have also offered fresh perspectives on these issues. The neglect of the phenomenon by Zimbabwean biblical and religious studies scholars has been frustrating. This volume goes some way towards addressing this limitation. It is envisaged that other projects focusing on specific aspects relating to prophets and prophecy in Zimbabwe shall be pursued.

The Bible, Prophets and Prophecy: The Chapters

Contributors to this volume come from a variety of disciplines and perspectives. As editors, we encouraged the participation of scholars from diverse disciplines, as well as theological perspectives. The earlier chapters focus more directly on the Bible and its relevance to debates on prophets and prophecy in Zimbabwe. In this opening chapter, the editors, Ezra Chitando, Masiwa Ragies Gunda and Joachim Kügler intro-

duce the volume. Chapter two by Gunda and Francis Machingura explores the occurrence of the phrase, “man of God” in the Bible and is followed by Obvious Vengeyi’s discussion on whether the Bible can settle the “true and false prophecy” debate in Zimbabwe in chapter three. Chapter four by David Bishau provides methodological reflections on prophecy in African perspectives. Kudzai Biri and Lovemore Togarasei analyse Zimbabwean Pentecostal women as representing true prophets due to their commitment to nation building in chapter five.

In chapter six, Ezra Chitando probes attitudes towards the prosperity gospel in Zimbabwean gospel music, while in chapter seven Tarisayi A. Chimuka grapples with the morality of prophetic acts. In chapter eight Fainos Mangena and Samson Mhizha utilise ethics and psychology to address the issue of ethics in relation to prophets. In chapter nine Ezra Chitando, Molly Manyonganise and Obert B. Mlambo examine prophets from the perspectives of age and gender, while in chapter ten Tapiwa P. Mapuranga focuses on the significance of naming in the prophetic movement in Zimbabwe. Clive T. Zimunya and Joyline Gwara approach the phenomenon from an economic perspective in chapter eleven.

Despite its desire to project itself as thoroughly biblical, one of the abiding questions surrounding the prophetic movement in Zimbabwe has been its relationship to indigenous spirituality. In chapter twelve Nisbert T. Taringa contends that African Initiated Church (AIC) prophets are fundamentalists of African Traditional Religions, while in chapter thirteen Tabona Shoko and Agness Chiwara compare and contrast Emmanuel Makandiwa with traditional healers. Canisius Mwandayi picks up the same thread and analyses the ministry of a prophet from Gweru, one of the smaller cities in Zimbabwe, in chapter fourteen. In chapter fifteen Anna Chitando examines the portrayal of prophets in Zimbabwean literature, while in chapter sixteen Pauline Mateveke, Clemenciana Mukenge and Nehemiah Chivandikwa analyse the representation of Makandiwa in two Zimbabwean daily newspapers. In chapter seventeen Charity Manyeruke and Shakespear Hamauswa focus on prophets and politics and in chapter eighteen, Mapuranga, Ezra Chitando and Gunda reflect on multiple approaches to the study of the United Family International Church. Chapter nineteen completes the volume; from the perspective of oldest New Testament tradition Joachim Kügler looks at the role of the poor in modern Christianity.

Overall, the chapters in this volume confirm the statement that the Bible has become an “African book” indeed, which remains at the centre of African Christianity in its various manifestations. The importance attributed to the Bible by African societies of today is not limited to the realm of church, but is reaching out to daily living as well as to arts, economy and politics.¹ In the specific case of Zimbabwe, the emerging but forceful Pentecostal prophetic movement has demonstrated high levels of sophistication in its transactions with the Bible. However, in order to do justice to the complexity of the phenomenon of prophets and prophecy, there is need to cull the wider context in which the various actors are located. Consequently, contributors from diverse disciplines have sought to clarify the phenomenon from within their disciplinary axioms. What is clear, however, is that while demonstrating technological sophistication in the contemporary period, the key actors in the drama are also falling back on an ancient document for justification. Indeed, it is “back to the future!”

¹ In a way we continue here the work of two earlier volumes in our series: Masiwa Ragies Gunda & Joachim Kügler (Eds.), *The Bible and Politics in Africa* (BiAS 7), Bamberg: UBP 2012; and: (same Eds.), *From text to practice. The role of the Bible in daily living of African people today* (BiAS 4), 2nd ed., Bamberg: UBP 2013.



CHAPTER 2

Masiwa Ragies Gunda & Francis Machingura

The “Man of God”

Understanding Biblical Influence on Contemporary Mega-Church Prophets in Zimbabwe

Abstract

Different names are used to refer to various religious functionaries across the World Religions. In Zimbabwean Christianity, there is a group of Christian officials who are currently popularly known as “men of God.” This article argues that this title is one of the many influences of the Bible on contemporary Christianity, since its use is dependent on its biblical usage, especially regarding the extra-ordinary and miraculous events surrounding Elijah and Elisha. The title is used eighty times in the Christian Bible and seventy-nine of these are in the Old Testament. In our analysis of both its Old Testament and contemporary usage, the title is used to acknowledge the qualitative difference between all human beings and the few men (and women) who are specially chosen to be God’s representatives. These specially chosen functionaries are more than simply human, and do more than simple human beings do. “Man of God” is understood as a continuation of biblical traditions.

Introduction

The advent of prophets in Zimbabwean Christianity can be traced back to the early decades of the twentieth century, during the period that African Initiated Churches were founded and planted across Zimbabwe. The most prominent among these prophets were Samuel Mutendi of the Zion Christian Church, Johanne Marange of the African Apostolic Church as well as Johanne Masowe of the Apostolic Sabbath Church of God (Daneel 1971:339, Mukonyora 1998:191-207, Gunda 2012:335-36). Since then, every generation of African Christians, with special reference to Zimbabwean Christians, has seen its own prophets. Some of these prophets have continued in the heritage of these pioneering prophets of AICs while others have added on to the heritage, especially when one focuses on Zimbabwean Pentecostal prophets. This latter

brand of prophets in Zimbabwe was locally popularized by Ezekiel Guti, founder and leader of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa, Forward in Faith (ZAOGA FIF). However, the current discussions surrounding prophets and prophecy in Zimbabwe are largely inspired by another brand of Pentecostal prophets, the mega-church prophets. Among this class are Emmanuel Makandiwa and Uebert Angel, founders of the United Family International Church and the Spirit Embassy respectively.

There is so much that has captured the imagination of Zimbabweans when one looks at these two leading figures among the mega-church prophets currently operating in Zimbabwe: from their lavish and materially extravagant lifestyles, including the latest and very expensive cars such as a Lamborghini and Bentley for Angels and a Mercedes S600 for Makandiwa. These prophets also claim to possess spiritual healing powers that few can rival, and to being able to bless followers materially, including the so-called “miracle money”¹ where followers find money in their pockets and bank accounts (*Daily news*, 06 February 2013; *Newsday*, 16 January 2013; *Newsday*, 08 January 2013; <http://nehandaradio.com/category/news/page/5/>; *The Herald*, 05 January 2013; *Newsday*, 30 January 2013; *The Standard*, 06 January 2013) that cannot be accounted for through normal accounting procedures. Makandiwa has also come up with his “miracle weight loss”² where the prophet commands fat to burn and people instantly lose weight (*The Sunday Mail*, 13 February 2013). Makandiwa has also been associated with miracle babies where it is reported that the United Family International Church leader assisted a couple to conceive and give birth after three days (*The Herald*, 21 Febru-

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- 1 Miracle money remains unexplained! There are claims, however, of people finding money in their pockets, which they did not have previously. Such claims are also made regarding bank account balances, where accounts are believed to be credited with money that cannot be accounted for through normal accounting procedures. In a meeting with the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, Makandiwa and Angel appeared to suggest that all they do is recover lost money and return it to its rightful owners, which seems to contradict the initial claims surrounding miracle money.
 - 2 Miracle weight loss is among the claims being made by the mega-church superstar prophets. People who have allegedly battled weight problems are prayed for and their excess fats are commanded by word of mouth to burn instantly. Interestingly, in one of the videos, it appears that only women lose weight and only from their waist downwards since only skirts were visibly oversized while their tops remained of the right size.

ary 2013). All these are interesting facets of this new brand of prophets in Zimbabwe; however, this study focuses on another aspect which has a bearing on all the claims we have just highlighted above. These prophets are among the few religious functionaries in Zimbabwe who use the title “man of God” extensively and exclusively either through self-propagating or by accepting the title when it is used by their followers. This study therefore traces the biblical roots of the phrase “man of God” and investigates how the biblical texts on “man of God” have influenced the self-understanding and claims being made by Zimbabwean prophets.

“Man of God” in the Bible: statistical analysis

The phrase “man of God” occurs eighty times in the Christian Bible. Of the eighty times that this phrase is used, only once is it used in the New Testament, precisely in 1 Tim. 6:11. The New Testament text (1 Tim. 6:11) seems not to have found favour with the Zimbabwean ‘men of God’ due to the insinuations of the text especially the preceding verses. The text, especially 1 Timothy 6:9-10, outlines what the “man of God” should guard against by saying

⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs. ¹¹ But as for you, man of God, shun all this; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness (1 Tim. 6:9-10 ^{RSV}).

As the only text in the New Testament that talks about the “man of God”; the text, unfortunately, is in bad taste for many “men of God” whose messages predominantly focus on the prosperity gospel (Machingura, 2011:212). It is our contention therefore that the use of the title ‘man of God’ for contemporary religious functionaries in Zimbabwe is not overly dependent on this New Testament understanding, especially since those using it seem to also be the gospel of prosperity preachers.

While the phrase “man of God” is only used once in the New Testament, it is predominantly used in the Old Testament. Interestingly, it is the Old Testament portrayal of the “man of God” that appears to be the basis upon which some individuals in Zimbabwe claim to be “men of God”. The distribution of the phrase “man of God” is interesting to observe. Following the canonical arrangement of the books, the phrase

appears for the first time in Deut. 33:1 with reference to Moses. Interestingly, this is the only time that this phrase is used in the Pentateuch, a section of the Old Testament that is largely concerned with the law of the Lord. It then appears again once in Joshua (14:6) and twice in Judges (13:6, 8). In Joshua the reference is once again to Moses while in Judges it is used with reference to the angel of God who announced the birth of Samson. In short, the phrase “man of God” is used four times in the first seven books of the Old Testament. There are five references to “man of God” in 1 Samuel (2:27; 9:6, 7, 8, 10) and it occurs seven times in 1 and 2 Chronicles (1 Chr.23:14, 2 Chr.8:14; 11:2; 25:7, 9; 30:16). In these texts, it is used to refer to Moses, David and some prophets. It also occurs once in Ezra (3:2) and twice in Nehemiah (12:24, 36) where it is used with reference to Moses and David respectively. There is also reference to Moses the “man of God” in Psalm 90:1 as well as Igdaliah the “man of God” in Jeremiah 35:4. These uses amount to twenty-one uses out of the seventy-nine occurrences in the Old Testament, the remaining occurrences are limited to the books of Kings where the phrase occurs fifty-eight times.

In these fifty-eight occurrences, there is reference to Shemaiah, a prophet (1Kgs. 12:22), while the phrase occurs frequently in 1 Kgs.13 (vss. 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 19, 21, 23, 26, 29, 31) as well as in 2 Kgs. 23: 16 and 17 where it is used to designate the unnamed man of God who came from Judah. This unnamed “man of God” is credited with making prophecies against Bethel and foretelling the coming of King Josiah centuries later (Crenshaw 1971:41-2, Cogan and Tadmor 1988:299-300). There is also reference to another unnamed man of God in 1 Kgs. 20:28. The title “Man of God” appears in several texts (1Kgs.17:18, 24; 2Kgs.1:9, 10, 11, 12, 13) as a designation of Elijah and as a designation of Elisha in 2 Kgs. 4: 7, 9, 16, 21, 22, 25, 27, 40, 42; 5: 8, 14, 15, 20; 6: 6, 9, 10, 15; 7: 2, 17, 18, 19; 8: 2, 4, 7, 8, 11; 13: 19. While the “man of God” who came from Judah is only identified through this phrase, however, the manner in which this phrase is used for Elijah and Elisha coupled with the popularity of these figures in Christian communities means our investigation of the influence of the biblical “man of God” on contemporary men of God should largely focus on these two individuals. Of the fifty-eight times that the phrase occurs in Kings, on thirty-four occasions it is with reference to either Elijah or Elisha, and it is often qualified by extraordinary demonstrations of miraculous power.

“Man of God” in the Bible: Characterizations

The title “man of God” is one among many titles that are applied to a select group of individuals alongside and as interchangeable to “prophet”, “seer” and “prophethess”, especially in the story of the lost donkeys of Saul where Samuel (1 Sam. 9:6-10) is described as prophet, seer and man of God (Lamb 2010:176). From this background it is apparent that the title “man of God” is not a general designation for all created beings but rather an exclusive title for the few “men (possibly women also)” who stand in a very intimate and close relationship with God. Indeed, “the man of God is a specially set aside individual who is essentially a manifestation of the divine hence protected by the divine and in instances where such divinity is not respected, the divine reserves the right to avenge” (Gunda 2012:345). This makes sense when one considers that in the entire Pentateuch; only Moses is labelled man of God. A closer analysis of Deut. 33:1 shows that “the superscription uses the phrase ‘the man of God’ to refer to Moses as does Joshua 14:6 and Ps. 90. The same title is frequently used of “prophets or messengers of God” (Driver 1973:389). Texts that refer to Moses as “man of God” clearly show that there is some qualitative difference between Moses and all other Israelites. Moses is different, he relates differently with God and he accesses God differently from all other created beings. It is this difference between Moses and ordinary men and women that mark him out as man of God.

“Man of God” is an outstanding individual, an “*Übermensch*” (Glover 2006:452) suggesting an individual who is literally “above men”. This is a title that places some mortals above other mortals, especially because of the things that they can accomplish. Chapter 33 of Deuteronomy is labelled the Blessing of Moses and it consists of a series of benedictions pronounced upon the different tribes of Israel (even though Simeon is not recognized) (Driver 1973:385). Moses stands as the founding father blessing his descendants, and this comes after he had received the law from Yahweh and had passed on the same to the Israelites. The law that is interchangeably called the Law of the Lord or the Law of Moses is central in understanding why Moses is qualified as “man of God”. No other individual had been this close to God! Being “above men”, “Moses thereby gives to each tribe his own gift of divine understanding and power, and at the same time the diverse gifts and characteristics of each tribe are recognized and affirmed to be gifts of God” (Clements

1998:534). This is similarly important that the blessings given by Moses are as good as blessings given by God because the man of God stands for God, his actions are God's actions.

This understanding of "man of God" is equally attested in the Elijah and Elisha narratives. The outstanding nature of Elijah is suggested in insinuations that "supports the suspicion that where Elijah, life or speech are, YHWH is never far away" (Glover 2006:450). Yahweh, the God of Israel, is always hovering around the "man of God", suggesting that proximity to the "man of God" is essentially proximity to Yahweh. This creates the impression that Elijah "will stride the earth like some Yahwistic *übermensch*, unperturbed by the droughts and distances of earth. He is the prophet who 'stands before the Lord.' The words of Elijah and YHWH share a common authority and ability to shape the future" (Glover 2006:452, 453). The things that constrain men and women cannot constrain the man of God who is essentially standing under the shadow of God, sharing in the authority of God, which gives him the power to command the "jar of meal not to be emptied and the jug of oil not to fail until the day that the lord sends rain on the earth (1 Kgs. 17:14-24)" (Gunda 2012:346). The "man of God" represents life because God is life. As Glover observes, there is much symbiosis between Yahweh and "man of God" that it is difficult if not impossible to separate their effects on the community. "If the speech of Elijah and YHWH has a similar effect, so also does their presence. The story begins with an apparent association between YHWH and certain substances of nourishment—above all water. Their abundance (e.g. in the widow's house, 17.14-16) points to the presence of God. Their scarcity (e.g. the drought, 17.1-7) is suggestive of divine absence" (Glover 2006:453 cf. Gunda 2011:146). This is particularly important in searching for the effects of these narratives on contemporary manifestations, the "man of God" represents abundance wherever the "man of God" is present and the same applies to God.

In short, the title "man of God" is used to describe some outstanding individuals who are believed to have a special relationship with God. It is mostly used to refer to individuals who are sometimes called "prophets", "seers", and "visionaries." The title is used interchangeably with these other titles, especially in 1 Samuel 9. In the narrative of 1 Kings 13 as well as the Elijah-Elisha narratives, the title appears to be simply an equivalent of prophet. The man of God is associated with extraordinary

demonstration of miraculous power, which is seen as the result of being a direct representative of God (Gunda 2012:340). Being in the presence of the “man of God” is understood as being in the presence of God since the “man of God” possesses and uses the power of God.

The Influence of the “Man of God” Texts on Contemporary Prophets

While the authenticity and veracity of the Bible is roundly questioned in academic circles, African manifestations of Christianity (barring a few exceptions that disregard the Bible as being “stale food” such as the Johane Masowe groups (Engelke 2004)) has been thoroughly and extensively “biblical.” Most African Christians take their Bible seriously as the be-all in terms of deciding what they should do as Christians, if not in their actual daily lives then at least in public discussions. Biblical examples and injunctions are therefore actively sought to justify and rationalize what to do, how to do it, when to do it and why to do it. In such contexts, it should not be surprising therefore that contemporary claimants to the title “man of God” present themselves as descendants of the line of the specially chosen few who stood before God and who shared in God’s authority. In one incident Makandiwa was quoted in the print media confirming his election in one of his sermons when he said that (*The Herald*, 03 January 2013):

The Lord told me “Tell Zimbabweans to change their focus. Everyone is saying diamonds, diamonds, but I see another precious mineral for Zimbabwe ... gold will be picked up from the ground. Mysteriously gold will be appearing everywhere. As I was praying I saw a wind blowing and I saw gold coming to the surface. People are going to be picking up gold without any drilling. You know what they say about the water table? One has to dig first before accessing water, but with this one there is no drilling needed. Those people who have been looked down upon will be picking up gold like they are picking up stones. The Lord told me ‘This is for my people’,” said the UFIC spiritual father to wild applause.

The sermon on the night was premised on 2 Kings 7 where the lives of the Israelites were transformed from poverty to plenty in one day following the declaration of Elisha, the “man of God”. Makandiwa’s statement confirms what most of the Pentecostal Christians’ understanding of the Bible and the pastors involved in ministry as ‘mouthpieces and God’s representatives’. The contemporary claimants reject the idea of “the end

of inspiration” as contradicting the dictates of the Bible, the Word of God. In the Bible, it is clear that “after his dramatic victory over the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah is portrayed as spiraling into a suicidal depression, in the midst of which Yahweh informs him that he has chosen his successor” (Lamb 2010:172). In short, the understanding is that God intended to always have a representative or representatives among human beings, hence the choice of a successor for Elijah is not only specific, it is also representative. In reaching this observation we are indebted to earlier observations by Robert Carroll (1969:401) when he states: “The institution of prophecy was to be a continuous and permanent office constantly supplying the people of Israel with a covenant mediator who would recreate the role of Moses for the nation.” This understanding is critical in trying to understand the contemporary manifestations of Christian prophets both among AICs as well as among the Pentecostal movements.

As noted earlier, the biblical “man of God” is essentially more than simply a human being, he or she is divine-human being because he embodies an amalgamation of his mortal nature and the immortal nature of God, sharing in the fate of humanity yet exercising the power and authority of God. The performance of miracles and other such paranormal activities is understood in the context of their divinity. All things that God can do can be done by the “man of God” hence the idea that where the man of God is, God cannot be far away (Glover 2006:450). It is not surprising that, such ‘men of God’ attract big crowds as in the case of Makandiwa whose followers stampede in order to have access to the front seats in the auditorium where they will be closer to the ‘man of God’ (<http://www.intozimbabwe.com/top-news/zimbabwe/3016-18-injured-in-stampede-to-see-prophet-makandiwa.html>). In another incident, the Spirit Embassy Ministries Church founder, Uebert Angel had to abandon his food from a fast food outlet in Gweru and flee from members of the public, who had thronged the premises and started jostling to greet the “man of God” (*The Chronicle*, 24 October 2012). The popular preacher Uebert Angel and his body guards had to dash into their vehicles and flee, leaving their food which was still being prepared after members of the public swarmed the food outlet and started jostling to greet the Harare-based preacher-cum prophet. Those who managed to evade the human wall made by Prophet Angel’s bodyguards would kneel on the tarmac before greeting him. One of the few who had the chance to shake hands with Prophet Angel claimed that they were “blessed” as a

result of shaking hands with the “man of God” (*The Chronicle*, 24 October 2012). The man who appeared to have entered into a trance soon after shaking hands with Prophet Angel said “Thank God, I am now a new man. I am blessed to have been greeted by this great man of God”.

The people who flock around the “man of God” or who seek the presence of the “man of God” are in essence seeking the presence of God. In the case of Zimbabwe, prominent musicians like Leonard Karikoga Zhakata, gospel diva Joyce Simeti, Mahendere Brothers, Peter Moyo, Sulumani Chimbetu, Diva Mafunga and Biggie Tembo (Jnr) among many others have deserted their old churches to join thousands of people attending Makandiwa’s church (newsdzezimbabwe.com). Followers of the popular “men of God” have gone to the extent of putting stickers that identify them with their “men of God” on their cars, office chairs (where they usually sit) and their Bibles. It is now common in Harare to see private cars owned by for most of Makandiwa’s followers with stickers with the UFIC logo with words like “*Ndiri mwana wemuporofita* – I am a child of the prophet”. It is also interesting that, followers of the “man of God” as in the case of Makandiwa and Angel are very conservative, defensive and sometimes resort to abusive or threatening language whenever their “men of God” are criticized. Christine Vuta, who christened herself ‘*mwana wamuprofita* or child of the prophet’ did not take lightly to people who criticized Makandiwa and Angel on the ‘miracle baby of three days and miracle money episodes’ by saying:

I write as an ordinary member of United Family International Church (UFIC). I challenge the critics of my spiritual fathers to pray that they be granted the spirit of discernment so that they know the spirit behind these men of God. If you are [a] genuine Christian; then you will see that these servants of God are led by the spirit of truth. They are vessels (men of God) that the Lord has chosen to bring about spiritual revival in Zimbabwe. I have heard careless statements like ‘Makandiwa is neither God nor Jesus’. True but he has heeded the call by Jesus which he told his disciples in John 14:12. Why should people have problems when greater miracles are performed, for instance, instant weight loss and gold appearing in peoples’ hands? (*The Sunday Mail*, 24 February-2 March 2013).

Vuta, just like many followers of these Pentecostal mega-churches, regards what the “men of God” miraculously do as fulfillment of the ‘word of God’. Takura Mukwati (*The Herald*, 10 July 2012; *The Herald*, 26 Feb-

ruary 2013), a pastor in the UFIC, was quoted in *The Herald* threatening those who criticized Makandiwa by saying:

Born of a prophet, in this article, I am going to answer a bit of this question. A prophet is a man of insight to the will and purposes of God (Amos 3 v 7). A prophet is a man who sits in the cabinet with the Almighty and can hear the discussions of heaven and can bring them to men. Our father in the Lord Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa, in United Family International Church, is a typical example of a prophet of that calibre whom the Lord has given to us as a gift. He is amongst the Prophets who are the eyes and minds of God, members of the heavenly cabinet. That is why there is always a violent reaction from the heavens when his prophets (Makandiwa included) are touched, embarrassed, harassed, persecuted or killed. Touching a prophet is a shortcut to the grave according to Psalms 105: 14-15, graves of sicknesses, poverty, misfortunes, even spiritual and physical death.

If in times past, Elijah's deeds were a confirmation of the spoken word of God; contemporary "men of God" see themselves or are seen by their followers as being legitimized through the written word of God while at the same time they authenticate the word of God. Josephine Chuma (*Daily news*, 07 August 2012) adds her voice by claiming that:

Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa is a real man of God. He does not claim to have powers but he has got the power of God. He has been anointed by God to deliver people who believe in God from the evil works of the devil. Those who believe have been made to prosper in all aspects of their lives including health, finances, education only to name a few. The anointing upon Prophet Makandiwa involves a multiplicity of blessings which includes wisdom, favour, honour and protection from evil forces and misfortunes.

And in most cases the authentication of their inextricable connection to the divine is through the performance of miracles as witnessed at Makandiwa and Angel's Church services (*Daily news*, 26 June 2011; *Newsday*, 10 August 2012). According to Pastor Ndhlovu of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe (interviewed, 19 February 2013), the danger that we have today is that of people who think we can relive the world of the Old Testament "men of God". For him, the calibre of prophets we have are 'fake, hucksters and empire builders' who hide behind the Bible to milk unsuspecting people. Antonia Sigauke (interviewed, 18 February 2013) posed the following questions in response to threats that are usually churned out by followers of the Zimbabwean "men of God":

Why should prophets not be questioned? When they become prophets, do they cease to be human beings and become infallible? This is setting a dangerous precedent of not subjecting the prophets to the test of scripture and soundness according to the word of God. Why should the prophets be afraid of being questioned? Why is it some of them get arrested for committing heinous crimes like: rape, theft and murder?

Critics of the contemporary “men of God” find it very difficult to reconcile the influence of the “man of God” texts on the contemporary Zimbabwean prophets, especially when it comes to their flashy lifestyles in the context of the poverty of their followers. Yet followers of such “men of God” see it differently. Not only does the man of God read the text of the Bible, he acts it out in his own words and the followers become the recipients of the benefits of the presence of the divine, which is characterized by the abundance of health, wealth and well-being (Glover 2006:453). The followers and those in the presence of the man of God; “witness to the inexhaustible jar of meal and jug of oil in their own lives” (1 Kgs.17) (Gunda 2012:346). This text is re-enacted week in, week out until the followers start proclaiming to themselves, to the man of God and to others who stand outside: ‘Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth’(1 Kgs.17:24). Such texts are read to show what God did through a chosen vessel, in a way that convinces the followers and listeners of the authenticity of what the contemporary prophet is going to do in the name of God. Elijah and the contemporary prophet are similar, they are specially chosen by God and they need each other. The Biblical narrative legitimizes the current prophet but the current prophet makes an unbelievable Biblical narrative believable by re-enacting it” (Gunda 2012:346). The motto for the contemporary man of God is simple, the unbelievable is godly! (Gunda 2011:147). The same motto has become the slogan for the majority of followers in these mega churches where the ‘men of God’ are regarded as ‘friends of God’ who know the mind of God.

Concluding Observations

Among the many titles that are being appropriated by contemporary prophets in Zimbabwe is the title “man of God”. While it has always been used by Christians, it appears that its use was given a new lease of life by Pentecostal religious functionaries. Within Zimbabwe, the role of

Guti in popularizing this title cannot be overstated. However, the rise of a class of mega-church superstar prophets at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century in Zimbabwe made this title even more popular. Ordinary Christians excite their prophet into prophesying by consistently urging him on using the title “man of God.” It is a title that acknowledges that some men and women are in a better position to commune with God than others. These privileged individuals can become bridges that help others cross flooded rivers between their sinful lives and the holy lives demanded by God.

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CHAPTER 3

Obvious Vengeyi

Zimbabwean Pentecostal Prophets

Rekindling the “True and False Prophecy” Debate

Abstract

Since around 2009, Zimbabwe has witnessed an unprecedented surge of Christian preachers who call themselves prophets/esses. Characteristically, these so-called prophets/esses claim to work miracles; especially miracles that ‘contradict’ nature. This has earned them multitudes of both admirers and critics. Interestingly, while admirers and followers quote the Bible to endorse them as true prophets, critics and sceptics also cite the same Bible to characterise them as false prophets. The purpose of this article is to prove that by appealing to the Bible, both camps are wrong. The Bible does not have watertight criteria to distinguish true from false prophets. In other words, there is no distinction between a true and a false prophet in the Bible because fundamentally they are both called prophets! The article claims that the Bible is the source of confusion and not the solution to the debate regarding the distinction between true and false in the contemporary world.

Introduction

Zimbabwe has recently seen not only an increase in the number of Christian movements that have so far radically transformed the Christian landscape, but it has also seen an eruption of a phenomenon of ‘prophets’ that perform ‘strange’ miracles. From 2009, names that include, prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa and wife, prophetess Ruth of United Family International Church, Uebert Angel and wife, prophetess Beverly, prophet Tavonga Vutabwashe of Heartfelt International Ministries, prophet Passion Java and wife prophetess Yasmin of Kingdom Embassy, prophet Adventure Mutepfa (Revival Centre World Ministry), prophet Oliver Chipunza and prophetess Makanyara (now late) of Apostolic Flame Ministries of Zimbabwe, have made news headlines. In media terminology, stories about their exploits could be regarded as the most trending. And their popularity is increasing by the day. Generating

much interest is their claim to perform ‘extra-ordinary’ miracles such as filling pockets, wallets and hands of believers with bank notes and gold nuggets. After prayer, followers open their eyes only to find their pockets and wallets full of money and gold nuggets in their palms. These prophets claim to heal any kind of sickness such as cancer, HIV, AIDS and even raise the dead. In full view of their congregations, some have caused people to instantly stop smoking, instantly lose weight up to 30kgs, and instantly grow full teeth that had long fallen. They usually confound their congregations by telling them their house numbers, cell phone numbers, Identity Numbers (IDs), car registration numbers and the colours of undergarments their followers would be wearing. Other ‘extra ordinary’ miracles include children being born only after three days or just hours of conception and increasing fuel in cars instead of it getting used up as one drives. They also specialise in making accurate predictions of events that will happen in the near and distant future. In short, their miracles follow closely those performed by West African Pentecostal prophets such as T.B. Joshua of Synagogue Church of All Nations, Pastor Chris Ayakhilome of Christ Embassy (both of Nigeria) and Victor Kusi Boateng of Ghana who is Makandiwa’s spiritual mentor, Godfather.

All these miracles and the doctrine of prosperity which is the anchor of their preaching are therefore not entirely unknown in Zimbabwe and in Africa at large. They have been heard of; even in the history of Christianity such events and teachings are not new. In fact, in the Bible, working miracles seems to be one of the preoccupations of Israelite prophets, especially pre-classical ones.¹ For instance, Abraham prayed for Abimelech and was instantly healed (Gen.20:7), Moses provided manna to hungry Israelites (Ex. 16:1ff), provided water out of the rock (Num. 20:11ff), at Zarephath Elijah miraculously increased flour and oil, instead of these commodities being used up (1 Kgs. 17:9-16) and he raised the dead (1 Kgs. 17:17-12), Elisha increased oil and one jar of oil filled several jars until there was no more empty jar (2 Kgs. 4:1ff). Jesus in the New Testament is also depicted as one who performed similar miracles. Zimbabwean prophets have therefore sought to closely follow these great Old Testament prophetic figures and Jesus. Their interest is to relieve, to re-enact the biblical times. In other words, they seek to dramatise

¹ Thomas Overholt, ‘Seeing is Believing: The Social Setting of Prophetic Acts of Power’, *JOT* Vol. 7, No.3 (1982), pp.3-31.

what they read in the Bible. Thus Zimbabwe has always been inundated with stories of miracle workers, who perform miracles similar to the ones these great men of God performed, from time to time.

Prophets in African Initiated Churches and traditional healers are known to perform such miracles. Followers of Prophet E.H. Gutu and wife prophetess Eunor of Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa Forward in Faith (ZAOGA-FIF), Andrew Wutawunashwe and wife, prophetess Ruth of Family of God Church (FOG) and Matthias and Mildred of Matthias and Mildred Church have also claimed that their leaders perform such miracles. But the popularity of such individuals never reached that of Makandiwa, Vutabwashe and Angel, who attract around 45 000 followers every Sunday service. This has never happened in the history of Christianity in Zimbabwe. People flock from as far as Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, and Mozambique to be ‘ministered’ to by these prophets. Some suspect that Makandiwa and Angel could be playing African magic acquired from either Nigeria or Ghana where such priests are common and one from Ghana has confessed that several pastors from across the globe including from Zimbabwe flock to him to get the magic to perform such miracles as making money. The Ghanaian magician claims that he makes ‘miracle money’ from nowhere.² Also, that the whole Zimbabwean society could concentrate on such individuals to the extent that even politicians, technocrats, economists discussed and consulted them is unprecedented in post-colonial Zimbabwe.³ Therefore, what is new is the popularity of the performers of such miracles and the rich pickings they get from these activities not the miracles.

In other words, the Zimbabwean society is abuzz with talk of their miraculous exploits. The discussions range from scepticism, outright dismissal of them as false prophets and their miracles as magic to admiration. At the centre of the arguments is the Bible. Those who dismiss

² Cf. ‘Miracle Money godfather speaks out’, *The Saturday Herald*, 23 February 2012, p.1; Felex Share, ‘Ghanaian n’anga claims on miracle cash stir debate’, *The Saturday Herald*, 2 March, 2013, pp.1,3.

³ Cf. Zimbabwe’s Finance Minister Mr Tendai Biti sarcastically asked prophet Makandiwa and prophet Angel to donate some of the miracle money into the government coffers (cf. ‘Biti dares miracle cash prophets’, *The Herald*, 5 January 2013); Dr Gideon Gono, the Governor of the Reserve Bank also consulted with them (cf. ‘Gono meets Makandiwa, Angel over miracle money’ ZBC News, 5 February 2013); Deputy Prime Minister, Prof A.G.O. Mutambara discussed them in parliament (cf. ‘Govt is not run on miracles: DPM Mutambara’, *The Sunday Mail*, 13 February 2013).

them as false prophets appeal to the Bible and those who absolutely believe them as true prophets also cite the Bible. Such texts as Mark 16:17-18 which claim that ‘and these signs will accompany those who believe... in my name they will drive out demons;...speak new tongues;.... they will pick snakes with hands;...will drink poison (but) it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people and they will get well’ and 1 Cor. 2:9, which says, ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God prepared for those who love him’ have often been cited by the followers in defence of their leaders. Also quoted often is John 14:12 which has Jesus promising disciples that, ‘anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will even greater things that these’.⁴ For the followers of these prophets, these scriptures are being fulfilled in the ministries and miracles performed by Vutabwashe, Makandiwa and Angel among others. The prophets at the centre of the discussion also cite the Bible to show that they are indeed true prophets, followers of Christ. The main import of this article is to dismiss the criteria set in the Bible as not sacrosanct in dealing with such a complex phenomenon as prophecy, let alone distinguishing true and false prophets. Evidence shall be drawn especially from the Old Testament.

Background to the “True and False Prophecy” Debate in Ancient Israel

The problems faced regarding the criteria to distinguish who is a true and who is a false prophet is not a modern phenomenon. It is maybe as old as the institution of prophecy itself. The Old Testament bears evidence of a society similar to our own; a society grappling with the determination of true from false prophecy. While in ancient Israel, the society was provoked by the existence of conflicting messages from people who both claimed to be prophets of God, in our contemporary society, the existence of men and women who perform ‘extra-ordinary’ miracles seems to spark the debate more than conflicting messages. The clashes between Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal (and 400 prophets of Asherah) at Mt. Carmel (1Kgs 18: 16-40), that of Micaiah ben Imlah and Zedekiah (1 Kgs 22:24) and the one between Jeremiah and Hananiah (Jer. 28) are convincing evidence not only to the fact that in Israel con-

⁴ Cf. Mrs Christine Vuta, ‘Critics need spirit of discernment’, *The Sunday Mail*, 24 February-2 March 2013, p.7.

flicting theological convictions between prophets was the source of contradictory messages but also that this ideological clash in most cases ended up in real physical clashes/fist-fighting and death.

Thus, prophetic conflict in Israel was not uncommon and the reasons for their clashes varied.⁵ According to Robert Carroll, while prophetic conflict had been part and parcel of the Israelite society maybe from as far back as its origins, the problem became acute towards the end of the Judean Kingdom in the sixth century BCE.⁶ As one prophet said one thing, another said the opposite. This became confusing to the society until theologians of the era took it as their responsibility to advise the society on the criteria to differentiate true and false prophets. Unfortunately, some of these theologians were interested parties in that they were prophets themselves. As such, they premised themselves as true and condemned as false whoever had a contrary theological or political ideology to theirs. While such prophets-cum theologians thought their criteria were objective and water-tight, the suggested criteria, as we look back, are very biased and can hardly solve the debate within our societies.

Be that as it may, this attempt at establishing criteria of authenticity of prophets in Israel is captured in literature by Deuteronomist theologians/editors (Deut 13:1-5; 18:15-22), Jeremiah (23:9-32) and Ezekiel (13). However, rather than solving the debate as regards to who exactly was a true prophet and who was a false one, the criteria set by the Deuteronomist theologians only provide very important insights into the dilemma that befell the society of Judah in trying to fish out false prophets from true prophets. And the same dilemma is on our societies. The criteria set by the Deuteronomists (and in the entire Bible) cannot help us solve the debate. While these criteria have been invoked as water-tight by some in our contemporary world, (in Zimbabwe in particular) in the debate relating to numerous Pentecostal preachers who are called prophets, the present article regards the criteria as having failed to really make a distinction between true and false prophets.

⁵ Cf. James L. Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*. BZAW, 124. Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 1971.

⁶ Cf. Robert P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed: Reactions and Responses to Failure in the Old Testament Prophetic Traditions*. Express Reprints, 1978, pp. 184-185.

Criteria set in the Book of Deuteronomy

The book of Deuteronomy offers maybe what could be the earliest and most comprehensive attempt by the society at establishing criteria to determine authentic and inauthentic prophets in Israel. For instance, in two separate but thematically related texts, Deuteronomy provides some criteria that have been cited over the ages as important for distinguishing true from false prophets, even in our midst. The first criterion proposed was 'speaking in the name of Yahweh'. A true prophet was to speak in the name of Yahweh. This criterion assumes that in Israel true prophets were messengers of Yahweh, hence were supposed to speak in his name. And they were supposed to invite listeners to worship Yahweh alone. Any prophet who spoke in the name of another god, or one who told the Israelite community to worship other gods beside Yahweh was to be stoned to death (Deut 13:1-5). In the contemporary world, and especially for the ordinary readers of the Bible, this criterion is clear and has the capacity to flush out false prophets from true prophets.

However, the matter of determining whether a prophet is true or false is not that simple. Prophecy as a phenomenon is very complex. The main weakness of this criterion is that in ancient Israel, it only may have catered for the difference between foreign prophets and Israelite prophets. Indeed, prophets of Baal most likely spoke in the name of Baal and those of Yahweh spoke in the name of Yahweh. What this means is that the criterion did not solve the problem among Israelite prophets who all claimed to speak for Yahweh, yet they had contradictory messages. The same is true in our modern society. All individuals who claim to be prophets speak in the name of God, even though their messages sometimes are contradictory. Under such circumstances, who could we call true and who is false?

The Criterion of Prediction and Fulfilment

It was maybe due to the above weakness that Deuteronomists included another criterion that had to be considered also in the determination of who is false and who is true; the criterion of prediction and fulfilment (Deut 13:1-5; 18:21-22). In this sense, Deuteronomy assumes that a true prophet must speak in the name of Yahweh and the prediction must come to pass in the manner so predicted. From the point of view of the Deuteronomist theologians, the criterion of speaking in the name of

Yahweh was supposed to be used simultaneously with that of prediction and fulfilment. If a prophet spoke in the name of Yahweh and predicted something which comes to pass, but goes ahead and calls upon the people to worship some other gods besides Yahweh, such a prophet was to be stoned (Deut 13:1-2). In the same manner, if he spoke in the name of Yahweh but the word was not fulfilled, such a prophet was to be regarded as a false prophet, hence was supposed to be stoned to death (Deut 13:5; 18:20). With these criteria, maybe no contemporary man or woman who claims to be prophet would be stoned. They all would be attested as true, for most of their predictions have come to pass. But at the same time, they would all be stoned, since some of their predictions have not been fulfilled. As noted in the introduction, most (but obviously not all) of the predictions by Zimbabwean prophets for example are accurate and come to pass as predicted. In fact, in Zimbabwe, those in support of Vutabwashe, Makandiwa and Angel believe that these individuals are true prophets because their predictions have come to pass.

Weaknesses of the Prediction and Fulfilment Criterion

Critiquing the two criteria proposed by the Deuteronomist theologians, Carroll is apt when he observed that, 'it was too oversimplified an approach to the complex matter of prophecy'.⁷ The criteria leave a lot of issues unattended to. Firstly, the criterion of prediction and fulfilment of events only caters for prophets who make short-term predictions, such as: tomorrow you will die, you will get money, or next week or next year there will be drought, etc. But, prophets who make long-term predictions were left 'unjudged' until such a time predicted has lapsed. But some of these predictions took generations to be fulfilled, hence caused a lot of anxiety in the society (Ezek 12:27). And by the time the prediction was fulfilled, the concerned prophet may have died. What this means is that, prophets who made long-term predictions would die false prophets. In other words, they only could be taken as true prophets by later generations who would have witnessed the fulfilment of their predictions. But again, it depended on the memory of the people from one generation to another; otherwise most of the predictions of these prophets would have been forgotten.

⁷ Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, p. 186.

The second weakness is that this criterion is self-contradictory. While according to these theologians, a prediction was supposed to be fulfilled maybe in the prophet's life time, some of these Deuteronomist theologians included in their history, long-term predictions; prophecies that were not to be fulfilled in the immediate future or in their life-time. For example, 1 Sam 2:31-36 predicts what is in the very distant future and not yet conceivable. 1 Kings 13:2 also indicates that the prediction was made so many years back and the society may have forgotten about it. Another incident is that found in 2 Kings 13:15-19, where Elisha made a prediction but died before the prediction was fulfilled (2 Kgs. 13:20). Thus when we use the criterion of fulfilment of prediction, Elisha died a false prophet. The same conclusion could be reached regarding Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10, Jeremiah made a prediction that Judah would be released from Babylonian slavery after seventy years. Basing upon the criterion of fulfilment of prediction, Jeremiah would only be proven as a true prophet after seventy years. And by that time Jeremiah and most, if not all the people who were his audiences would have died. In short, Jeremiah, according to this criterion, died a false prophet. The criterion has thus the propensity to dismiss as false all the prophets we have always regarded as true, such as Elisha, Jeremiah, Micah and Isaiah among others. Micah (5:5) and Isaiah (10:5) for example, predicted that Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Assyrians in the eighth century but Jerusalem was not destroyed by the Assyrians in the eighth century.⁸ It was destroyed instead by the Babylonians in 587, in the sixth century BCE. According to this criterion, Micah and Isaiah are false prophets.

A third weakness associated with the Deuteronomist theologians' criterion of prediction and fulfilment of prophecy is that it makes prediction the sole function of prophets. Of course prophets predicted and this is very pronounced in the Old Testament. In 1 Sam. 10:5 for example, Samuel predicted that Saul would come across a group of prophets, and it happened (1 Sam 10:10). In 1 Kings 11:26 Ahijah predicted the break of the kingdom and Jeroboam would be king over the northerners, Israel and it happened (1 Kgs. 12:20). Ahijah predicted that Jeroboam's ill son was going to die and it happened (1 Kgs. 14:12, 17) exactly as predicted. But equating prophecy with prediction is not always quite correct.

⁸ Cf. Todd Hibbard, 'True and False Prophecy: Jeremiah's Revision of Deuteronomy', *JSOT*, Vol. 35 No.3 (2011), pp. 339-358 (p.353).

Prophets were first and foremost preachers, whose preaching was intended to cause change of attitude and change of action from the audience. Herbert Bess is therefore right when he observes that ‘certainly the (Israelite) prophet did predict the future...but prediction (of the future) was not the larger part of prophecy; it was as much the prophet’s responsibility to interpret correctly the past and the present’.⁹ In other words, what they predicted may be offset by the change of behaviour of the people. In fact, most of the great prophets of Israel always connected their predictions of doom and gloom with hope and chance of repentance. They always wanted people to repent so as to avoid consequences which they predicted.

The fourth most important weakness of the criterion of fulfilment of prediction, as implied in Deuteronomy 13:1-5 especially is that even a false prophet could by chance predict what could come to pass. In other words, there was also a great chance that a prophet regarded as genuine might on occasion be false and the so called false prophet might speak the truth (1 Kgs. 13:18).¹⁰ This scenario was witnessed in many other instances in the history of Israel. A prophet regarded as true would be deceived by God to prophesy falsehoods. He, in other words, would be given a false revelation by God. 1 Kings 22 is the classic example of divine deception; the fact that God could lie to true prophets so as to achieve certain goals. In this case, King Ahab consulted 400 prophets on whether he has to go for war or not. They all encouraged him to go claiming that God was with the king to give him victory (1 Kgs. 22:6). Yet, the text is very clear that the 400 prophets had been lied to by God (1 Kgs. 22: 19-23). This means, had it not been the lying spirit from God that entered these prophets, they would have said the truth. In fact, it is clear that before this incident they always told the truth; they were true prophets. It also means after this incident they became false prophets or they became true prophets again. In other words, 1 Kings 22 makes a bold declaration that both a true prophet and a false prophet were mediums of the same God! What is also coming out of this text is that prophets are not responsible for their actions and speech. Therefore, they cannot be held accountable since they are only agents in the hand of God. This defeats Deut 13:5 which stipulates the death penalty to those who

⁹ S. H. Bess, ‘The Office of the Prophet in Old Testament Times’, *Grace Journal* Vol. 1. No. 1 (1960), pp. 7-12, (p.12).

¹⁰ Cf. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, p. 186.

prophesy falsehoods. Why would they be killed when they were truthfully serving God by lying?

The concepts of divine deception together with divine repentance provide some of the most likely avenues for understanding contradictions among Israelite prophets and even prophets in our midst. While the Israelite history shows that the divine (God) could deceive his prophets, His repentance also left his messengers, the prophets in limbo. In so many instances in the Bible we are told that God repented and did not do what he had promised to do (cf. Amos 7:3,6,). Although prophets were understood or understood themselves as social and religious critics in order to bring about reform, divine repentance always left them exposed as false prophets. The harsh tone with which prophets reacted to their unfulfilled predictions indicates that they were afraid of being labelled false prophets since the criterion of prediction and fulfilment was in full force. For example, when the people of Nineveh repented and turned away from their sinful ways, Yahweh decided to spare them (Jonah 3:4). However Jonah could not have it. Jonah is prepared to die than to live because people would call him a false prophet (Jonah 4:3b).¹¹ And Jonah had suspicion already before he went to Nineveh that Yahweh would not fulfil his words (Jonah 4:1,2). This is why initially he fled to Tarshish (Jonah 1:3). The same frustration with God's deception or repentance is evident in Jeremiah 20:7-10. If we apply the criterion of fulfilment of prediction, these prophets were false prophets. Thus the criterion is weak in that it does not leave room for both the divine and the society to repent.

In the light of divine deception and divine repentance, the criterion of fulfilment of prediction as a mark of true prophecy is rendered void. This becomes glaring when we consider 1 Kings 21:21-29. We encounter Elijah predicting disaster on the house of Ahab and the death of his wife Jezebel. As a way to fulfil the prediction by Elijah, in 2 Kings 9:1-13 Jehu is anointed by a son of a prophet who had been sent by prophet Elisha; that is, with divine approval. Elisha through the madman told Jehu to slaughter all the members of Ahab's family (2 Kgs 9:6), as had been predicted by Elijah earlier. And Jehu took the commission seriously and exterminated the house of Jehu as directed by the Lord (2 Kgs. 9:14-10:36). On the basis of the criterion of fulfilment of prediction, Elijah

¹¹ Cf. Hibbard, 'True and False Prophecy', p.357.

was a true prophet because his prediction was fulfilled. Yet in Hosea 1:4, a fellow Israelite prophet, Hosea is given a word by God to condemn Jehu for doing exactly what God had commanded through two great prophets, Elijah and Elisha, to massacre the house of Ahab in the Jezreel valley! Which is which? Who received the word from God? What this means is, a prophecy that was taken as true by an earlier generation may be interpreted in bad light by later generations. Or it means God changes his mind. While God thought what Ahab had done was wrong, he later felt that what he had commanded was wrong and he repented. But where does the repentance of God leave the prophets who were just used as instruments? Who was a true prophet between Elijah, Elisha and Hosea? With this set up, all were true prophets and all were false prophets!

According to Todd Hibbard, it was upon the weaknesses of the criterion of fulfilment of prediction that Jeremiah developed other supporting criteria to be considered in determining who is a true and who is a false prophet. The charges made by Jeremiah against his opponents/other prophets that he labelled false provide further criteria for distinguishing between prophets, but they are however not without their own problems. The first of such criteria is immorality, particularly sexual immorality (Jer 23:9-15). Thus, Jeremiah in Jeremiah 23:9ff but especially in Jeremiah 26-29 revised Deuteronomy 13:1-5 and Deuteronomy 18:18-20 which emphasise the criterion of fulfilment of prediction as *sine qua non* of prophecy.¹² For Jeremiah, moral uprightness is to be considered as well.

The Criterion of Morality

It is generally assumed that moral uprightness was expected of prophets if they had to be considered authentic in the Israelite society. Although it is not known exactly how prevalent this practice of sexual immorality was among prophets, the accusation is a strong one suggesting that this may have been a real cause for concern.¹³ According to Jeremiah any prophet who is immoral is a false one. True prophets must be morally upright. And this has influenced the way we judge men and women in

¹² Cf. Hibbard, 'True and False Prophecy', pp. 339-358.

¹³ Cf. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, p. 189.

our midst who claim to be messengers of God. Anyone who commits adultery or fornication is dismissed as a false prophet. And anything he or she says is not taken seriously. In Zimbabwe for instance, former Archbishop for Bulawayo diocese, Pius Ncube commanded great respect as a prophet of God until in 2007 when he was captured on surveillance camera committing adultery with a number of women. Since then, the Zimbabwean society generally does not regard him as a man of God anymore.

Be that as it may, the criterion can be dismissed as weak on the following grounds. First, we have prophets in the Israelite society who lived morally questionable lives; yet they are called true prophets and their words were revered. Hosea, for instance married a prostitute called Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim (Hos. 1:2,3). And it is explicit in the Bible that she was a prostitute, an adulterous woman. Therefore, by marrying Gomer, Hosea committed an immoral act before the Lord. It is not indicated in the Bible whether she stopped her immoral ways after marriage or not. But taking cue from the divorce and remarriage (Hos. 2-3), she continued her trade even after marriage. This suggests that Hosea lived an adulterous life. Yet, he was called a true prophet. Although it is possible that sexual immorality was not understood in the ancient Israelite society in the same way as we do today, Hosea's marriage to Gomer, a prostitute (Hos. 1-3) would have been condemned as immoral by his society (cf. Deut. 24: 2-4). Thus, with this criterion, Hosea is a false prophet, yet all of the readers of the Bible regard him as a true prophet. Actually modern preachers often refer to his book and even to the marriage itself as a very great lesson! In the same way, according to this criterion, Isaiah's sexual relations with a prophetess (Isa. 8:1-3) would have been condemned.¹⁴ Of course there are scholars who presume that this prophetess was his wife, but there is no indication in the Bible that Isaiah was married to this woman he had sexual relations with. It is possible that she was just a prophetess, whether she was married or not we do not know. The matter becomes worse if she was married. That means, Isaiah would have committed adultery.

Second, on the basis of this criterion, Isaiah can be regarded as false prophet because he walked naked for three years (Isa. 20:3). Although he was dramatising the message of Yahweh, nakedness was considered an

¹⁴ Cf. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, p. 192.

immoral act unless one was mad. Besides, it was a shameful thing to be naked throughout the biblical period (Gen. 3:7; 9:20ff; Rev. 3:18). Also, Elisha's cursing of the children was a horrendous act that resulted in the death of forty-two of them (2 Kgs 2:23-24). This constitutes a very immoral act that can be equated to terrorist acts. More so, the activities of Elijah and Elisha qualify them as mercenaries, yet they are not regarded as false prophets. They were associated more with bloodshed than life preservation. They caused various bloodbaths in Israel (1 Kgs 18:40; 2 Kgs 1:9-12; 9:10) to the extent that even later generations of prophets condemned their acts (Hos. 1:4). Surely men of God should have been known for good than for massacres!

Without realising the weaknesses of his criterion of moral uprightness, Jeremiah goes further to set other subsidiary criteria of morality that he thought could be used to differentiate true from false prophets. According to him, since they were immoral, false prophets lie, deceive people and steal oracles (Jer. 23:23-32) from true prophets; those prophets who have been in God's council. Basically, specific elements in the charge were criticisms of the techniques used to receive oracles by these prophets. They are accused of using dreams and borrowing or stealing each other's oracles. After stealing oracles, they would only appeal to the messenger formula that was common with true prophets, 'Thus says Yahweh....' (Jer. 23:31),¹⁵ as if they were sent by God. Although this criterion is quite attractive, it is fraught with weaknesses. In fact, all the criteria set forth in Jer. 23:9-32 still leave a lot to be desired. For example, while Jeremiah positions himself as morally upright, he can himself be dismissed as false. In Jer. 38:24-27, he lied to protect King Zedekiah. Various other prophets still would fall by the way side. Micaiah ben Im-lah also deceived King Ahab that he was going to win so he should go up and put up a fight with Syria (1 Kgs. 22:16). He only could tell the truth after some pestering; otherwise he was prepared to lie so as to speak the same word with other prophets. He had heeded advice from King Ahab's messenger who told him not to speak against the word of other prophets that the king had consulted earlier. With this same criterion, Elisha would be dismissed for using deception against Ben-Hadad (2 Kgs. 8:7-15).

¹⁵ Cf. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, p. 190.

After all, the accusation that other prophets of Jeremiah's era were preaching lies and deceit would only make sense if they deliberately chose to lie and deceive people. Yet, it is clear from other biblical texts (Ezek 13; 14:1-11; Deut. 13:3) that these people may have been honestly preaching what they without any doubt considered to be truth. In other words, their visions may have been false, but without realising it themselves or without them intentionally designing to preach falsehoods.¹⁶ As we noted above with the 1 Kings 22 incident, a true prophet could be deceived by God to lie. According to Carroll, now if Yahweh used the false prophets or the idolaters to deceive community and individuals, or if he tested the community by false dreamers or prophets as is clear in Deut 13:3, in what way were Jeremiah and Ezekiel right to claim that Yahweh had not sent the prophets who proclaimed such false visions (Jer. 23:21; Ezek. 13:6)?¹⁷ Indeed these prophets were sent by Yahweh. In fact, it could be Jeremiah and Ezekiel who are liars. Their belief that these prophets were not sent by Yahweh is a lie because as a matter of fact these prophets were sent by Yahweh.

Further, Jeremiah's attack on the use of dreams (Jer. 23:25-28) and the use of other prophets' oracles (Jer. 23:30) is very problematic. The Bible has plenty of places where dreams are regarded as a legitimate way of receiving oracles or inspiration from Yahweh. In other words, Yahweh in the history of ancient Israel has on various occasions communicated his will through dreams, (Gen 28:12-17; 40-41), (1 Kings 3:5-15), Joel (2:28) and Daniel. Even in Deut 13:1,3 there is an implication that dreams were a formal way of receiving revelation from God. The same high regard for dreams as a method in which the divine communicated to people existed across the ancient Near East especially in Egypt, to the extent that what Joseph did in Genesis 40-41 by interpreting dreams was not unknown.¹⁸ The same is true in the New Testament. Dreams are not condemned. They are a legitimate way of receiving inspiration from the divine world (Heb. 3:1).¹⁹ To therefore claim that receiving messages through dreams is a mark of being a false prophet is misplaced.

¹⁶ Cf. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, p. 191.

¹⁷ Cf. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, p. 200.

¹⁸ Cf. John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*. Michigan: Baker Books, 1996, pp. 224-228.

¹⁹ Cf. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, p. 191.

Finally, Jeremiah's accusation that false prophets steal oracles from other prophets actually backfires. On the basis of this criterion, even Jeremiah himself would be dismissed as a false prophet and a lot more prophets that we regard as true, such as Isaiah, Micah, Amos and Joel, because these prophets have some of their oracles that are identical, betraying the fact that they were 'stolen' from one another. For instance, Isa. 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-3 are basically one and the same oracle given by two different prophets apparently in the same context.²⁰ According to the criterion of Jeremiah, one prophet stole from another. So either Isaiah was a false prophet or Micah, or even both were false prophets. The same could be said about Amos 1:2; Jer. 25:30 and Joel 3:16 which all use the same expression. These shared elements can also be found in Isa. 10:27b-32 and Micah 1:10-15; Isa. 5:8-10 and Micah 2:1-3, Jer. 49:7-22 and Obad. 1-9. So shall we dismiss these as false prophets? If we are to apply this criterion, Jeremiah himself would be dismissed. For, in Jeremiah 26:17-18, Micah 3:12 is cited almost verbatim, something that is very unusual. This has prompted Hibbard to conclude that, 'this is the only instance of a prophetic book quoting from another by name anywhere in the Hebrew Bible'.²¹

The Criterion of *Pro-Status-quo* vs. *Anti-Status-quo*

There are scholars who believe that in Israel a true prophet was one who always opposed the ruling elite or the political establishment. Anyone who agreed or served the political establishment was regarded as false. In other words, in sociological terms, central prophets were all regarded as false while peripheral prophets were true. Bess set the matter this way, 'the great distinction between the messages of the true prophets and those of the false was not in the manner of its delivery, but in the content of the message itself. The false prophets were the yes-men of their times, currying favour with the political figures of the day and giving the messages that would justify the actions of those politicians'.²² In the history of Zimbabwe, and even across the globe, this criterion has been applied, nevertheless quite selectively. However, generally in post-

²⁰ Cf. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, p. 192.

²¹ Hibbard, 'True and False Prophecy', p. 353.

²² Bess, 'The Office of the Prophet', (p.12).

colonial Zimbabwean (and African) politics, religious leaders who oppose the government are labelled as ‘prophetic’ meaning, true prophets, while those who support government programmes and initiatives are regarded as false prophets.²³ This is why in Zimbabwe, Makandiwa together with AICs prophets such as Mwazha, Noah Taguta, Wimbo and other prominent Pentecostal preachers have of late been accused of being false prophets. They are accused of supporting the ruling party for participating in the Anti-Sanctions rally in 2011.²⁴ On the contrary, pastors who always oppose ZANU PF and those who did not participate are labelled as true prophets.

In the Old Testament, the clash between prophet Jeremiah and prophet Hananiah (Jer. 28) is cited often to demonstrate the fact that true prophets opposed the narrative of the ruling class while false prophets agree with them. Thus, Jeremiah is presented as a true prophet for ‘contradicting’ the narrative of the Judean political establishment while Hananiah is described as a false prophet for ‘agreeing with the narrative’ of the Judean political leaders. While it is true that Jeremiah and Hananiah differed in their interpretations of the situation, their differences had nothing to do with either one being true and the other being false. According to R. R. Wilson, ancient Israelite theological traditions lie behind both of these views. Jeremiah as a peripheral prophet (one not part of the central religious establishment in Jerusalem) subscribed to the Deuteronomistic school of thought that viewed the election of Jerusalem and the house of David as conditional to obedience. To sustain his argument Jeremiah could cite the example of Shiloh and Samaria that were destroyed in 722 BCE by the Assyrians as punishment for disobedience of the law of God (Jeremiah 7; 2 Kgs 17). On the other hand, Hananiah, a central prophet (one who was part of the Jerusalem’s religious establishment) appealed to the unconditional character of the election of Jerusalem and the house of David (2 Sam 7; Psalm 132). And to support this theological position Hananiah could cite the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem when Sennacherib invaded. Despite Israel’s

²³ Cf. Obvious Vengeyi, ‘Kunonga Versus Bakare: Zimbabwe’s Own Version of Prophet Amos versus Priest Amaziah of Israel (Amos 7:10-14)’ *BOLESWA*, No.3 (2012), pp. 15-41; Vengeyi, ‘Israelite Prophetic Marks among Zimbabwean Men of God: An Evaluation of the Conduct of Selected Zimbabwean Church Leaders in Recent Politics’, *Exchange*, Vol 39, No.2 (2010), pp. 159-178.

²⁴ Cf. ‘ZANU PF swallows Makandiwa’, *NewsDay*, 03 March 2011.

sins the city was not destroyed and the king was not removed (2 Kgs 18-19; Isaiah 10; 28-31; 33).²⁵ This in other words means both prophets were correct and their positions were favourable among their constituencies. There are people who believed Hananiah to be a true prophet while disregarding Jeremiah as a false prophet. And the same applied to Jeremiah; among his constituency, the Deuteronomists, he was a true prophet while Hananiah was a false one. The claim by Jeremiah that Hananiah was false is therefore not an objective one.

The above position becomes important, particularly when we scrutinise Jeremiah's encounter with Hananiah. According to Carroll, what scholars fail to realise is that Jeremiah 27-29 is an edited account most likely way after Hananiah's prediction was disconfirmed. The editors of Jeremiah worked from hindsight and from the premise that Jeremiah was a true prophet and Hananiah was a false prophet.²⁶ But, even if we take the account as it is, we can still realise that fundamentally both Hananiah and Jeremiah were correct. From a theological perspective, they only interpreted Yahweh's action in history from different perspectives; which were not unknown in Israelite history. Hananiah's prediction that the 597 BCE deportees would be released after only two years in exile was informed by a well-known Israelite theological notion of the saviour Yahweh who would save his people soon after punishing them. On the other hand, Jeremiah saw the deportation of 597 BCE as the beginning of many other catastrophic scenarios to follow. This is why Jeremiah predicted seventy years.²⁷ But essentially both realised that there was hope after exile and that message is central. Finer details regarding when and how the end of exile would come about depended on the theological perspective of the prophet. For instance, if someone had predicted in 1980 that the World Trade Center of America would be attacked in two years' time on the 11th of September that prophecy would have been taken as a true prophecy in 2001 when America was attacked! The argument is, the time period is not important but the event is. So in other words, that Judah was going to spend two years or seventy is not

²⁵ Cf. R.R. Wilson, 'Interpreting Israel's Religion: An Anthropological Perspective on the Problem of False Prophecy', in Robert P. Gordon (ed.), *The Place is Too Small for Us' The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship*. Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1995, pp. 332-344 (p.343).

²⁶ Cf. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, p. 195.

²⁷ Cf. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, p. 195.

important but the event of release is. After all, their predictions were dependent on their interpretation of very complex subjects: international and domestic politics.

Even so, what modern readers of the Old Testament also do not take into consideration is that this criterion is very subjective; it is based upon the Deuteronomist theological conception of prophecy; thus cannot be applied uniformly across different contexts. For example, according to Deuteronomist theologians as evident in Jeremiah, true prophets are those prophets who preached war and destruction of the nation and not hope (Jer. 28:8).²⁸ This is because most of the Deuteronomist theologians' material was written after the exile. And in line with their criterion of fulfilment of prediction as a mark of true prophecy, those who had predicted a lengthy exile were considered true while those who had predicted imminent hope were considered false. In this case, Jeremiah had spent the bigger part of his ministry preaching doom and gloom for the nation which came to pass. Any prophecy of hope was thus judged as a false prophecy after the exile had taken long. This is why prophets of hope are presented as serious threats to Jeremiah (Jer. 23:9ff) and accused of speaking from their own minds without having been sent by Yahweh (Jer. 23:18,22).²⁹ What is clear though from Jeremiah 23 is that this is prophecy after the event! If by one reason or the other, exile had been short, those who preached a lengthy exile, including Jeremiah would have been labelled false prophets.

In any case, this criterion is difficult to apply uniformly throughout the Bible. There are so many prophets in the Bible that are regarded as true yet they mixed and mingled with the ruling elite. Some, as in the case of Nathan and Gad, supported and even worked for the ruling elite. Their support for the ruling elite was not hidden. Following closely the concept of Ancient Near Eastern royal theology, Nathan crafted the Davidic royal ideology (2 Sam. 7:2ff) which promised the house of David to rule for ever. Any opposition to the house of David was effectively opposition to God. This was unprecedented in the history of Israel.³⁰ Prophet Gad was known to be King David's personal seer (2 Sam. 24:11). This means Gad was first and foremost responsible to David, which makes him al-

²⁸ Cf. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, p. 188.

²⁹ Cf. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, p. 189.

³⁰ Cf. Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament: Vol. 1: From Beginnings to the End of the Monarchy*. Kentucky: John Knox Pr., 1991, pp.116-122.

most a personal assistant of the king. Another interesting example is Isaiah who believed in the politico-religious ideologies of the ruling elite: the Davidic Royal Ideology, the Invincibility of Jerusalem and the Temple theology, to the extent that he is believed by some scholars to have been a foreign minister in King Ahaz's government. In fact, Mary Evans is of the opinion that Isaiah belonged to the royal family in that tradition suggests that he was himself a cousin of Uzziah, (King Ahaz's father) and thus of royal blood. She interprets 2 Chronicles 26:22 as implying that Isaiah was a trained writer-historian employed as the royal recorder during the reign of Uzziah. She therefore concluded that this is probably why Isaiah was well-educated, familiar with the king's court and a trusted advisor of King Hezekiah more than any other prophet of his time.³¹ Despite this link with politicians hence his own participation in politics, Isaiah was never doubted as a true prophet in his community. Even today, most if not all the readers of the Bible regard him as a true prophet. Therefore, although these prophets cited above participated in politics, supporting the rulers, they were never thought to be false prophets. We often give them as great examples of servants of God. Yet, those among us who participate in politics we condemn. Besides this, by regarding true prophets as those who oppose the government, in the modern world, this criterion has the danger of supporting insurgency, banditry, mercenary and rebellious activities. In fact, all terrorists would be justified as true prophets!

The Criterion of Professionalism

In their search for criteria to establish authentic and inauthentic manifestation of prophecy, theologians in the Israelite society must have come to the conclusion that a true prophet is one who does not receive payment for his services. The basis of this criterion lies in Micah 3:5, 11 which label those who prophesy for hire as false prophets. True prophets therefore took their ministry as a service not a profession. H. H. Rowley notes that, false prophets on the contrary, instead of knowing the direct constraint of the Spirit of God, were looking around for their oracles.

³¹ Cf. Mary Evans, *Prophets of the Lord*. The Paternoster Pr., p.97.

They were the mere members of the profession, not men of vocation'.³² Because they took prophecy as a profession from which they got remuneration, there is a great possibility that they made sure they pleased their clients. That means they would sometimes alter the message of God. Contrary to true prophets, professional prophets could for instance preach peace where there was no peace. This criterion is appealed to most in the contemporary world. In Zimbabwe, due to the huge sums of money they collect from followers every time they meet, Makandiwa, Vutabwashe, Angel among others are accused of being professional prophets hence false. It is estimated that Makandiwa collects more than US\$100 000.00 per service; of which he conducts more than five services a week. African Initiated Church prophets have equally been accused of this professionalism since their clients have to bring gifts, such as chicken, fresh milk, eggs, bread among others each time they come for consultation.

The major weakness of this criterion is that its claims are not based upon a critical analysis on the situation obtaining on the ground in Israel. There are several explicit examples of prominent prophets in the Old Testament who received gifts or remuneration for their services. Of course, it is not clear if they charged or not. But the assumption we get from certain passages is that it was the expected tradition for clients to bring gifts to prophets each time they consulted them. Prophet Samuel, for instance received money for his services (1 Sam 9:2). The impression in the text is that he always did so. In 1 Kings 14:3 also, Jeroboam's wife is instructed by her husband, Jeroboam to 'take ten loaves of bread, some cakes, and a jar of honey' and go to Ahijah to inquire about their ill son's fate. Further, Nathan is almost employed by King David as a civil servant, yet he was (and is still) regarded by many as a true prophet. Biblical evidence shows that even until the classical era of prophecy, (the time Micah ministered) prophets received payment for their services. In Amos 7:12, Amaziah advises Amos to go back to the land of Judah and to earn his bread there. This statement may indicate that payment of prophets for their services was common. There is no adequate evidence therefore to conclude that professionalism was a mark of false prophecy

³² H.H. Rowley, 'The Nature of Old Testament Prophecy in the Light of Recent Study', in *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays*; Rowley, 'Ritual and the Hebrew Prophets', *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Vol. 1. No. 4 (1956).

in Israel. Therefore, to dismiss Makandiwa or any other prophet for that matter as false on the basis of Micah 3:5, 11 is unwarranted.

The Criterion of Ecstasy

Since the publication of Duhm's *Die Theologie der Propheten* in the last quarter of the 19th Century which associated Israelite prophets with ecstasy,³³ debate surrounding the link started. To begin with, Duhm's hypothesis was well received and attracted a lot of disciples, not only in Germany in the likes of H. Güntel, and Hölscher, but also in Britain and America, with T.H. Robinson and Robert Pfeiffer respectively.³⁴ For them ecstasy has been a hallmark of prophecy in Israel. Ecstasy manifests as suspension of mental faculty to give room to the invasion by the spirit. It is this external spirit that dictates either hyperactivity or extraordinary passivity/inactivity. Hyperactivity relates to the display of extraordinary capabilities and usually accompanied by uncontrollable raving. On the other hand, one in ecstasy may display passivity, dullness or inactivity that is beyond natural. In short, ecstasy is similar to a condition that one who has been drugged finds him/herself. From the moment of consumption, drugs take over the individual's mental and physical state. In fact, Israelite prophets, including some canonical prophets according to these scholars, were ecstatic as those prophets of Canaan and Asia Minor. Isaiah walked around the streets of Jerusalem city naked and barefoot for three years (Isaiah 20:3) and Jeremiah wore a wooden yoke around his neck for some time (Jer. 27f).³⁵ Thus, like ANE ecstatic prophets, there is an assumption that these persons are pictured as moving across the land from one place to another in wild groups, chanting

³³ Cf. B. Duhm, *Die Theologie der Propheten*. Bonn: Marcus Pr., 1875.

³⁴ Cf. H. Güntel, 'The Secret Experiences of the Prophets', *The Expositor*, 9th Series, No.1 (1924), pp. 356-66; *Die Propheten*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1917; Hölscher, *Die Propheten: Untersuchungen zur Religionsgeschichte Israels*. Leipzig 1914, pp. 1-158; T.H. Robinson, 'The Ecstatic Element in Old Testament Prophecy', *The Expositor*, 8th Series, XXI, 1921, pp. 217-38; Robinson, *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel*. New York: Scribner's Sons, 1923, p. 50; cf. H.H. Rowley, 'The Nature of Prophecy in the Light of Recent Study', *Harvard Theological Review*, XXXVIII, 1945, p. 2.

³⁵ Cf. H.H. Rowley, *The Growth of the Old Testament*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, p. 79-83.

in loud voices (maybe accompanied with dance) and making ecstatic inquiry for people upon request to do so.³⁶

The ability of such individuals to enter into ecstasy earned them respect and endeared them to the people who interpreted ecstasy as positive indication that they were indeed sent by the divine. Equally, in our context, Pentecostal prophets rely heavily on their capacity to make predictions, speak in tongues, and perform miracles such as making people fall on the ground and lie unconsciously to authenticate their ministries. Society is, however, divided over this. Some believe that these are tricks of false prophets who want to claim legitimacy while a majority of people follow these prophets precisely because of these capabilities. For these prophets and their followers, the Old Testament provides so many examples to justify their operations. It should be noted that these differences in interpreting such abnormal behaviour within the prophetic fraternity started even in ancient Israel. We seem to see the existence of these two attitudes towards the ecstatic phenomenon. Ecstatic behaviours among prophets are in some cases positively viewed but in other cases, they are negatively construed. Today, even scholars are equally divided. Some believe that it was part of Israelite prophetic heritage while some deny such haste conclusions.

For those who believe that Israelite prophets were ecstatic, the basis of their hypothesis is twofold. First, Israel being a small nation in the bigger and more illustrious neighbours must have been influenced in all fronts; political, economic and socio-cultural and religious wise. Therefore, Israelite prophecy was borrowed with all its features that included ecstasy from the surrounding nations. Secondly, the Bible has several passages that seem to confirm that indeed Israelite prophets like their neighbours were ecstatic, that is, they lost consciousness when the spirit of the Lord came upon them. In that state of unconsciousness, they prophesied; they carried their prophetic duties. Under the influence of the spirit or hand of God, for example, Elijah killed all the 450 prophets of Baal that fought him (1 Kgs. 18:20); he also ran with an extra ordinary

³⁶ Cf. Leon J. Woods, 'Ecstasy and Israel's Early Prophets', *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 1966, pp. 125-137 (p. 125); Cf. Rowley, *The Faith of Israel*. London: SCM Pr., 1956, pp. 37-39; H. Knight, *The Hebrew Prophetic Consciousness*. London: Lutterworth Pr., 1947, pp. 80-81; J. Bright, *History of Israel*. Philadelphia: Westminster Pr., 1959, p. 166; A.C. Welch, *Kings and Prophets of Israel*. London: Lutterworth Pr., 1952, p. 70.

speed that he overtook a horse chariot (1 Kgs. 18:46). As in the other nations surrounding Israel, it is assumed that music and rhythmical dance were very important to induce invasion or possession by the spirit of the deity (2 Kgs. 3:15).

Other passages which have been subject of debate for many centuries now to bolster the fact that Israelite prophets were ecstatic like their ANE counterparts include, Num. 11: 25-29; 1 Sam. 10:1-13 and 1 Sam. 19:18-24. Numbers 11:25-29 describes an event whereby Moses' spirit was transferred and distributed among seventy elders who began to prophesy ecstatically. The spirit of the Lord was so powerful that even some two elders who were not present, Eldad and Meldad for example, continued longer than others in this state of unconsciousness. The same condition of ecstasy is witnessed when Saul met a band of ecstatic prophets. As soon as Saul met the prophets, he began to prophesy ecstatically like them for he was transformed into another man as Samuel had predicted (1 Sam. 10:1-13). He prophesied to the amazement of onlooker who exclaimed, 'Is Saul among the prophets!'. This reaction shows that Saul displayed some hyperactivity similar to raving by ecstatic prophets. In another incident, Saul met a group of prophets at Ramah and when he experienced the spirit of God, he fell into ecstasy like the three groups he had sent before to find David. All began to prophesy removing their clothes according to the dictates of the spirit upon them. King Saul lay naked the whole night under the influence of the spirit of God, something that no normal being could ordinarily do (1 Sam. 19:18-24) except in a state of possession.³⁷ This is evidence that he was as good as dead, the whole night; a clear sign of extra-ordinary passivity. And this behaviour of removing clothes (and cutting oneself) may have been common among ecstatic prophets (cf. 1 Kgs. 18:18). As we noted earlier, Isaiah also under the influence of the spirit of God preached along the streets of Jerusalem naked for three years (Isa. 20:3). The fact that these prophets behaved in these abnormal ways is probably why some Israelite prophets were despised by their society hence called mad men (2 Kgs. 9:2,11; Jer. 29:26; Hos. 9:7).

While there are evidently so many incidents in the Old Testament that seem to confirm that ecstasy was part and parcel of Israelite prophecy, there are other passages that prove the contrary. These passages give

³⁷ Cf. Simon B. Parker, 'Possession Trance and Prophecy in Pre-Exilic Israel', *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol.28, No.3 (1978), pp.271-285.

credence to arguments against associating Israelite prophets with ecstasy. Woods believes that ecstasy was not part and parcel of Israelite prophecy. For him and others it was a foreign practice associated therefore with false prophets. However, Woods' reasons for dismissal of the connotations of ecstasy in the three main passages (Num. 11:25-29; 1 Sam. 10 and 19) are devoid of any merit. For him the Hebrew word interpreted in these passages as suggesting ecstasy is similar to the term used to refer to praise in 1 Chronicles 25:1-3 where praising is ascribed to the idea of prophesying. In these passages, Woods suggests that they removed clothes to be flexible in praise, since clothes hindered their movements in praise. Therefore, in these passages to prophesy is to praise/preach not to be ecstatic.³⁸ This is very unconvincing. Although in agreement with Woods that ecstasy was not a positive characteristic of prophecy in Israel, Bess dismissed connotations of preaching or praising in relation to these passages. He argued, 'it is difficult to see how prophesying in this context could be preaching'.³⁹

But perhaps, the most convincing argument that Woods raises is that taking ecstasy as a *sine qua non* characteristic of Israelite prophecy excludes so many prophets we have known to be true prophets. For instance, Moses is regarded as the standard of all prophets (Deut. 18:15), yet he did not display any ecstatic behaviour. Also, Joshua who succeeded Moses, although he is not formerly called *nabi*/prophet, he was nevertheless practicing the prophetic role in that he was a channel of communication between God and the Israelite community. He never exhibited ecstatic behaviour. The same is true with Deborah who is called prophetess (Jud.4:4); she, like Moses and Joshua, did not display ecstatic tendencies. The same is true of Samuel, himself a well-known prophet, yet he was not ecstatic. Even as we move through history further, Woods argues that we find the same non-ecstatic manner of prophecy with Nathan (2 Sam. 7:2; 12:25), Gad (2 Sam. 24:11), Ahijah (1 Kgs. 11:29; 14:2-18) and others,⁴⁰ particularly most of the classical prophets. Shall we then dismiss all these as false prophets because they were not ecstatic? This criterion therefore is weak and cannot help us solve the debate regarding who is true and who is a false prophet. In

³⁸ Cf. Woods, 'Ecstasy and Israel's Early Prophets', (pp.133-4).

³⁹ Bess, 'The Office of the Prophet', (p.8).

⁴⁰ Cf. Woods, 'Ecstasy and Israel's Early Prophets', (p.126).

other words, we cannot successfully use this criterion either to dismiss or to authenticate the people who claim to be prophets in our midst.

The Criterion of Prophetic Call

As we move towards the conclusion of our discussion, it is important to indicate that so far no criterion is without weaknesses. It is clear even from the language used in the Old Testament that it was not possible for the ancient Israelite theologians, let alone the ordinary people, to separate true from false prophets. What made the separation difficult is that externally one could not tell the difference between true and false prophets since both maybe dressed, ate and behaved the same. This is why strangely the Hebrew Bible calls both prophets. According to S. Herbert Bess, the fact that they were always accused of deceiving people shows that it was not possible to distinguish them on the basis of external criteria.⁴¹ For him therefore, one of the most distinguishing feature between true and false prophets is that of call. While both were called prophets, ‘one point of distinction among true prophets must have been that sense of compulsion to prophesy’. And this compulsion comes at the point of call. True prophets seem to have been called against their wish, but the divine overwhelmed them and compelled them to prophesy. Moses, the standard of prophets (Deut. 18:15) was called and he resisted, but the divine pressurised him until he accepted the call; then the divine commissioned him (Exo. 4:15-7:1ff). The Old Testament clearly attests this trend, as the call narratives of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4, 20:7-8) and Isaiah (6:1ff) bear testimony. According to Bess, even ‘Amos, Hosea and others experienced a definite call which obligated them to speak out for God’.⁴² Therefore, we could conclude that true prophets had definite calls but false prophets did not have definite calls.

Several individuals among us also believe that anyone who claims to be a prophet must be called. It is because of this desire to be like Israelite prophets that most Pentecostal prophets claim to have been called in the pattern of Old Testament prophets, against their wish. What this means is, with this criterion, not even one Pentecostal prophet in Zimbabwe will be dismissed as false because all of them narrate how and

⁴¹ Bess, ‘The Office of the Prophet’, (p. 11).

⁴² Bess, ‘The Office of the Prophet’, (p. 11).

when they were called. As indicated already, their call narratives are no different from Old Testament prophets. Shall we then say all are true prophets? The matter is however not as simple as this. While it appears to have been standard that Israelite prophets had call accounts detailing how and when they were called and the mission for which they were called, not all Israelite prophets had calls. Elijah, Ahijah, Micaiah, Nathan and Gad are clear examples. We only meet them in the midst of their prophetic ministries. Yet, such prophets were never doubted to be prophets in their communities on the basis that they did not have call narratives.

Conclusion

After this long discussion, it is important to admit that the article has come to the conclusion that 'the analysis of the criteria for distinguishing the authentic prophet from the rest has shown that they were too ambiguous to be helpful and that there is no such thing as an external test by which to tell true prophecy from false, such as all reasonable persons may safely apply'.⁴³ As such, there are no solid criteria to test or to enable us to determine who was and who was not a genuine prophet, in Israel let alone in our contemporary society. The Bible has not answered the question with certainty.⁴⁴ The long and short of it is that the criteria set by the Deuteronomist theologians in the Old Testament were (as they are still now) inadequate to deal with a complex phenomenon such as prophecy. Therefore, appealing to the Bible in order to decipher who is true or false among Zimbabwean Pentecostal preachers as is common today is a wild goose chase.

⁴³ Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, pp. 197-198; A. W. Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*. London, 1971, p.33.

⁴⁴ Cf. Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, p. 124; James A. Sanders, 'Hermeneutics in True and False Prophecy', in G. W. Coats and B.O. Long, (eds.), *Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Pr., 1977, pp. 21-41.

CHAPTER 4

David Bishau

Prophecy in an African Context

Methodological Considerations

Key Terms | Exegesis, Hermeneutics, Horizon, Synchronic, Diachronic, Cultural Relativism

Abstract

Efforts to view prophecy from an African perspective fall into the category of approaches to the Bible that seek to make the Bible meaningful to the world or horizon of the reader. Basically, these are efforts that seek to contextualize the Bible. Concerns to contextualize the Bible so that it speaks to the context of the reader, and in our case, the African context, are not new. There has been a long standing debate reviewing the movement in biblical interpretation dubbed 'the New Hermeneutic' whose major concerns were to apply the biblical text to the context of the reader and in a way that incorporated the culture of the reader. Our thesis in this chapter is that while the concerns are novel and indeed genuine, scholars who venture in these endeavours have not always been forthcoming in terms of how they propose to contextualize the Bible in ways that restrain biblical interpretation from falling back to, and into, the methodological pitfalls of the past, especially the pitfalls of the various shades and forms of eisegesis whose major heuristic crime was the failure to do enough justice to the text. In this chapter we revisit the history of the interpretation of the Bible in general, and prophecy in Ancient Israel in particular, in a bid to make our own proposal on the method and, or, hermeneutics that are appropriate to interpret the prophetic books in an African context but still doing justice to the message that was intended by the authors of the texts to the audiences of their time. We propose a fresh look at hermeneutics as a generic term that distinguishes it from exegesis and incorporates principles of cultural relativism and social scientific criticism. We very briefly apply the social scientific conceptual metaphor of social capital as a demonstration of the application of our hermeneutics to understand the prophet Isaiah and selected contemporary prophets in Zimbabwe.

The Task at Hand

If our task were to be academic, if our endeavours were to be regarded as research at all, then it is inevitable to first and foremost think about issues of methodology. We need to reflect on the 'how' and 'why' we are going to perceive and conceptualize the phenomenon of prophecy in an African context. Quite often writers plunge straight into discussions of various figures in Africa they regard as prophetic figures; moving back and forth the various biblical stories they deem comparable to case studies of these African figures without providing a methodological rationale and operative logic for their comparative studies. More often than not, findings from such studies raise more questions than answers and are easily dismissible as what Haralambos and Holborn (1991:698) refer to as guesswork or common sense that has been mystified.

To this end, this chapter deals specifically with two questions: first, how do we go about investigating the phenomenon of prophecy in an African context drawing parallels from a similar phenomenon in ancient Israel? Second, on what operative logic is/are our method(s) anchored? That is, what are the principles and philosophies that underlie our perception and conceptualization of prophecy in an African context? Therefore, the focus of this chapter is on methodology. While it does refer to some examples of phenomena regarded as African prophecy, its primary concern is 'how' and 'why' it is that we come to perceive and conceptualize that which we call prophecy in an African context, especially as we compare two phenomena that are miles apart in terms of time and culture. This is a stage that this chapter regards as foundational to build-up studies looking at specific case studies of African prophets and different manifestations of African prophecy.

The task of interpreting prophecy in an African context has two dimensions to it emanating from two strictly related assumptions. The first assumption is that the prophecy we are talking about is prophecy in ancient Israel (hereinafter referred to only as Israel) or what is commonly referred to as Old Testament prophecy which we intend to understand from the context of the African cultural background. The implication of this assumption to our task is multi-varied. Does it imply that the phenomenon of prophecy was unique to Israel and therefore, Old Testament prophecy can be seen as the sole provider of the canons with which we can understand prophecy in our contemporary context? Besides, by looking up to Old Testament prophecy as the provider of inter-

pretive canons for contemporary prophecy, are we implying that the Bible is normative and indeed does speak for posterity? Are we also implying continuity between prophecy in the Old Testament and prophecy in the New Testament? Therefore, the first dimension of our task may bring forth a number of articles probing each of the implications mentioned above and many more that we are silent about.

For instance, some scholars have argued that there was prophecy outside Israel that even predates Israelite prophecy. This is not a new argument and neither is it a bizarre one for those of us who are familiar with theories on the origins of prophecy in Israel. An implication of this argument that has not been probed is that prophecy, then, is not unique to the Judaeo-Christian tradition. In fact, it has often been argued that various concepts of prophecy are found throughout the world's religions and cults. This is what has given birth to articles comparing elements of Old Testament prophecy with what may be regarded as prophecy in say, African traditional religions.

What needs to be probed in this regard is, are we not imposing a category that never existed in those religions that we are alleging to have possessed this category of religious phenomena which Israelites referred to as prophecy? Phenomenologically, when say, for example, Chaminuka predicted the arrival in Zimbabwe of some people 'without knees', or when Nehanda predicted that 'her bones were going to rise' and fight in a newly rejuvenated Chimurenga, did these two sacred practitioners regard their predictions as prophecy? Similarly, did the recipients of such predictions regard the two sacred practitioners as prophets? From a phenomenological perspective, how valid are such statements of eidetic intuition? Similar questions can be asked about similar phenomena and religious figures in all those other religions throughout the world that we are alleging to have possessed the category of prophecy.

Thus, the task to investigate prophecy in an African context may proceed in two directions that produce research in two categories. First, there may be research that is based on prophecy in the Old Testament and hence, research that compares prophecy in the Old Testament with what may be deemed African prophecy. Second, there may be research that looks at prophecy that is independent of prophecy in the Old Testament, based on the assumption that prophecy was in existence throughout the various cultures of the world and it even predates prophecy in the Old Testament. Each one of the two directions has its own

methodological principles and philosophies to consider as we draw meaning from phenomena studied.

This chapter is placed in the first category of research. This is not to say the second category is not significant, but our choice is based purely on considerations of time and space. Our task here assumes that the prophecy we are dealing with is prophecy in the Old Testament, which we need to understand within the context of our African cultural background. Therefore, from a methodological point of view, it is inevitable to consider how prophecy in the Old Testament has been interpreted, especially the principles and philosophies informing those interpretations, in a bid to arrive at means to conceptualize prophecy within our African cultural background. Methodology to discern prophecy in the Old Testament has historically revolved around exegesis and, or, hermeneutics. Therefore, it is inevitable too that the first and larger part of the chapter is a historical examination of the principles and philosophies underlying the stated methods aimed at arriving at our own methodology deemed appropriate for the task of understanding prophecy from an African cultural perspective. The case studies of typical African prophets and manifestations of African prophecy are minimal as they are serving only to vindicate and exemplify our methodology.

The Current State of the Debate on Methods

Biblical interpretation to date is raven with controversy regarding the way forward in so far as interpreting not only prophecy but the Bible as a whole in a way that reflects critically on contemporary issues. That is, how are we to interpret the Bible in such a way that it speaks to the contemporary reader?³ Scholarship is divided to two extremes. One extreme position is that biblical interpretation should begin with and must respect the horizon¹ of the author and his/her intended audience. This position advocates a diachronic² reading of the Bible as the approach

¹ We interpret the term 'horizon' to mean 'the world-view' of either the author or the interpreter of the Bible in a way that encompasses even the creative milieu of the author. For a much more expanded and detailed discussion of this term see Thiselton: 1980, xix.

² We take the term to encompass all those methods that take cognizance of the fact that language and especially culture occur and, or, change over a period of time and therefore an analysis of such phenomena must necessarily either imply or ask historical

that does justice to the text. The second extreme position is that the world of the writer of the biblical text and his/her intended audience must simply disappear into oblivion. What is crucial is the horizon of the reader and what the reader makes of the Bible today. This latter position thus advocates synchronic³ approaches to the Bible as the meaningful and more relevant approach to the contemporary reader.

Such a concern is not new in the history of the interpretation of the Bible. There have been similar attempts in the history of the interpretation of the New Testament (even though it spilled into the Old Testament) in the form of an interpretative method, or in our view a 'movement', dubbed 'The New Hermeneutic' (see Braaten, 1966; Ramm, 1970; Shealy, 1979 and 1997 and recently, Marshall, 2013). While a number of books and articles have been written on this subject, Marshall's definition of this interpretative method gives us sufficient ground to discuss it without losing many of our readers. Marshall (2013) defines The New Hermeneutic as an approach that focuses (or rather, focused) on how current audiences interact with the biblical text. Scholars generally agree in principle that E. Fuchs and G. Ebeling are the initiators of this method, even though the foundation for the method was laid as far back as the 1920's with R. Bultmann who himself was building up from K. Barth's insights (see Carson, 1980 and 1996). Marshall echoes what many New Testament scholars point out; that the method is based on two strictly related philosophical presuppositions: first, that the text is timeless and claims that this timelessness necessarily means that it holds new meaning for each new reader and second, timelessness also means that the text transcends original historical context, authorial intent, or other dimensions across which a text is evaluated (Marshall, 2013). What this means is that in our present endeavour one can compare Old Testament prophetic figures with contemporary African cultic figures, drawing similarities between the two without raising any methodological eyebrows.

However, despite the fact that he was for the new hermeneutic, R. Bultmann (cited in Ogden, 1984:3) raised an argument that dismissed the continued validity of the Old Testament to provide canons to under-

questions (see Hirsch 1967:1 and also <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diachronic>).

³ If an approach, phenomenon or activity is described as "synchronic" it means it is not affected by past and future, and that it simply focuses on a specific point in time.

stand contemporary religious phenomena. Bultmann was of the view that nothing that contradicts science and reason should be acceptable, even if it were clearly taught in the Bible. In particular, according to him, the Old Testament is a human document and Christians may entirely ignore it or, if they use it at all, its value would only be as a document that paves the way for Christianity (cited in Surburg, 1974:14). Such a negative attitude towards the Old Testament and supernatural dimensions of the Bible as a whole can be understood from the point of view of the philosophy that informed Bultmann and the situation he was trying to address. As an army chaplain, Bultmann was trying to come up with a biblical interpretation that was relevant to soldiers who were seeing their colleagues perishing at the battle front and were always haunted by the idea that one day it would be their turn. Bultmann thus adopted the philosophy of existentialism that guided him throughout his interpretation of the Bible. His interpretation of the Bible was born out of, and was intended to answer an existential concern (Baker, 1964:7). While Bultmann's argument left a yawning gap in biblical interpretation regarding the continued validity of the Old Testament, he contributed one crucial philosophical principle to biblical interpretation that is relevant to our task of understanding prophecy in an African context: any methodology to discern Old Testament prophecy must address the existential concerns of the reader if it is to be relevant. To what extent does the Old Testament, and in our case, the Old Testament prophecy speak to the contemporary reader? Is the Old Testament prophecy normative? Therefore, is the endeavour to see the Old Testament prophecy speak to our own African context a worthwhile endeavour?

Bultmann's argument on the validity of the Old Testament is not as worrisome as what his hermeneutic implied on methodology. Bultmann's hermeneutic placed inevitable emphasis on theology (faith) and not on method. To put Bultmann's argument in perspective, it is the message of the prophets in the Old Testament that is relevant to the reader, rather than the methods to prove that the prophets themselves and events surrounding them were historical. We can still develop faith in God from the stories and use that faith to understand our own religious experiences today without establishing the historicity of those Old Testament stories about the prophets.

Of course, emphasis on theology and not on method was not unique to Bultmann. Rather it was typical of that era in biblical studies because

even in Old Testament studies up to the early 70's the categories and methodologies that now dominate the Old Testament studies were not yet on the horizon (Brueggmann, 2002: xii). Then, the major shape of the Old Testament was largely crafted by G. von Rad and E.G. Wright who emphasised the dichotomies between 'history' and 'nature' and 'time' and 'space' in Old Testament studies that saw the inevitable focus on the theology of the Old Testament. Here scholars isolated specific themes that were guided by the major theme of 'God's mighty deeds in history' (Brueggmann, 2002: xi). Interpretation of the message and, or, theology of the prophets was thus guided by this overarching theme.

However, focus on theology was the kind of direction the 'New Hermeneutic' took because of the concerns of the architects of the movement. The spirit to allow the Bible as a whole to speak to the contemporary reader of the Bible was the key driver of the endeavour. Emphasis on theology (faith) would give the New Hermeneutic such elasticity and mileage.

Bultmann's students, popularly known as the Post-Bultmannians, added their voice when they argued that language itself is existential in character (Fuchs, 1964:115; Ebeling, 1963:331) in which case they took up their teacher's axiom that biblical interpretation must answer to an existential concern. Although the context of their discourse was the 'Quest for the Historical Jesus', the Post-Bultmannians contributed a methodological principle that was to have a lasting effect in the history of biblical interpretation. Fuchs and Ebeling in agreement with their other fellow Post-Bultmannians, E. Kaesemann and G. Bornkamm to mention a few, realized that although the historical Jesus was difficult to find in the New Testament, that Jesus needed to be found; it is important to know what can be known about him because the Jesus of faith, the Christ of the kerygma necessarily continues from this historical Jesus. Otherwise if there is no such continuity then Christianity is a non-historical timeless myth. There is simply just too much historically relevant data about this Jesus in the Gospel traditions for scholars to ignore (Meier, 1993:1318). Thus, the Post-Bultmannians managed to establish that there is indeed a kernel of history in which the Christian faith must have confidence and it is that kernel of history that makes the contemporary religious milieu of the reader relevant. Faith alone without that kernel of history is without the necessary foundation.

Again to put the argument into perspective, it is not possible to focus on theology without method and thus, the Post-Bultmannians broadened the breath and improved on the elasticity of the biblical interpretation of their teacher. There is a syntagmatic relationship between sound theology and method and from our argument above there is need for a method that asks historical questions; that proceeds from the world of the authors of the biblical texts and their audience.

However, the proponents of the New Hermeneutic, Ebeling, Fuchs, Gadamar, Funk and many who belong to this school, were of the conviction that their New Hermeneutic was not to be limited to theology only but was to be also the foundation for the reconstruction of philosophy and the basis for a new programme of epistemology (Surburg, 1974:16). For them, apart from Scripture, contemporary culture also became a source of religious authority. Thus, it is a valid observation that the proponents of the New Hermeneutic transcended the mere quest to allow applications of biblical texts to be more life-related (Surburg, 1974:17); their claim went a bit further to assert that the biblical message itself needed reformulating (Surburg, 1974:17) in the light of contemporary culture.

The reconstruction of our hermeneutics builds up on major critiques of the New Hermeneutic that we discuss, but only briefly. A number of critics are not comfortable with the basic existential import of the New Hermeneutic that faith is just but a relationship between persons; by its emphasis on existentialism most of the traditional dogmatic teachings are eliminated and by its interpretation that faith is merely a relationship between persons and need not have a doctrinal content the whole foundation of Christian doctrine is undermined (Surburg, 1974:18). Hence, the major fear, especially among the evangelicals, is that such an import undermines the authority of the Bible and strips it of its normativity. The message of the Bible becomes unnecessarily relative and this is the major fear of those who are opposed to the endeavour to interpret the message of the Old Testament prophets for the African context.

Notwithstanding such theological reservations, our focus is more on the implications of the New Hermeneutic on the method of biblical interpretation than on Christian Theology. After all, sound and appropriate methods of biblical interpretation result in sound doctrine and acceptable Christian Theology. Therefore, we do not focus on what the New Hermeneutic did and is still doing for and about Christian Theology, but

on the net effect it had and has on method. Did The New Hermeneutic collapse all earlier efforts on method for instance, the thrifty gains of the Historical Critical Method⁴, to build something completely new or this was and is still a fuss about nothing that did and does not make any methodological headway? Is what we are trying to do: to understand prophecy in our own African context methodologically unattainable?

A number of critics indeed have raised serious concerns against the New Hermeneutic for what they think is its impact on method and what they think is likely to happen to biblical interpretation as a whole should the 'arbitrary' application of the Bible be allowed. Major critics along these lines arose from evangelicals. These evangelical critics range from extreme critics like Ramm (1970) and some of his ardent disciples like Shearly whose scathing attack on the New Hermeneutic features in his *Redrawing The Line Between Hermeneutics And Application* (1997) to moderate critics like Larkin Jr (1988) who not only reviewed the major findings of previous methods of interpreting the Bible but also discussed in satisfactory detail Cultural Relativism in his *Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics*.

The primary criticism that these critics raise against the New Hermeneutic theorists is that in terms of method the theorists departed from the grammatico-historical principles (that according to the critics, presumably instilled objectivity in biblical interpretation) and embraced the kind of subjectivism typical of all such approaches to the Bible as the New Hermeneutic (Ramm, 1970:vii). Shearly (1997:83) expanded the argument and according to Shearly, the New Hermeneutic theorists incorporated the dimension of application into the hermeneutical process thereby confusing definitions of hermeneutics, exegesis, meaning and interpretation. We are not sure whether we understand fully what Shearly exactly meant by this but the gist of his critique is that in the process of trying to come up with an approach to the Bible that allows the Bible to speak to the reader, terms were either not properly defined or they were not defined altogether resulting in inevitable confusion in their use. Such confusion led to a number of unfortunate developments, according to Shearly. First, it encouraged a man-centred interpretation; second, it allowed cultural interpretation to alter meaning and third, it encouraged a reader-response type of interpretation among other syn-

⁴ We are using the term here as a generic term encompassing all the methods that either ask or imply historical questions (see Bishau, 2010:77).

chronistic approaches to the Bible (Shearly 1997:83). Whatever else Shearly says later in his article are elaborations and exemplifications of this basic argument that we summarise here and so we work on this summary as we develop our argumentation.

What the critics of the New Hermeneutic persuade us to do in our reconstruction of hermeneutics that allow us to apply Old Testament prophecy to our African context is to first, note the crucial importance of defining the terms used to describe the various approaches to the Bible and second, arrive at ways in which our interpretation of prophecy takes cognizance of the African culture but still retaining the desired objectivity of the traditional grammatico-historical methods of interpreting the Bible. Indeed, our survey of some literature on methodology vindicates Shearly's point: the terms exegesis and hermeneutics appear confused in terms of what they denote about interpretation and application.

Towards Appropriate Hermeneutics to Interpret Prophecy in an African Context Exegesis

By exegesis we mean a systematic interpretation of the text that employs such methods that generally constitute the Historical Critical Method (Hayes and Holladay, 1987:23). The Historical Critical Method is taken as a composite method embracing all those methods which either ask or imply historical questions. These, according to Kaiser and Kummel (1967:69), include Textual Criticism, Literary and, or, Source Criticism, Form Criticism and Redaction Criticism, to mention a few.

We use this term this way but taking cognizance of R. N. Soulen's word of caution and reservations concerning whether or not the Historical Critical Method can be as generic as we imply here. Soulen would view our use of the term Historical Critical Method not only as loose but also somewhat erroneous. For him the term is often used erroneously as synonymous with the whole body of methodologies related to the discipline of Biblical Criticism (Soulen, 1981:88). We define the Historical Critical Method as we do following scholars like J.J. Keegan (cited in E.D. Hirsch, 1967:3) who see it as essentially a diachronic method that comprises such distinct methodologies we stated above. The strength of using the term as a generic term is that we are able to use the methods as a composite without necessarily specifying them individually unless it is strictly necessary to do so. We are also aware of the fact that each of

these methods has its own assumptions, strengths and weaknesses. We argue that the assumptions, strengths and weaknesses of exegesis are an aggregate of the assumptions, strengths and weakness of the individual methods that comprise the exegetical method and therefore, embrace those aggregate assumptions and strengths of exegesis. Elsewhere we deal with these in detail (see Bishau, 2010). It is sufficient only to state one of them briefly below.

One crucial strength of exegesis comes from the assumption that when we exegete texts, we exegete written words and not oral ones, which implies that, as Hayes and Holladay (1987:23) correctly point out, the writer is not present as the reader reads the text. This makes the Bible specialized content whose forms of expression were produced in the world of the writer (first party) and were intended for the writers' audience (second party) (Hayes and Holladay, 1987:8). Both these parties lived much earlier than us, the interpreters of the Bible (third party). Thus, not only are the biblical texts composed in a different language and forms of expression different from ours, but also, they were composed in a different culture and historical context. Therefore, a cultural gap exists between the writer and his audience on one hand, and us, the interpreters of the Bible on the other hand. Similarly, a historical gap exists between the production of the biblical texts and the interpretation of these texts. What is crucial to the task of interpreting prophecy in an African context is that exegesis helps the reader to go back to the world of the writer and his audience.

However, exegesis has its weaknesses. One major one arises from the fact that as interpreters of the Bible, we are third parties. Hence, both a cultural and historical gap exists between the writers of the texts and their intended audiences on the one hand, and us, the interpreters of the Bible on the other hand. For us to be able to interpret prophecy in an African context, there is need to find means to bridge both the historical and cultural gaps. This is where we revisit the definition of hermeneutics once more.

Hermeneutics

The terms exegesis and hermeneutics have sometimes been used interchangeably as if they refer to one and the same thing. Therefore, the critics of the New Hermeneutic are correct when they argue that there

has been confusion regarding exactly what each of the two terms designates. For example, hermeneutics has been defined as a theory of interpretation of biblical texts; the formulation of rules or principles or methods of studying the text and these methods include Source Criticism, Form Criticism, Redaction Criticism and Textual Criticism (Achtmeier, 1985:384). This definition is not at all different from the definition of exegesis which we gave above. In other definitions, exegesis has been defined as the concrete explanation of sacred scripture using the principles of hermeneutics, while hermeneutics has been defined as a form of theological science that treats the principles of biblical interpretation (Meagher, 1978). Thus, it is apparent that these definitions are not only vague but also confused, especially when the definitions are extended to show the relationship between exegesis and hermeneutics.

Yet, for a successful application of biblical prophecy to our African context that relationship must be delineated clearly. Again we do that in a greater detail elsewhere (Bishau, 2010). We maintain the definition of exegesis as defined above and proceed to define hermeneutics following A. C. Thiselton's insights regarding the interpretation of texts. Thiselton views the interpretation of texts in terms of "horizons". By "horizon" Thiselton refers to the limits of thought dictated by a given perspective or viewpoint (Thiselton, 1980:xix). In the interpretation of texts this scholar envisages two horizons, namely: the horizon of the text, in particular, that of the writer and his intended audience, and, the horizon of the reader or interpreter of the text. Thus, according to Thiselton, exegesis helps us to establish as accurately as is possible, the horizon of the writer and his intended audience. However, the nature of our task, which is interpreting prophecy in an African context, dictates that we move from that horizon of the author to the horizon of the interpreter and this is where hermeneutics comes in.

We define hermeneutics as a method of interpreting the Bible whose task is to bring about an active and meaningful engagement between the interpreter and the text in such a way that the interpreter's own horizon is reshaped and enlarged (Thiselton, 1980:xix). So, hermeneutics seeks to bridge both the cultural and historical gaps between the author and his intended audience on one hand, and the interpreter on the other hand. The method certainly has a synchronic dimension but it is different from the synchronic literal approaches we dismissed earlier in that hermeneutics proceeds from the results of exegesis, which is diachronic.

It aims to apply the message of the author, already determined diachronically, in such a way that it speaks to the situation of the interpreter of the text today. Therefore, in essence, hermeneutics helps us to avoid the methodological problem of jumping categories by applying various paradigms of historical and cultural relativity.

There have been similar attempts before. One that immediately comes to mind is James Limburg's method of interpreting the prophetic message for the contemporary context in his *The Prophets and the Powerless*, 1977. Limburg (1977:17) expresses a similar concern regarding what the prophetic word may mean today. He suggests that after determining what the text meant (through exegesis), the next thing would be to then determine what it means in the contemporary context. To do this the interpreter must ask two crucial questions: first, what does the text say about the relationship between God and humanity and second, what does the text say about the human being and one's relationships with fellow human beings? The interpreter then formulates brief answers to these questions in a manner that bridges the gap between what the text meant and what it means. However, in his application of this hermeneutic on Isaiah 1:10-17, Limburg observes the limitation of such hermeneutic in that it does not apply to every text in a mechanical way. We argue that meaning is not always attached to God's relationships with individuals, neither is it always specific to human interrelationships.

This is where Larkin Jr.'s hermeneutic comes in. Larkin (1988:104) asks broader questions than Limburg in what he calls biblical imperatives that guide his hermeneutics. Larkin's hermeneutic is guided by four critical questions. First, what teaching or practice does the text advocate? Second, what meaning is expressed by the action in the text? Third but strictly related to the second question, what is the rationale behind the action whose meaning is expressed in the text? Fourth, what is the cultural context in which the action takes place and is to be comprehended? It is from these biblical imperatives that according to Larkin we can arrive at the text's contemporary relevance.

There have been varied ways of dealing with the question of the context. While Limburg raises valid points, it is as if human relationships occur in a socio-economic and political vacuum, as he says nothing about the context or the creative milieu of the prophetic word. This is why we are happier with Larkin than Limburg. Larkin says something about the social context of the prophetic word, but does not satisfy us

regarding how the context is to be regarded in the hermeneutics. J.R. Jaeggli (1997) talks about contextual analysis involving a process of ‘de-contextualization’ that is to be perceived in terms of various levels of context: the immediate context within a paragraph, the relation of paragraphs within a genre, development of genres in a section of a prophetic book, and the macroscopic contribution of sections in the overall message of a book. By keeping a macroscopic perspective, the interpreter can maintain his/her bearings as s/he navigates through the many hermeneutical details one must consider.

We do not indulge in such complex explanations of the hermeneutic endeavour. We embrace both Limburg and Jaeggli’s contributions but add that there is need to define the relationships, teachings, practices, standards and meanings advocated by the text in terms of concepts. Our thesis is that concepts transcend time and culture. For example, the concept of eating is the same across time and cultures. What differs is what is eaten and how it is eaten, but the concept of eating remains the same conceptually in terms of purpose and significance. So, if we discern what Limburg’s relationships and Larkin’s biblical givens or imperatives or prerogatives in terms of concepts or what we popularly refer to as conceptual metaphors or paradigms, then we will be able to bridge both the historical and cultural gaps between the horizon of the author and his audience on one hand, and the horizon of the reader on the other hand.

Since the context of the prophetic message is a socio-political and economic one, it is logical to derive the conceptual metaphors from the hermeneutical tool of social scientific criticism. Elsewhere we define what we mean by this method (See Bishau, 2010). J. Elliot’s (1995:7) definition suffices and according to him social scientific criticism is a phase of the exegetical task which analyses the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models and research of the social sciences. Thus, for Elliot, it is a sub-discipline of exegesis that seeks to complement the other exegetical methods, all of which are designed to analyse specific aspects of the text. However, we mark a departure from Elliot in that for us, social scientific criticism helps the reader to move from the social environment of the text to the social environment of the reader. Thus, social scientific criticism is in fact a phase of the hermeneutical task.

Conceptual metaphors that can be derived from social scientific criticism include relative deprivation; the concept of image borrowed from the sociology of knowledge, familiar conceptual metaphors namely the honour-shame and honour-discourse models respectively (see DeSilva, 2004:280), patron-client and patronage models respectively (see DeSilva, 2004:334), the conceptual metaphor of ideological texture (for a detailed discussion and application of this see DeSilva, 2004:463), and ‘the power of incumbency’, which in our view is the concept that Limburg (1977:44-53) uses to interpret the prophets under the theme of power, and many other concepts that scholars have applied to penetrate the biblical text. In the last part of our chapter we use one conceptual metaphor that may not be familiar to several biblical studies scholars to exemplify our hermeneutics, namely the social scientific conceptual metaphor of ‘social capital’. Briefly we use this conceptual metaphor to derive meaning from Isaiah and a brief conceptual understanding of selected contemporary prophets in Zimbabwe today is attempted.

The Conceptual Metaphor of Social Capital

‘Social capital’ is a social scientific concept referring to connections between and within social networks; the social connections or relationships or networks are established purposefully and are employed by those wielding the social capital to generate tangible and intangible benefits in the short or long term (for a detailed definition and coverage see Coleman, 1988, 1994; Portes, 1998; Field, 2003). We need, however, to underscore the point raised by Field (2003:1) that the central thesis of the social capital theory is that relationships matter and therefore, social networks are a valuable asset that allow communities to commit themselves to each other through concrete relationships of trust. Once trust is built it becomes a shared value that allows individuals participating in the networks to put at each other’s disposal actual or potential resources for purposes of forming a durable network (Bourdieu, 1985:248). From P. Bourdieu’s definition social capital can be broken down into two basic components. First, the social relationship itself that allows individuals to claim access to resources possessed by their associates and second, the quantity and quality of the resources to which members have access. Sources of social capital are many and varied but the chief ones are: families, communities, firms, civil society, public sector, ethnicity and

gender (www.web.worldbank.org.) The biggest social capital one could have is networks involving political leadership at various levels because when one is involved in such networks easy access to the 'king' would accord them opportunities to influence political decisions that may then precipitate into all other benefits which of course, include economic benefits.

It is reasonable to argue that the concept of social capital is as old as humanity because we cannot envisage a period when human beings ever lived without social networks in which they actually benefited or had potential to benefit by mere participation in the networks. Therefore, hermeneutically, the concept of social capital transcends time, space and culture and hence, it can be used successfully as a conceptual metaphor that bridges the historical and cultural gaps respectively that exist between the horizon of the author of the biblical text and the horizon of the reader of the text.

Isaiah and Social Capital

We give here just an example of how this conceptual metaphor can be used to interpret the prophetic book of Isaiah and how the meaning we derive from there applies to our own context. While the full background of the prophet Isaiah is hazy, we deduce from the superscription that he was the son of Amoz (Isaiah 1:1) and from the fact that he could be seen to go in and out of the king's court we are able to deduce that indeed Isaiah was either a member of the royal family or he was well connected as a member of the social network of the king, Ahaz himself. From the point of view of the conceptual metaphor of social capital we are able to gain a lot of probable information about Isaiah and his family but, what is more important, we are able to conceptualize and rationalize Isaiah's actions.

While we do not know much about Isaiah's father Amoz, we know that he was a Southerner and probably had tribal ties with Ahaz who was himself a Southerner. This we can deduce from the level of knowledge Isaiah had about Ahaz's personal problems that only a member of Ahaz's inner circle would have. When Isaiah approached Ahaz during the Syro – Ephraimite crisis he demonstrated that he was aware of the psychological stress that Ahaz was experiencing due to a number of factors. Ahaz's father Uzziah had died from leprosy; there had been a natu-

ral disaster- the earthquake recorded in Amos 1:1 – and there had been a political disaster – a military invasion organized by Rezin and Pekkah – that saw the death of three key people in Ahaz’s government, Ahaz’s son, his deputy and his commander-in-chief (2 Chronicles 28:7). Ahaz’s refusal to accept Isaiah’s advice was probably based on a shared ideological conviction that the inner circle (probably the remnant that Isaiah spoke of) would be eternally protected by Yahweh. Those three disasters were evidence enough that for some reason Ahaz was no longer under such protection. We deduce this from Isaiah’s prescribed solution based on signs from Yahweh. So, Isaiah’s family was probably closely related to Ahaz, but this alone would not have accorded Isaiah the kind of social capital that he enjoyed. His association with Ahaz was based on a relationship further and perhaps more valuable than familial ties.

If we cannot explain Isaiah’s social capital from the perspective of familial ties, it is highly possible that he was a member of an important civic group that belonged to the same social network as Ahaz. This is why Ahaz would accord Isaiah access to the king’s court and would even lend him an ear each time he came with advice. Apart from the deep knowledge of Ahaz’s personal problems cited above, there is no record to show that any other prophet other than Isaiah visited the King’s court as frequently as, and with the kind of message carried by, Isaiah, in the book of Isaiah itself and both in the two books of Kings and Chronicles respectively.

Indeed the social group of prophets and their sons or disciples was a very important civic grouping and a rich source of social capital. Surrounded by the myth and mystical aura associated with the prophetic call, the king was bound to listen and respect such a grouping. Indeed too, since the dividing line between the political leader and the religious leader that time was tissue thin, we have every reason to surmise that Isaiah and Ahaz were part and parcel of the same social network, with Ahaz reaping spiritual benefits from the network and Isaiah and company reaping political and economic benefits and vice versa. One important benefit of social capital of this nature for a prophet is that the prophet’s legitimacy may not always be derived from his call but from access to the king and the state machinery surrounding him. During that time kings were known to be guided by gods and either victory or defeat in a battle was attributed to the gods. If the king for whom a prophet was advisor was always victorious in battle and successful in

leadership then logically the prophet would be regarded as legitimate. Thus, the social network was not only developed and made durable from trust, but also from such subtle benefits of the social capital. It becomes understandable when later Ahaz ignored Isaiah's advice that Isaiah became so frustrated that he even abandoned his so-called second ministry, depositing his prophecy among his disciples (Isaiah 8:1).

Social Capital and Selected Contemporary Prophets in Zimbabwe

It is not possible to do justice to the history of the Johanne Marange and the broad range of prophets among them in a section of a chapter on many other issues to do with prophecy in an African context. We seek here to understand only a minute aspect of them from the perspective of the conceptual metaphor of social capital.

One very spectacular phenomenon among the apostolic groups in Zimbabwe today is the presence of politicians at important gatherings of the groups. Similarly, the apostolic group members are also conspicuous by their presence at important national events unreservedly clad in their religious regalia. What is intriguing is that under normal circumstances the gatherings are addressed by specific prophets in the apostolic sects' hierarchy who take turns to do so. Ritual observance is strict. There is sacred space within which ordinary apostolic members may not enter, and non-members worse, if they are not in the required regalia and do not actually have bald heads, those sacred places are taboo. Towards the 2013 harmonized elections in Zimbabwe various politicians visited the Johanne Marange apostolic sect in Marange area in the Manicaland province of Zimbabwe. The pictures were taken during some visits by some of the politicians. It is interesting to note that contrary to their strict ritual regulations and taboos, the politicians were allowed space into the sect's sacred space. Not only that, the president of Zimbabwe and the first lady and some of female politicians around her were even allowed to put on the religious regalia that is a preserve of members. We know the president to be a Catholic and a staunch one, but to see him with an apostolic sect prophet's rod and staff has to be explained by some other theory other than that he was converted into the Johanne Marange sect. We know the opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader Morgan Tsvangirai to be a member of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe and a staunch one, his presence among the

Johanne Marange apostolic prophets warrants explanation. Exactly what is the nature of the relationship between these politicians and the Johanne Marange prophets that we see being depicted in part in the pictures below?



▲ *The President of Zimbabwe R.G. Mugabe walks clad in apostolic sect prophetic regalia.*

The First Lady G. Mugabe walks with members of the ZANU (PF) women's league through sacred space at the same gathering. ▼





▲ In typical prophetic posture, Mugabe addresses the Johanne Marange sect members.

On a separate visit, MDC leader M. Tsvangirai sits among the Johanne Marange sect prophets, shoes off as he is on sacred space. ▼



Among other paradigms to conceptualize the relationship, we argue that the social capital paradigm that existed between Ahaz and Isaiah and the social group to which they belonged can be a conceptual metaphor to discern what was happening here. Sometimes prophetic activity is much more than just a religious phenomenon. In the case pictured above, we see the apostolic sect prophets breaking their religious rituals and norms, even profaning their sacred space, in order to gain the much needed social capital. It needs to be noted that neither of the politicians, Mugabe or Tsvangirai, forced their way into the sacred space. It is inconceivable that Mugabe was even allowed to address the gathering with the staff of a prophet as if to suggest that he was a prophet himself. As was the case with the Ahaz-Isaiah scenario, the social capital is created and strengthened through legitimating and promises. At these gatherings apostolic sect prophets make crucial prophetic pronouncements either to legitimize the leadership of the politicians or prophecies predicting the perpetuation of the politician's regime. In return the politicians make certain promises to support economically or otherwise, the activities of the apostolic sects. More details can be given but what we have said here suffices to demonstrate the applicability of social capital as a conceptual metaphor and the kind of penetrative fecundity it has in hermeneutics.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have sought to demonstrate that indeed the prophets in the Old Testament can speak to the contemporary reader through the application of appropriate hermeneutics without seeking, as the proponents of the New Hermeneutic did, to assert that the biblical message itself needs to be reformulated in the light of contemporary culture. What we seek to do with our hermeneutics is to ask what the prophetic books mean for the contemporary context, paying attention to what the text meant for its own time. That way we avoid what Limburg (1977:18) refers to as 'the method of the religious quack, who picks a verse here, another there, and then patches together some comments on current events and predictions of future happenings for which one claims biblical authority.' Such is some kind of misuse of the Bible to support practically any opinion and to predict practically any event, which our proposed hermeneutics seeks to overcome.

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CHAPTER 5

Kudzai Biri & Lovemore Togarasei

“...but the One who Prophesies, Builds the Church”

Nation Building and Transformation Discourse as true prophecy: The case of Zimbabwean Pentecostal women

Abstract

This chapter celebrates the achievements of Pentecostal women in Zimbabwe in the discourse of nation building and transformation during the crisis years of the late 1990s to about 2013. During this period, Pentecostal women rose and gained space and visibility through their interdenominational fellowships. The chapter highlights the role that the women have played in addressing challenges brought by the crisis. Using the New Testament, and especially the Pauline, understanding of prophecy, the chapter then argues that Pentecostal women's discourses of nation building and transformation were indeed prophetic. It compares and contrasts women's 'prophecies' with the prophetic acts of some men whose practices put the office of the prophet into disrepute.

Introduction

“May Zimbabwe live! Cry the beloved country; Zimbabwe shall live!”
(Pastor, Dr Cathy Chindori)

With over 80% of Zimbabweans professing to be Christians (Togarasei 2012: 229-245), it is no surprise that public discourses are punctuated with a lot of biblical quotations and references. The Bible continues to play a very central role, not only on matters of morality, but in reality, in all matters: politics, economics, and all other sectors of life. This scenario is especially so among Pentecostal Christians. For this reason, even discourses on nation building and transformation following the crisis years leading up to the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in 2009, saw the public influence of the Bible.

The crisis years saw millions of Zimbabweans flocking to the diaspora. Pasura (2012:138-147) estimates that between three and four millions of Zimbabweans went on voluntary and involuntary migration to

neighbouring countries and beyond. This was from the 1960s and especially during the period under discussion. This mass exodus saw the separation of families as spouses, children, brothers, sisters headed to different destinations of the world in search of better lives. Those who were left behind were deprived of basic commodities and many other challenges associated with a failing state. Women and children were worst affected by the crisis as some men who left for the diaspora abandoned their families back home, starting new lives wherever they went. The crisis adversely affected women and children also because in a bid to rectify the situation, the government carried out policies that were gender blind (Chitsike 2011:169-6).

The policies adopted emphasised the need to reduce poverty levels, often without the thought of re-establishing and strengthening families. This is where Pentecostal women made a very important contribution. They tried to deal with the root causes of the problem which they found in family disintegration. In this chapter we, therefore, highlight the economic situation that has adversely affected the social life of most Zimbabweans leading to the collapse of the socio-economic and political fabric of the nation. We show that it is within that context, that Pentecostal women rose and gained space and visibility because of their inter-denominational fellowships. We, therefore, highlight, as well, the role that the women played in addressing these challenges. These women treated the crisis of morality as the basis for arguing for the need for nation building and transformation. Moreover, it is a fact that the GNU did not bring notable changes that empowered women. As such, Pentecostal women continued to argue that they were marginalised and women had to initiate change themselves rather than to wait for men or the government.

This chapter, therefore, celebrates the achievements of Pentecostal women in Zimbabwe in the area of nation building and transformation during the crisis years. It treats such discourses as prophetic acts and utterances, a position that has not been addressed in the public discussion of what prophecy entails in Zimbabwe. Using the New Testament, and especially the Pauline understanding of prophecy, we argue that Pentecostal women's discourses of nation building and transformation were indeed prophetic. We, therefore, compare and contrast their 'prophecies' with the prophetic acts of some men (the majority of which are discussed in public- see further discussion of this below) whose prac-

tices have put the office of the prophet into disrepute. Data for this chapter were collected by one of the authors who was a participant in the national transformation activities of Pentecostal women in Harare. They were collected between 2010 and 2013. The field data were supplemented with data from other sources such as newspapers and specified web pages. Before we consider prophetic activities during the crisis years, we need to examine the context of these prophecies first.

The Zimbabwean crisis

The crisis that Zimbabwe experienced from the late 1990s to 2009 when the Government of National Unity brought some sanity in the country, has been adequately documented (Chikuhwa 2006; Mlambo, Vambe and Zegeye 2010; Togarasei and Chitando 2010; Maposa, Sibanda and Makahamadze 2011). This crisis began with the introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in the early 1990s, to the payment of gratuities for war veterans of the 1970s in 1997; programmes which saw the erosion of workers' salaries due to the Zimbabwean dollar's loss of purchasing power. Subsequent events that included the rejection of the 2000 draft constitution and the ensuing invasions of white owned farms by landless people did not help the unfolding crisis (Makoni and Kujinga 2000).

The disputed 2002, 2005 and 2008 elections further contributed to the crisis as Zimbabwe was isolated by the major political and economic powers of the world. The crisis reached its boiling point in 2008 when the country's government systems literally came to a halt. Schools and hospitals were closed and all other government systems were crippled as inflation became uncontrollable and food and most other goods became unavailable. In the midst of this deep crisis, many prophetic voices arose addressing the crisis in many different ways. In the section below, we examine the rise of 'prophets' in the context of the crisis.

The crisis and the rise of 'prophets'

The crisis years in Zimbabwe saw the rise of many prophets. Traditionally Zimbabweans are used to consulting soothsayers whenever they face crises in their lives (Shoko 2007). Due to the lambasting of these traditional diviners by the missionaries, many Zimbabweans are now shy to

consult traditional healers (Chavunduka 1994). But the desire to get divine guidance in times of crises continues. This explains the popularity of ‘prophets’ during the crisis years. So many are the prophets who arose during this time that at a funeral in November 2012, President Robert Mugabe questioned their integrity, “Also in some churches you hear that a husband and his wife are prophet and prophetess . . . *Ah, zvino ndozvazvinoitwa here vakomana? Bhaibheri ndozvaraiita?* (Is that how it is; is that what the bible says?)” (Guma 2012). Mugabe even went on to note that there seemed to be more prophets in Zimbabwe than the ordinary people. Though this was an exaggeration, the President’s point was loud and clear: the nation had seen the rise of many prophets. The crisis years made many Zimbabweans so desperate that they had to seek divine intervention. Thus many prophets arose claiming to offer divine solutions to the people’s problems. Amongst the most popular prophets that arose during the crisis years were Matthias and Mildred of Matthias and Mildred Ministries, Emmanuel Makandiwa of the United Family International (UFI), Uebert Angel of Spirit Embassy, Erasmus Joseph of Word Life Ministries and many others. The majority of these popular prophets were men, although a few women were also found in the group.

The popular prophets did not address the structural issues that many identified as having caused the crisis: poor governance, corruption, lack of rule of law and human rights abuses among many others. Rather they concentrated on individual sin; prayerlessness, failure to tithe, not believing in God, following traditional religion, witchcraft, etc. For them these were the causes of the crisis that Zimbabwe was experiencing. As a demonstration of power and divine inspiration, some prophets like Makandiwa and Angel identified people in the congregation by their national identity and cell phone numbers. Sometimes they told people their home addresses, the names of their relatives, the types of music they liked and colours and designs of furniture in people’s houses. Whole services could be devoted to these acts, together with healing of the sick. They made predictions of deaths of some people, miraculously reduced people’s weight, raised the ‘dead’ or prayed for the barren to conceive and bear children in three days! They prophesied that Zimbabwe was destined for prosperity as God would ‘rain’ gold and diamonds in the country. With the many problems Zimbabweans experienced during the crisis years, such claims by the popular prophets and their loyal members increased their clientele. Many people flocked to these prophets to have their problems addressed. Therefore, it is little

wonder that mega churches arose during these crisis years. The prophets promised prosperity that is divinely instituted. They promised people that all the suffering would end, as long as people heeded God’s voice and contributed to the church in form of tithes and pledges.

The prosperity prophets (the majority of whom were men as noted above), however, stirred a lot of controversy in the country. There were accusations that the prosperity they preached was only realised by them as many of them moved from rags to riches. Some people even accused them of consulting traditional healers to get their healing powers (www.myzimbabwe.co.zw/news/3064-false-prophets-in-zimbabwe-use-vultures-brains-to-predict-future-prophesy-peoples-lives). Others were accused of sexually abusing unsuspecting Christians in the name of divine healing (www.sott.net/article/255319-Fake-prophet-rapes-woman-in-Mutare-Zimbabwe). There were also cases of the prophets themselves criticising each other and challenging each other to demonstrations of power. For example, after Prophet Erasmus Joseph of Word Embassy Church predicted that there would be a plane crash in Southern Africa, another prophet, Pastor Paul Tizora of Word in You Ministries, responded,

“It is very unfortunate that we now have a lot of people who are using the name of God to be popular. The role of the prophet is not to put fear in people, it is quite obvious that sooner or later a plane crash will happen in Southern Africa” (www.myzimbabwe.co.zw/news/5156-prophecy-harare-prophet-predicts-plane-crash-that-will-kill-all-passengers).

All these accusations and counteraccusations put the office of the prophet into disrepute. Thus, instead of providing a divine voice in the midst of the Zimbabwean crisis, these prophets were accused of taking advantage of it to pursue personal gains.

Crisis of Morality? Pentecostal women’s interpretation of the crisis

As the male prophets addressed the crisis in the manner described above and thus attracting public attention for both good and bad reasons, Pentecostal women in Zimbabwe had their own, different perceptions about the crisis. They diagnosed the crisis as a spiritual crisis. They said Zimbabwe had been undergoing a crisis of morality and that this had a bearing on the politics and economics of the nation. Homosexuality, lesbianism and the negative effects of the internet such as pornogra-

phy were cited as the chief causes of the problems. They said behind the immorality were spiritual forces at play.

The above spiritualisation of the Zimbabwean crisis by Pentecostal women was, however, strongly challenged by some people. They asked; how does the spiritual problem explain the mismanagement of resources by some politicians, the negative effects of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme, among many government policies? Chitando (2012:274), for example, critiques this position when he points out that spiritualising the problems in Zimbabwe has the effect of shifting the blame from politicians tasked with guiding the country. He says Pentecostals gloss over the economic causes of the crisis and in the process fail to critique corrupt leaders. Other scholars have found positives in spiritualising African crises. For example, Kalu (1998:28-29) sees the Pentecostal intercessory prayer as a form of political engagement that moves beyond Afro-pessimism to argue that God can change the situation in Africa. He sees prayer as “a reconstruction of Christian experience,” based on their deeper engagement with issues affecting the individual’s social identity” (Kalu 1998:30).

Chitando (2012) and others’ criticism of the spiritualisation of the Zimbabwean (African) crisis would, in the case of this chapter, be true of the male prophets we have discussed above. This is because the Pentecostal women we are focusing on did not end on the prayer mat in their discourses of nation building and transformation. They went further to engage in practical action to transform the country. They declared that women were champions because they bore the scars of the crisis. Hence they were better positioned to take the lead in transforming and rebuilding the nation of Zimbabwe (Shana, Interview, 2-02-2013). They questioned and even destroyed existing popular models of development (van de Kamp 2010:152). They argued that God does not use politicians in transforming society, but the Church. This attitude and perception of excluding politicians in their envisioning of nation building and transformation informs us of Pentecostal response to the crisis. Below we analyse the Pentecostal women’s practical responses to the challenges over and above prayer and the miraculous acts of the male prophets.

Pentecostal women’s response to the crisis

Zimbabwean Pentecostal women addressed the Zimbabwean crisis at two levels: the moral level and the economic and developmental level. However, let us hasten to mention that, as we have shown above, Pentecostals believe the moral and the economic are intertwined as the moral affects the economic. Thus our separation of the two levels is simply for analytical reasons as, practically, Pentecostals do not do this. At the moral level, Zimbabwean Pentecostal women were very vocal during the 2011-2013 constitution making process. They challenged issues of the legalisation of prostitution, abortion, and acceptance of homosexuality, for example. They spoke against the so-called human rights discourse seeking to promote practices like homosexuality, describing these as human ‘evil rights’. Such human rights for them militated against Godly principles and African traditional ethical values that oppose these practices. The Pentecostal women also spoke against witchcraft practices, especially in the form of Satanism which they believed to be rife in schools. Women, therefore, advised each other to send their children to Christian schools and even encouraged churches to build more Christian schools.

The women did not also shy away from addressing tribalism and racism in the country. At one of the EFZ 2013 women’s gatherings, Mrs Shana (one of the leaders of the interdenominational women’s forum) said the following, “We choose to pull down walls and names that separated us, our differences, our personalities and the way we see things, to do one thing.” The tribal rift between the Shona and the Ndebele, often perpetuated by politicians in order to gain political mileage, was addressed by these women. Songs were sung both in Shona and Ndebele at the gatherings to demonstrate ethnic solidarity. Transcending ethnic boundaries, women addressed each, not on the basis of ethnic or family identities, but on the basis of spiritual identities. They were sisters to each other, “daughters of the father” (God) (Pastor Gurupira) or “Daddy’s girls” (Dr Chindori). Pentecostal women in Zimbabwe demonstrated the power of religion in shaping society. Their discourses were significant because they mobilised the church and society to be patriotic. They also encouraged unity and solidarity which was a dire need in a nation characterised by ethnic fragmentation and political parties’ strife. This approach challenged the pessimism that many critics and scholars

of religion have expressed on the potential role of religion in transforming nations and nation building (Eloia, 2012).

Politicians were not spared criticism in the Pentecostal women's discourses of nation building and transformation. They were mainly accused of corruption which the women said was endemic in Zimbabwe. "Politicians have failed us," one of the women said at the 2013 EFZ meeting in Harare, "but women in Zimbabwe will not fail to build Zimbabwe and restore the nation to its former status of being the bread basket of Southern Africa." But in accusing politicians of corruption, Pentecostal women also self-introspected. At one of the women's gatherings, Taruvinga (2-02-2013) observed:

Our culture is sick, plagued with corruption...., yet 83 percent are Christians. So do we think 17 percent is corrupt? No, corruption is also in the church! How do we understand Zimbabwe's Christian religiosity against the background of corruption and socio-economic breakdown? If Christians are 83%, then who is corrupt? Is the church immune from allegations of corruption?

Whereas the public Pentecostal gospel seems to denounce culture and tradition by emphasising "a complete break with the past" (Meyer 1998), Zimbabwean Pentecostal women's discourses of nation building and transformation tapped into culture and tradition. They engaged local traditional idioms to foster family relations. The family was at the centre in Pentecostal women's discourses of nation building and transformation. Members were encouraged to maintain their relations with kin and to meet their obligations to their families. As Mate (2002) observed, Zimbabwean Pentecostal women stress certain cultural and traditional values as necessary for women who want to build up their families. They believe that building the nation requires building families first. The philosophy of *unhu/ubuntu* (Taringa 2007) is underlined. They lambasted the internet, accusing it of failing to bring positive change, especially in children. They were also against feminist ideologies seeing these as weapons that are used to destroy nations and contradict God's divine plan for Zimbabwe. Thus women were discouraged from seeking jobs outside the country as this often results in them leaving their children to be brought up by other people. In their words, they stressed, "the culture of bringing up one's children..." They said it is these attributes which give women "power, splendour, excellence, honour, favour." At national level the discourse then is that since women bear scars of birthing children, it is the same women who can again give 'birth' to a new and

prosperous Zimbabwe. Thus instead of burying and burning the past, Zimbabwean Pentecostal women advocated the mining and re-living of the past that promoted the functioning of the family and the nation.

At the economic and developmental level, Zimbabwean Pentecostal women were also very active. They challenged the prevailing political and economic system, claiming that it is the Church that could bring positive transformation. Therefore, they placed themselves at the centre of the agenda to re-build Zimbabwe. As we have mentioned above, they denounced those fleeing the country to seek economic refuge in other countries. In their gatherings, some women pointed out that they had to turn down good job offers in the diaspora because they did not want to go out of the country. They also criticised the missionary gospel that emphasised riches in heaven by stressing the need to enjoy wealth on earth. Poverty was challenged with the emphasis, "You cannot have influence if you are poor!"

Hard work and entrepreneurship were encouraged. Using the example of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31:10ff, women encouraged each other not to just depend on their husbands for sustenance but to fend for themselves and for others. Since mothers feed the children, the teaching among the women was that, as mothers in Zimbabwe, they needed to feed the nation both physically (by producing agricultural products, for example) and spiritually (by praying for the good of the land). Empowerment lessons were shared as women taught each other how to be productive. Different Pentecostal churches therefore pioneered projects to empower women. Pentecostals created opportunities for employment through running hospitals, schools, hotels, universities. In the discourses of Pentecostal women, this was to demonstrate that Pentecostals, especially the women members, could re-build the nation of Zimbabwe.

Pentecostal women discourses of nation building and transformation put women at the centre of this process. Women were reminded that they could initiate the transformation and lead the nation of Zimbabwe to become the Promised Land (land that is economically stable, morally upright and influencing other nations). Women thus declared; the mandate for the transformation of Zimbabwe was not for the government but for the children of God! Women were also portrayed as "roots" with the understanding that if the roots were weak, they could not sustain the tree, but if the roots were strong, the whole tree would be healthy. There-

fore, the women mobilised each other to pray, to love one another, to be united and to teach children and influence men so that the nation of Zimbabwe could become one.

All these powerful images and teachings were meant to evoke a spirit of patriotism and sacrifice for the motherland. For example, in one of the women's gatherings, women were reminded that the Bible sponsored the industrial revolution in Europe, so the church, through its women, could inspire revolution in Zimbabwe. "Revolution from corruption to faithfulness, revolution to rescue Zimbabwe from inflation, revolution *kuti Zimbabwean dollar ridzoke* (revolution to bring back the Zimbabwean dollar), that is our currency" (Taruvinga 2-02-2013). In all these calls, Pentecostal women were honest and critical of themselves and their religion. They always declared, '*zvinotanga nesu muchechi*, (it begins with us in the church). They also taught that the world was a reflection of what was in the Church. This, therefore, strategically placed Pentecostal women to be in a position to pioneer nation building and transformation because they did not cover up or gloss over the church's weaknesses and limitations. They mobilised women to set their lives and houses in order so that they could impact the whole nation.

Female pastors from different denominations had their own meetings to discuss the challenges Zimbabwe was facing and mapping out strategies for development. Some of the women even called for women's public awareness campaigns for the need to transform and rebuild the country. One of the speakers at the EFZ interdenominational meeting in 2011 proposed several marches in the cities and along major roads of the nation especially the Harare-Beitbridge road. The marching would be a prophetic act, symbolising the unity of the nation and the dominance of the Christian religion. She claimed that Christians in Zimbabwe should emulate the Arabs, whom she claimed are divided in many things but united in one thing- the destruction of the Israelites. She said Zimbabweans, especially women, who belonged to different political parties and ethnic groups had to be united by one common thing- the agenda to rebuild Zimbabwe. She used the biblical image of the story of Hannah, Peninah and Elkanah (1 Samuel 1:2). Peninah had provoked Hannah for a long time but at some stage she decided that she had had enough. She decided that she had to take action and made sure she got a son. Thus Zimbabwean Pentecostal women were also to do the same: to take action and reform the country from the many years of suffering. They re-

minded each other that there was need for urgency; urgency to teach children and mobilise men to “embrace the kingdom agenda of re-building the nation of Zimbabwe.”

Some Pentecostal women criticised the ‘miracle money’ discourse of some male Pentecostal prophets. In the midst of the crisis prophets like Uebert Angel preached the gospel of ‘miracle money’, teaching that those with faith could miraculously overcome the economic challenges facing Zimbabwe when, in response to their faith, God filled their pockets or their bank accounts with money. Some Pentecostal women challenged this ‘cheap’ doctrine. For example, at ZAOGA Grange International Church, the pastor announced;

ZAOGA does not believe in miracle money, we have been taught to work talents, to use our hands and God blesses the work of our hands, there is no such thing like miracle money! (Sermon 5-02-2013).

The basis of such criticism in ZAOGA (and other Pentecostal denominations that criticised ‘miracle money’ prophets) lay in their understanding of prophecy in the Bible and also God’s principles of blessing his children. Many women argued that they believed in working hard and that God had principles of blessing them, rather than raining money from heaven.

Pentecostal women’s response as prophetic ministry

Above, we have outlined the work that Pentecostal women did for nation building and transformation. In this section we argue that, according to the New Testament definition of prophecy, the Pentecostal women’s discourses of nation building and transformation were indeed prophetic. We base our argument on 1 Cor. 14:3, “...but the one who prophesies, builds the church.” We argue that the common and popular understanding of prophecy as foretelling (Mare 1966:139) is misleading and has resulted in many people in Zimbabwe being deluded by the contemporary prophetic bandwagon of popular prophets we discussed above. These male prophets have deeply divided the nation, with some following them and others describing them as nothing but charlatans bent on enriching themselves through claiming prophetic inspiration. We argue that, though some New Testament prophets had abilities to perceive the thoughts and background details of other people and to predict future events as done by the likes of Prophets Makandiwa, Angel and many

other prophets of the same guild, neither of these is necessarily the primary function of the gift of prophecy. By definition, “prophecy is an inspired word of instruction and/or exhortation that addresses the community in the language of the people...” (Gorman 2004:275).¹ According to Paul, prophecy edifies, encourages and consoles (1 Cor. 14:3). We also follow Hargreaves (1978:178), who, when commenting on the kind of prophecy Paul had in mind in writing 1 Cor. 14, notes the following:

- That prophets were a group of Christians within a congregation who taught the people
- That they were responsible for up building, encouragement, consolation, convict and call to account
- That they were not foretellers, but rather people who were fully aware of the will of God and the situation in which they and their contemporaries were living.

We also agree with Barrett (1967:316) that the word ‘prophecy’ as used by Paul in 1 Cor. 14:3, “refers much less to prediction than to exhortation and exposition of Christian truth.” It is in the light of these definitions of prophecy that we consider the work of Zimbabwean Pentecostal women prophetic. In the name of God, these women, “fully aware of the will of God and the situation in which they and their contemporaries live”, have not emphasised the miraculous, and in the process seek to enrich themselves. Instead, they identified the structural realities that have led Zimbabwe to where it was. They taught their members how to survive in the crisis. They preached the gospel of building, not only Zimbabwean families, but the nation as a whole. They encouraged and consoled the Zimbabwean populace, reminding them that it is the Church that could bring transformation since with God, nothing is impossible. They also called for accountability by politicians and all the people as they addressed corruption, maladministration, ethnicity, immorality, both in word and in action. Like the prophets that Paul had in mind, they taught their members practical skills to survive in a tumultuous economic situation. All this was been done in the name of God. As

¹ Gorman bases his definition on Paul’s use of the term. The OT Hebrew word, *nabhi*, strictly means “a spokesman, speaker, prophet” while the Greek word, *προφήτης*, indicates “one who speaks for a god and interprets his will to man” (in the classical sense), and “as a proclaimer and interpreter of divine revelation” (in the LXX and New Testament), (Mare 1966:139).

true prophets, they did not seek individual fame through miraculous deeds and pronouncements, but were very practical pertaining to the issues that had brought suffering to many Zimbabweans. They, therefore, encouraged and consoled realistically. True to the prophetic role of a community builder, they engaged in discourses of nation building and transformation.

Discussing the prophets of the Old Testament, Brueggemann (1978: 110-113) has also discussed the role and characteristics of prophets that captures the prophetic ministry of Pentecostal women in Zimbabwe. He notes that throughout history, the prophetic ministry has arisen where people lived together and worry about their future and their identity. In such a situation prophetic ministry has served the following:

- To evoke an alternative community: This is what Pentecostal women did in pursuit of a new Zimbabwe guided by Christian morality.
- To provide a hermeneutic about the world of death and the world of life that is brought to light in every context: Brueggemann notes from Old Testament prophets that prophetic work is not about a miraculous event or an act done at some specific time and place. Prophetic ministry, rather, should be about the day to day lives of the people. This is what Zimbabwean Pentecostal women were doing. They spoke to the issues that affected people daily, pronouncing the will of God in practical ways that addressed day to day realities. They did not promise ‘miracle money’ as their male counterparts. Instead they challenged the structural issues that caused the people’s suffering.
- To accompany the people and share their pain: Above, we noted that most male Zimbabwean prophets brought the office of the prophet into disrepute. Most of these prophets did not accompany the people and share their pain. Rather, they manipulated the people and enriched themselves.² Prophets Makandiwa and Angel, for example, ranked among the richest citizens of Zimbabwe, even as the majority of their followers languished in poverty. According to Brueggemann, this is not a true mark of prophecy.
- To penetrate despair so that new futures can be believed: Zimbabwean Pentecostal women exposed the real causes of the suffering of

² Enriching oneself is a mark of a false prophet according to criteria for identifying true and false prophets in the Old Testament (Grabbe, 1995:82).

the people and called upon the people (especially women) to specific action that could bring a better future.

It appears Pentecostal women had a deeper understanding of the will of God. They did not wait for anyone to engineer the agenda of re-building and transforming the nation as they declared, "...this is not the season for men ... we will teach our children and influence our men to follow, you and I have a mission. Mothers, we are the roots!" (EFZ women's meeting, 2-02-2013). The prophecy coincided with the Pentecostal quest to establish morally upright families and also families' building discourses that emerged as a result of the crisis. The crisis led to further disintegration of African family life, ethics and the communal orientation. Zimbabwean Pentecostal women's discourses of nation building and transformation could, therefore, be seen as a prophecy that challenged Christians to unite, re-build and transform the nation. It was a prophecy, which embraced the notions of hard work (activity), transforming (repenting) and assurance of prosperity that was conditional upon these notions. This was contrary to some prophecies from local (male) prophets that appeared to glorify the 'prophets' as they, for example, shouted out names of people, their house, phone and national identity numbers.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have discussed the work that Zimbabwean Pentecostal women engaged in in response to the crisis that engulfed the country from the late 1990s to about 2009. We have argued that many prophets emerged, offering solutions during the crisis. The emergence of the prophets was met with mixed feelings by Zimbabweans. In this chapter, however, we have highlighted the work done by women in action and in their discourses of nation building and transformation as prophetic. We have based our definition of a prophet, not on the common parlance of foretelling and performing miracles, but following Paul in 1 Cor. 4:3, that prophets teach, build, console, convict and call to account.

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CHAPTER 6

Ezra Chitando

Prophets, Profits and Protests

Prosperity Theology and Zimbabwean Gospel Music

Abstract

While the phenomenon of prophets in Zimbabwe has attracted considerable media and scholarly interest, there has been less focus on responses towards prosperity theology, one of the direct products of the prophets, in music. In particular, gospel music has become one of the most strategic sites of contestation around prosperity theology. On the one hand, some artists celebrate prosperity as a mark of divine favour. On the other hand, there are artists who challenge the emphasis on material progress in Christianity. To address this gap in the extant literature, this chapter focuses on responses to prosperity theology in Zimbabwean gospel music, while integrating material from other genres of Zimbabwean music. The chapter culls the socio-economic and political context in which prophets who popularise prosperity theology have emerged. It proceeds to highlight the key tenets of prosperity theology. The chapter captures the celebration of prosperity theology in gospel music, as well as its contestation in the same. It also describes attitudes towards prosperity theology by artists in other musical genres. Overall, the chapter contends that the sharp divisions that have emerged towards prophets and prosperity theology are in turn played out in Zimbabwean music.

Key words | nation building, transformation, Zimbabwean Pentecostal women's fellowships, crises

Introduction

The popularity of music by young Zimbabwean gospel musicians such as Mathius Mhere (“Favour”) in 2012 and early 2013 was not accidental. This music celebrated material prosperity, upward social mobility and general progress by the individual. It was couched in the language of defeating negative spiritual powers, identified as “the spirit of poverty” (Maxwell 1998) and achieving wealth in the “here and now.” This music

was infused with the key messages disseminated by young Pentecostal prophets in Harare. These prophets included Emmanuel Makandiwa of the United Family International Church and Uebert Angel of the Spirit Embassy Church. Central to their preaching and actions was the conviction that faith in God results in material prosperity this side of the grave. Operating in a society saturated with respect (and possibly, even envy) for individuals with wealth (“**ane tunhu twake**”), prosperity theology associates material prosperity with divine favour. Music promoting this worldview was therefore quick to gain popularity.

Music that celebrated prosperity gained ground following a “decade of crisis” (1998-2008) that saw the linguistic landscape being changed by the emergence of terms and expressions such as “**marwadzo**” (pain, a difficult situation), “**kurova pasi petsoka**” (to beat under the feat, painfully exorbitant prices), “**kukanga wire**” (roasting a piece of wire, difficult situation) and others (Kadenge 2012: 148). Emerging from a crisis of monumental proportions where life savings were wiped in a stroke following the shift from the Zimbabwe dollar to the multi-currency regime, Zimbabweans were “ripe” for more intense versions of prosperity theology. In a recent publication, Kudzai Biri (2012) has drawn attention to this quest for power, healing and miracles in the Zimbabwean Pentecostal movement.

While young Pentecostal prophets were promoting prosperity theology, their approach was not without contestation. The contestation could be found within “mainline” Zimbabwean churches, that is, churches initiated in the missionary period, such as the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Adventist Churches (see Zvobgo 1996). There was also internal contestation around prosperity theology within the Pentecostal movement itself. Non-Christian commentators waded in and indicted prophets for commercialising religion. Critics charged that the emphasis on material progress was not consistent with the “proper” teachings of Christianity. More fundamentally, they charged that it was the prophets who reaped profits from such a theology. Some musicians recorded songs that challenged prosperity theology.

This chapter contends that the contestation around prosperity theology in Zimbabwean society was played out in music. Artists influenced by prosperity theology recorded music that promoted this worldview, while those critical of it also produced music that challenged it. In the first section, the chapter provides an overview of the socio-economic context

that gave rise to prosperity theology in Zimbabwe. In the second section, the chapter outlines the key tenets of prosperity theology. The third section describes music promoting prosperity theology, while the fourth section draws attention to critiques of prosperity theology. In conclusion, the chapter calls upon researchers to remain vigilant in the face of competing ideologies and theologies.

Then came the Prophets: An Overview of the Socio-economic Context

In order to appreciate the upsurge in Pentecostal prophetic activities in Zimbabwe, especially from 2008 to 2013 and the subsequent interest in music addressing prosperity theology, there is need to appreciate the overall socio-economic context in which this drama was being played out. While a number of narratives are required in order to do justice to this theme, in this chapter I will outline some of the key themes that need to be considered. Due to space limitations, it will not be possible to elaborate on each one of these themes. Nonetheless, I will endeavour to draw attention to what I regard as the critical dimensions relevant to understanding the specific issues I will raise below.

First, it is vital to acknowledge that the rise in Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe is part of a larger, global phenomenon. Many commentators refer to the first “outpouring of the Holy Spirit” in downtown Los Angeles in 1906, more popularly known as the Azusa Street revival, as the genesis of Pentecostalism (Aasmundsen 2012: 87). Pentecostalism emerged as one of the fastest growing religious phenomena of the last century and retained its momentum into the contemporary period. This has attracted the attention of several scholars (see for example, Hollenweger 1968, Cox 1995 and Lindhardt 2012). Emphasising the role of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and miracles, Pentecostalism has expanded rapidly in the United States of America, Latin America and Africa. In particular, the 1990s saw Pentecostalism gaining a significant share of the religious market. Writing on Latin America, David Martin (1990) referred to “tongues of fire” and the explosion of Pentecostalism. Other scholars such as Allan Anderson (2004 and 2007) have drawn attention to the global significance of the phenomenon.

Second, whereas Zimbabwean Pentecostalism is part of the larger global phenomenon, it is also characteristic of African Pentecostalism. African

Pentecostalism interacts with the global phenomenon but gives it a distinctive African flavour. Works by, among others, Ogbu U. Kalu (2008) Paul Gifford (2004), Afe Adogame (2011), Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) and Asonzeh Ukah (2008) have sought to clarify the character of African Pentecostalism. African Pentecostalism engages with the underlying African view of the universe, with its firm belief in a myriad of spirits and powers. So pervasive has the Pentecostal influence been that many “mainline” churches have had to negotiate with it. This has seen the emergence of “charismatics,” that is, Pentecostals who continue to operate within the traditional missionary churches (Omenyo 2002).

Third, the emergence of young Pentecostal prophets after the “crisis decade” (1998-2008) must be linked to the “Spirit-type” prophets of the Apostolic and Zionist churches who emerged in Zimbabwe in the 1930s (Gunda 2012: 335-336). While Asamoah-Gyadu (2012) detects a move “from prophetism to Pentecostalism,” it may be more helpful to think of the two as co-existing. Whereas the “older” Apostolic, white-robed prophets appear to have been overtaken by younger Pentecostal prophets, they continue to offer their services to clients from diverse backgrounds (Chitando 2009). The young Pentecostal prophets disseminating the message of prosperity must, therefore, be located within the context of a pre-existing “prophetic tradition” in Zimbabwe.

Fourth and critically for this chapter, the impact of the economic meltdown during the “crisis decade” must feature prominently in efforts to understand the rise of young Pentecostal prophets and preachers. In the wake of increases of poverty, high death rates, unemployment, hyperinflation and hopelessness, many Zimbabweans would find a message promising wealth, abundant life and hope quite appealing. By the end of 2008, life in Zimbabwe had become a struggle for survival. Citizens deployed terms that characterised their poverty, lack and desperation. Terms such as “**kukiya-kiya**” (making ends meet), “**kujoinisa**” (to join things together) and others (Kadenge 2012) were used to characterise the dire situation that Zimbabweans found themselves in. Brian Raftopoulos (2009: 202) summarises the challenges thus:

A key aspect of the crisis was the rapid decline of the economy, characterised by, among other things: steep declines in industrial and agricultural productivity; historic levels of hyperinflation; the informalisation of labour; the dollarisation of economic transactions; displacements; and a critical erosion of livelihoods.

As the crisis deepened, many citizens sought solace in religion. In particular, Pentecostal prophets proclaimed that God had grand plans for Zimbabweans. If they would commit themselves, pray and fast, their fortunes would be transformed in a very profound way. The emphasis was on individual transformation in the midst of massive structural challenges. After the government adopted the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1991, there was an increase in poverty for the majority of the people. Although Pentecostal churches such as the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) had existed for decades (Maxwell 2006), newer churches began to emerge in response to the socio-economic challenges (Ndlovu 2012). In particular, the theology of prosperity began to gain popularity. The “durawall of faith” (Maxwell 2005) was meant to protect the faithful in the face of severe socio-economic challenges. The following observation by Virginia Garrard-Burnett (2012: 25) applies to Zimbabwe:

In the 1990s, as neo-liberal economic policies in Latin America reshaped both economic policies and ordinary people’s access to the system, one can argue that (the) prosperity gospel emerged in force at least partially as a reaction to changes in market forces. Certainly, this was the case elsewhere in the developing world, especially in Africa and Asia, where economic transition and corruption in the case of the former and unprecedented economic advances in the case of the latter have forced people into new methods of coping with new global realities.

Faith with Profits? An Overview of Prosperity Theology

As outlined in the foregoing section, the economic environment in the “crisis decade” led many Zimbabweans to embrace prosperity theology. While a separate narrative is required to describe prosperity theology, herein I will outline its key tenets. The major characteristic of prosperity theology is the idea that success in life’s endeavours is an integral part of a Christian’s experience of salvation. Salvation is not an event to be experienced in the remote future: it is a present possibility and reality. Researchers who include Gifford (2004), Ayegboyin (2011) and Garrard-Burnett (2012) have explained prosperity theology as a specifically Pentecostal doctrine that places emphasis on the attainment of wealth and health in the life before death. However, I would contend that this concept has diffused to other denominations.

Whereas missionary theology tended to promote the notion of salvation as a future event, prosperity theology shifts focus to salvation as attainable in this life. The obverse is deemed true: failure to thrive implies divine punishment. “Poverty theology,” that is, teachings that present this world and wealth as evil, is rejected. Why must Christians, heirs to all the riches of God, struggle in this life? Although writing with particular focus on Nigeria, Deji Ayegboyin (2011: 161-162) offers a useful description when writing:

In these churches, prosperity, not only in things spiritual but also in the secular realm, is accentuated. Poverty is no longer seen as an ideal to be striven for; rather pauperism, destitution and slender means are simply interpreted as God’s chastisement.

Built into prosperity theology is the fascination with miracles. Miracles confirm the “man of God” and authenticate the promises of prosperity. These miracles differ in range and complexity. In the period 2010 to 2013 in Zimbabwe, this included “miracle money” where money was said to enter into peoples’ pockets mystically, gold “raining” on congregants, “miracle weight loss,” healing of all kinds of ailments, “miracle babies” that were (putatively) delivered three months after conception, and others. Ideologically, miracles serve to present the prophet as one who avails abundant life to his congregants in the life before death.

The sharp contrast between the contemporary emphasis on prosperity and the traditional, world-denying approach to salvation can be illustrated by the Zimbabwean funeral classic, “*Hatina Musha Panyika*” (“We Are Pilgrims on Earth”). The moving song reminds hearers that this earth is temporary and converts are yearning to proceed to the “real home to come” in heaven. On the other hand, prosperity theology celebrates wealth in this life. One of the Pentecostal songs that gained popularity across the Southern African region in 2009, “My God is good”, by Uche, a Nigerian Pastor, highlights the preoccupation with material wealth. I capture the key phrases below:

Oh he-e he-e
 My God is Good oh (x 2)
 Everything nadouble-double
 Nadouble-double
 Promotion double-double
 Nadouble double
 Your money double-double
 Nadouble-double...

As the song shows, the major focus is on prosperity and progress. Divine favour is seen in advances in life: promotion at work, financial success and the “doubling” of all the positives in one’s life. Whereas traditional soteriology has concentrated on heaven and the life to come, prosperity theology focuses on success in this life. Prosperity relates not only to the ability to meet basic and recurrent costs, but also the peace of mind that ensues from such capacity. According to Kingsley Larbi (2001: 313) prosperity refers to:

...the ability to live a happy and balanced life without having the problem of having to think what to eat, where to sleep, what to wear; how to meet one’s social expectations, like school fees, children’s education and the ability to contribute to the needs of one’s community.

Prosperity theology contends that believers must “sow” in order to “reap” financial rewards and good health in this life. Through giving generously, God will reward them richly. The work of their hands will thrive, irrespective of the prevailing situation. God is projected as the God of miracles who empowers believers to “make a way where there is no way.” In their preaching and prophecies, proponents of prosperity theology such as Makandiwa, Angel and Prophet Passion promised adherents who gave generously that their lives would be transformed. They would no longer be in want, but they would become stable economically. God would ensure that poverty would not haunt them any longer.

When operating in African Pentecostalism, prosperity theology also evokes indigenous beliefs in oppressive spiritual forces and human enemies. In this paradigm, converts to Christianity must remain wary and stand guard against evil spirits and powers that seek to prevent them from enjoying the wealth that Christ secured by his painful death on the cross. Kalu (2008) rightly observes that the African map of the universe has been taken over by African Pentecostals. Prosperity entails domesticating these evil spirits and persons. This was confirmed by Makandiwa’s Easter 2012 theme, “Judgement Night” where the enemies of the believers would be vanquished and prosperity ushered in. The event was accompanied by an aggressive media blitz and had undercurrents of apocalypticism. Prosperity theology, therefore, includes the humiliation of one’s enemies.

As I shall illustrate below in my analysis of the song, “Favour,” prosperity does not only mean attaining outrageous wealth. In contexts characterised by anxiety and desperation, such as Zimbabwe during the “crisis

decade,” prosperity may mean the capacity to live to fight for another day. In this regard, the “durawall of faith” (Maxwell 2005) acts to protect individuals from sinking into oblivion. When one’s very own existence is threatened daily, what would be termed mere survival in other contexts becomes prosperity. This has been communicated in Zimbabwean gospel music.

Prosperity in Zimbabwean Gospel Music

Having been firmly planted in the national consciousness, prosperity theology soon found its way into gospel music. Studies on gospel music in Zimbabwe have dwelt on its historical development (Chitando 2002), openness to globalization (Chitando 2011) response to the Zimbabwean crisis (Gwekwerere 2009) and discourses of emancipation and empowerment (Magosvongwe 2008). Gospel music, essentially understood as music that seeks to promote a distinctively Christian outlook and to convert people to Christianity, has remained popular since the 1990s. It must be understood as an integral part of the Pentecostal struggle to sacralise space and ensure that Christian themes dominate. This has seen many Pentecostal churches in Harare, for example, taking over premises that were previously used as movie houses for divine services. The overarching concern is to “win culture and space for Jesus.” The ideology is that the devil “stole” music, hence Pentecostals must win it back for Christ.

The theme of prosperity features prominently in gospel music produced by the Pentecostal stable, which also happens to dominate the gospel music scene in Zimbabwe. Various artists have echoed the declarations by the prophets that those who give generously will be rewarded by God. They have also dwelt on the theme of election: God’s elect will enjoy abundant blessings. This has been expressed clearly in the album, “Zvichanaka/It Shall be Well” by Donna Chibaya. Her music essentially reassures the faithful that they are not called upon to suffer but that their prosperity is assured. Other artists, including Pastor G, Mercy Mutsvene and Sebastian Magacha, have also produced music that addresses the theme of prosperity and calls upon Zimbabweans to stand firm in faith. The bulk of this music was produced during the “crisis decade.” The music played a significant role in recharging citizens to persevere in the wake of devastation.

“Favour” and Prosperity

One particular song that dwelt on the theme of election and prosperity that enjoyed popularity in Zimbabwe in 2012 and 2013 was Mhere’s “Favour naMwari” (Favour with God), commonly referred to as “Favour.” The song enjoyed extensive airplay on the different radio stations, in public transport vehicles/kombis, hair salons and private cars. It competed favourably against music from the **sungura** genre by artists such as Alick Macheso and Sulumani Chimbetu. In Harare, revellers at popular spots such as Zindoga in Waterfalls and Mereki in Warren Park would play the song from their cars at these braai spots. Field observations confirmed that the song appealed to those who self-identified as Christians and those who did not. Below I highlight key aspects of the song:

Takaiona
Takaiona Favour ichiuya naBaba
Favour haitengwi nemari
Favour haitsvakwi kun’anga
Favour haiuye neshamwari
Favour inouya naMwari
 We saw
 Our Father bringing us favour
 Favour cannot be bought using money
 Favour cannot be brought by friends
 Favour comes from God

The constant refrain in the song is that of the faithful as the chosen ones of God. Although it appears to challenge the emphasis on paying tithes as the route to prosperity (“favour *haitengwi nemari*”), its overall thrust is to identify the faithful as those chosen by God. In this regard, they have been selected for prosperity as God’s favour leads to success. The song offers a quick review of those chosen by God and how they defied the odds. Thus, God chose Hannah and David from amongst those who would have felt more competent than them. It reassures faithful Zimbabweans: “*Mwari vanotipa tafura vavengi vedu varipo*” (God prepares our table in the sight of our foes).

“Favour” the song found favour with many music fans in Zimbabwe. In a profound way, it coincided with the fervour of “miracle money” associated with Prophet Angels and prophetic activities by Prophet Makandiwa and others of their ilk. The title of the album, “*Anoita Minana*” (He Works Miracles) captures the preoccupation with the miraculous on the

Zimbabwean religious landscape at the time that it was released. “Favour” celebrates success and prosperity as signs of divine blessing. Its theology resonates with the prosperity theology that was in circulation when it entered the market. Disputes regarding its composition (some associated it with Blessing Shumba, another gospel musician) could not derail its impact on the market. Because it spoke to a popular theology, it managed to attract a lot of followers.

In the preceding section, this article drew attention to the impact of the “crisis decade” on the expansion of Pentecostalism on the Zimbabwean spiritual market. The song “Favour” assisted many citizens to interpret their “post-crisis” situation as a mark of favour and prosperity. Many had witnessed the deaths of relatives and friends. Others had seen neighbours fleeing into the Diaspora. Yet, they had remained behind and “succeeded.” It is instructive to note that the sheer fact of surviving the crisis was interpreted as a sign of prosperity. The official dollarisation of the economy in 2009 enabled some Zimbabweans to begin experiencing some financial relief after years of hyperinflation. This was also read as a sign of divine favour.

The song “Favour” thus associates upward social mobility and prosperity as evidence of one having received the “divine seal of approval.” In line with prosperity theology, it evokes the rhetoric of defeating one’s enemies and their subsequent humiliation. Fungisai Zvakavapano-Mashavave captures this vividly when she prays that her enemies live long enough to witness her success (“*itai kuti vavengi vangu vagoona kubudirira kwangu*”). This is in keeping with some aspects of Old Testament theology where enemies must be “put down,” in both the metaphorical and physical senses. Mhere’s “Favour” retains the same ideology. It is not surprising that the examples of individuals who enjoyed God’s favour, Hannah and David, are Old Testament characters.

It is instructive to observe that many Zimbabweans cherished the extended family institution. However, this also brought intrigue, competition and suspicion. Accusations of family members who deployed *zvikiwambo* (goblins) to achieve success while frustrating others were numerous. The song, “Favour” must be understood against this background of witchcraft fears and accusations within families. Individuals who managed to hold on their jobs, built modest or ostentatious houses and sent children to school deemed themselves prosperous. Music that celebrated success and prosperity, such as “Favour,” appealed to them.

Contesting Prosperity Theology through Music

Prosperity theology propounded by some prophets and musicians was challenged from a number of perspectives. From within theology and religious studies, the major debate centred on whether prosperity theology subverted the fundamental Christian doctrines. One fundamental and recurrent criticism was that the so-called “man of God” was in fact, the “man of gold.” Where many made reference to “prophets,” it was more accurate to talk about “profits.” Critics maintained that proponents of prosperity theology were in fact deeply (and exclusively) interested in their own prosperity at the expense of members of their congregations. Below I highlight some of the debates in the scholarly literature and in Zimbabwean music, the major focus of this chapter.

While Chitando (1998) has appreciated its capacity to mobilise black Christians to participate in economic programmes, he charges that it is built on elitist and shaky foundations. However, Togarasei (2011) regards prosperity theology as having many positive dimensions. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to pursue these arguments in detail. What is instructive to note is that Zimbabwean scholars (as elsewhere) have held opposing views regarding prosperity theology. Such opposing views are also found in Zimbabwean music. Below I draw attention to critiques of prosperity theology in Zimbabwean music.

No Place for the Poor in Church? Elias Musakwa’s Critique of Prosperity

Elias Musakwa, a prominent gospel musician in the 1990s, questioned prosperity theology in his music. A cultural nationalist, Musakwa associated prosperity theology with the extreme aspects of globalization. In a particularly scathing attack, he charged that prosperity theology was all about preachers according value to those with money. Those on the periphery of society had no space in the new churches that worshipped money and class, he submitted. I will highlight his critique in the song, “*Ndiri Bofu Ishe*” (I am Blind Lord):

Zvikanzi nasisi vangu Mai Nkululeko, “Regaivo ndiende kuchechei ndinopu-pura zvandakaitigwa naMwari,” Zvikanzi: “Hama dzangu Mwari wakanaka! Pazvikuku zvangu zvinamakumi maviri nezvishanu, kana chimwe zvacho chakafa. Mwari wakandiitirawo zvakakanaka!” Zvikanzi, “Haiwa tibvirei! Taifunga kuti makatenga mota isu!

My sister, Mother of Nkululeko said, “Let me go to church to testify about the good things that the Lord has done to me. Out of the twenty five chicks I had, not one died. The Lord has done good things to me!” The crowd said, “Get away! We thought you had bought a car!”

Musakwa associates the prosperity gospel with discrimination based on class. Poor people are ignored at church and the high places are reserved for the rich people, many of whom are not even fully committed to the faith. Pastors only want to preach in the Diaspora. Thus, “*Vapfana, vhangeri riya ropisa somoto! Iye zvino ndonoparidza kuAmerica, nekuEngland nedzimwe nyika dzakadero*” (Young people, the gospel is now burning hot like fire! Now I preach in America, England and such-like places). They shun the rural areas as these do not bring any financial benefits to them. In fact, in the song the pastor remarks cynically, “*Kana tichiparidza tinoreva kumadhorobheni. Zvekumaruzevha hativuyiko. Hamuna mari yekubvisa chegumi. Muchaparidzirana ikoko!*” (When we preach, we mean the urban areas. We do not bother to come to the rural areas. You do not have money to pay tithes. You will preach to each other there!).

Musakwa is unrelenting in his criticism of the trend towards promoting the prosperity gospel. According to him, special places are reserved for those who are well known to the pastors. Poor women in particular have no space: they might even be moved from one place to another until they are left standing! The preoccupation with the English language and sophisticated dressing results in elitism. Togarasei (2010) also wondered whether these were in fact churches for the rich. Musakwa is highly critical of the emphasis on associating one’s material wealth with one’s spiritual standing.

For Musakwa, the preoccupation with prosperity has corrupted the church and weakened its pastoral ministry. Pastors no longer want to visit church members who are poor or who live in less affluent suburbs. Worse still, the appointment of deacons and elders is no longer guided by qualifications that are laid out in the Bible, but by the perceived financial clout of the prospective candidates. Those who own Mercedes Benz vehicles receive preferential treatment, while members of the Zimbabwe Footers Association (the car-less) are brushed aside.

Pastors threaten to shut down “useless” congregations, that is, those congregations that do not generate a lot of money. Corrupt individuals get high positions in Church on the basis of the money that they bring. The pastor says, shamelessly, “*mari imari chete, hazvina basa ndeye njuga*

kana yembanje” (money is money, it does not matter whether it is from gambling or from marijuana). For Musakwa, the end result is that church leaders now worship “*mari*” (money) and not, “*Mwari*” (God). The absent “w” represents a major loss, he avers. Profits, not prophets, reign supreme in such a scheme.

Musakwa’s critique is echoed by Fungisai Zvakavapano’s protest in the song, “*Baba Mufundisi*” (Pastor). Zvakavapano criticises pastors who are preoccupied with wealth at the expense of preaching a saving gospel. When congregants tithe, the pastor must meet his side of the bargain by preaching powerful. Using the ZAOGA model (where she is a member) of giving Talents, a form of tithing (“*matarenda*”), she demands: “*matarenda tabvisa, toda kuona Mwari pano*” (we have given our Talents, we want to see God here). Pastors may no longer continue to exploit their members: they must live up to their calling. Similar criticism has also been proffered by Winky D, a musician operating in the urban grooves genre.

“*Maninja Chenjerai*” (Ninjas Watch Out): Winky D’s Critique of the Prosperity Gospel

Winky D has emerged as an astute social commentator, although his musical genre, urban grooves, does not enjoy popularity amongst older Zimbabweans. However, it is quite popular with the majority of Zimbabweans, namely, the youth. His music is informed by an acute level of social consciousness. Locating himself within the Zimbabwean “ragga” protest tradition, Winky D has called upon young people (*maninja* in his parlance) to be alert in order to guard against abuse by the ruling elite. Born Wallace Chirumiko and also known as “Big Man,” he has emerged as one of the most popular performing artists in Zimbabwe. Manase (2011: 81) writes: “He, just like reggae icons such as Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, sings about the existence and effect of poverty, as well as of human relations, politics and religion on everyday experiences.” Below I draw attention to the key sections of his song, *Munodarirei?* (“Why do you do this?”) where he challenges new forms of Christian expression in Zimbabwe.

Shoko rakanaka somukaka
Zvinondinetsa vamwe vave kurirunga
Haiwa bodo ndinoramba

Vanoti vakaponeswa asi vasungwa
Nokuda masaramusi
 The Word/Gospel is as beautiful as milk
 What worries me is that some are trying to sweeten it
 No, I refuse
 They say they are saved but they are prisoners
 Because of their preoccupation with miracles.

Winky D positions himself as a social commentator and criticises Christians who manipulate their own religion for personal gain. Building on the Shona idea that milk does not need sweetening (*“chakanaka chakanaka mukaka haurungwi munyu”*), he challenges those who are sweetening the gospel by concentrating on prosperity. Whereas the old chorus declared that the gospel was beautiful (*“rakanaka vhangeri, rakanaka!”*) such people were now seeking to adjust it to satisfy their own interests. They were forcing many Christians who thought they were saved to remain oppressed as they were now searching for miracles. The artist contends that the quest for miracles in the churches led to mass enslavement. He continues to chant:

Kana muchiti kunamata
Hakuzi!
Vanhu vave kuda masaramusi kuti vapinde muchechi
 If you think this is worshipping
 It is not!
 People now demand miracles for them to go to that particular church.

From the foregoing, Winky D concludes that the preoccupation with miracles is, in fact, a scandal. He declares that this is not genuine worship. When miracles become the only motivating factor for people to join a church, real religion has been lost. He contends that this is the ultimate bastardization of religion. He puts it across forcefully: *“Idzo chechi dzomobata kunge toireti”* (You are treating churches as toilets). If churches used to be sacred spaces, they have become as profane as public toilets!

In order to guard against gullibility, Winky D calls for the spirit of discernment and vigilance. People must not take matters at face value, but they must adopt a critical attitude. According to him, *“Dai tambomira kubvuma zvataona nemeso edu, titange tadzikamisa pfungwa”* (We must stop accepting what we see with our eyes, we must compose our brains first). Winky D, therefore, calls for vigilance regarding miracles and

prosperity. After all, the Bible said false prophets would come: “*Bhaibheri rakataura kuti kuchauya vanyengedzi*” (the Bible said false would come). Ultimately, there is need for permanent vigilance, as he says in the chorus:

*Maninja chenjerai
Huchenjeri hwepasi pano
Kudenga hupenzi
Ninjas beware
The earth’s wisdom
Is foolishness in heaven.*

Winky D challenges society to be more discerning when it comes to new forms of religious expression. He eschews simplistic interpretations and fears that those who are supposed to deliver society from its multiple problems (that is, the Church) will actually lead it to destruction (“*vatinotemba kuti vachatibvisa mumatambudziko ndivo vachitiwisira mugungwa*”, that is, “those whom we trust to deliver us from our problems are leading us astray”). At any rate, miracles will not lead to the full liberation of their recipients as they would not have been empowered. Using a line from liberation theology that places emphasis on teaching people to fish rather than giving them fish, he declares: “*achakupa hove asingakudzidzisi kuiraura muvengi*” (he who gives you fish without teaching you to fish is an enemy).

Winky D, an iconoclastic young Rasta man and urban grooves artist, contends that Zimbabwean Christianity has taken an alarming turn in last few years. Like gospel artists such as Musakwa and Fungisai discussed above, he is convinced that the preoccupation with prosperity and miracles is contrary to the true spirit of Christianity. He avers that the sacred dimension of the Church has been compromised and where people previously looked for salvation, they are now interested in attaining wealth or squeezing a miracle from the “men of God.”

Conclusion

As the media in Zimbabwe continued to cover the craze around prosperity and miracles in the Church, the debate spilled over to music. While some artists celebrated miracles and prosperity, others produced music that was highly critical of the phenomenon. The debate over miracles and prosperity, therefore, spilled over from conversations and scholarly

publications into the artistic domain where various artists came up with opposing stand-points. In this chapter, I have refrained from openly endorsing or criticising prosperity and miracles. Instead, I have sought to describe how artists on either side of the divide have articulated their positions. What is clear, however, is that prophets, prophecy and prosperity have influenced perceptions in Zimbabwean music and researchers must invest in untangling the multiple and complex positions that have emerged.

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CHAPTER 7

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Reflections on the Morality of Some Prophetic Acts in Zimbabwe's Pentecostal Movements

Key words | Biblical ethics, prophecy, prophetic acts, prophetic ethics, African spirituality, Pentecostalism

Abstract

This essay investigates the re-emergence and proliferation of prophetic or charismatic movements in contemporary Zimbabwe. One wonders what has kindled this revival: Is it a fulfillment of the end of time as prophesied in Scripture? Has the Christian church in Africa got a new commission? Is it a sign of apostasy of the last days? Is it just an indication of self-fulfilling agendas of those involved? The paper discusses arguments on both sides of the divide. It hopes to draw useful inferences from the manifesting phenomena which will deepen our understanding on the matter.

Introduction

“Miracle campaign”, “Special divine healing programme”, “Evening of deliverance and prophecy”: such slogans, covering the walls of Africa’s large cities, bear witness to the growing visibility of Pentecostal movements in sub-Saharan Africa. Such is the common herald of African prophetic and charismatic churches in Lagos, Nairobi, Johannesburg, Harare and other African cities. In Zimbabwe for instance, the media is awash with wonders such as the ‘miracle baby’, ‘miracle money’ performed by prophets Emmanuel Makandiwa and Uebert Angel respectively. Evidently, Pentecostalism has made phenomenal strides in Africa. However, this phenomenon has generated immense interest and provoked heated debates amongst scholars regarding the moral status and spiritual significance of these acts. Never in the history of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe have prophetic acts generated such heated controversy.

These movements are renowned for reverberated teachings on prosperity, prophecy on personal lives and miraculous deeds and many people flock to them to witness the spectacles, if not to get saved. Many observers regard the revival and extension of this Pentecostalism with deep scepticism.¹ Others are beginning to suspect spiritual foul play. Evidently, the phenomenon has generated deep spiritual concerns for the Christian Church in general and Pentecostalism in particular. The question is; are these ‘new’ churches indeed playing the prophetic role as instituted by God in the scriptures or are they just there to hoodwink believers into some self-serving expeditions? Can we use biblical standards to gauge their spiritual and moral status? Now that they base their authority on the Holy Spirit promised to believers by Jesus Christ, do we have a pneumatic scale? How can one tell the difference between true and false prophets in the new Pentecostal movements? (see the chapter by Vengeyi in this volume). Such is the problem at hand.

This study employs knowledge of ethical theory to suggest the direction such an assessment may take. However, the researcher is cautious not to ‘venture where angels are afraid to tread’ – that is to say; there is always a danger of attempting to judge matters of the Spirit using rational tools.

In pursuance of the objective above, the chapter examines selected prophetic actions as manifested in Zimbabwe prophetic movements and seeks to determine their moral efficacy in light of Biblical ethics – particularly Christian ethics. It seeks to embark on some comparative analysis of the prophetic acts in some selected biblical literature and those of the prophets in the selected African Pentecostal movements with the hope of establishing either congruence or dissonance. In the final analysis, the hope is that perhaps this exercise will help us ascertain affinity or dissonance. Perhaps this will also help us determine whether African Pentecostal prophets are attuned to the Holy Spirit of God.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section sets the context of African Pentecostalism within the global movement. The second examines the African prophetic or charismatic movements in relation to African traditions or with a view of establishing whether these prophets or charismatic movements can still be regarded as authentically Christian in spite of having strong affinity to African spirituality. The

¹ This caption is found in C. Mayrargue (2008) and aptly describes the visibility of African Pentecostalism in African urban centres.

third makes a comparative analysis of the conduct and goals of biblical prophets and these African messengers of God.

An interesting corollary would be to assess the implications of all this, if it turns out that the leaders of these prophetic or charismatic movements have gone traditional or that they subscribe to a subtle form of dualism, between tradition and Christianity. Is not this case similar to that of the Church in Europe which has long been charged with promoting Western culture instead of upholding the tenets of Christianity?

Prophetic Manifestation in African Pentecostalism and African Initiated Churches (AICs)

Generally, Christianity in Africa and presumably all its dimensions is a result of the tragic encounter between Africa and the West (Coertze 2005:23). Colonialism has forced African Christians to exist without identity and this has wrought havoc (Ibid). As a result, there are lots of schisms in African Christianity, although we tend to celebrate this pluralism and diversity (Ukah 2007:2). Prophetic movements in Africa are aspects of Pentecostalism, which finds expression in the mainline Pentecostal churches or in the indigenous churches, also called African Initiated Churches (AICs). The AICs which also include prayer groups, constitute the African strand of Christianity. However, these pluralistic, and at times, discordant, orientations make one wonder whether the manifestation of these multiple variants of Christianity in Africa are routes to a common end – the worship of the ‘God of the Christians’. Thus, Christianity when applied to Africa is amorphous. Are we talking of Christianity practiced in Africa or of Africans who have become genuine Christians? Taking cue from Ukah (2007:2), there are many varieties of ‘African Christianities’ – Mission Christianity, African Initiated Christianity and African Pentecostalism.

Christianity was brought to Africa in Western clothing. Prior to the 20th century, Christian work was pioneered by Western churches and their missions. These became the mother churches in Africa (Oduro 2006:1). Accordingly, the administration of the church in Africa was by these Westerners missionaries or their representatives. In the words of Oduro:

The liturgy, hermeneutics, evangelization, architectural designs, administrative setups, worldview, and theological education and training of Af-

rican churches were, generally, patterned after their Western “mother churches.”

In addition, as Desmond Tutu (1975:29) points out, “... most Western missionaries in the early days found it difficult, if not impossible to distinguish between the Christian faith and Western civilization.” As Coertze (2005:14) puts it, “Not only did this portray wrong impressions of what Christianity is about, but it also viewed itself in its Western culture as superior to the African way of life.”

The situation changed dramatically at the dawn of the 20th century when Africans took an active role in the spread of Christianity. Again, as Oduro (2006:2) asserts:

Christianity in Africa was no longer solely linked to the missionary endeavours of Western missionaries and missionary associations. Many Africans played pragmatic and pivotal roles in the life of the Church in Africa. Many factors led to the turn of events in African Christianity, some were latent, and others were overt. The most significant factors, however, were the translation of the Bible into local languages, religious paternalism of some Western missionaries, the craving for political independence by Africans, Western missionaries’ lack of understanding the worldviews of Africans, and cultural revivalism in Africa.

Evidently, a host of factors have contributed to the massive involvement of Africans in the spread of Christianity. In some cases, Africans were simply reacting against a form of Christianity which was overly Europeanized – they wanted Christianity to be relevant to the needs of African daily life (Zvanaka 1997:69). Other factors were simply circumstantial – disease outbreaks, which missionaries failed to control or desertion by missionaries as financial support from their mother countries ran dry. However, some of these factors had nothing to do with Christianity per se, but with broader issues of a politico-racial nature generated by colonialism and the struggles for emancipation. Hendricks and Erasmus (2002:21) point out that the leaders of the pioneer Black churches were instrumental in the struggles against colonialism, imperialism and apartheid. It is in this broad stream of events that African Initiated Churches (AICs) were formed. In the end, there existed in Africa two forms of Christian churches; those established by Western missionaries and those founded by Africans as they broke ranks with the Western missionaries. The churches initiated by Africans came to have many different labels - African Independent Churches, African Indigenous Churches, African Initiated Churches, and/or African Instituted

Churches. The tag African Initiated Churches or African Independent Churches (AIC) best fits them all. They are generally defined as:

... congregations and or denominations planted, led, administered, supported, propagated, motivated, and funded by Africans for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and worshipping the Triune God in the context and worldview of Africa and Africans (Oduro 2006:1-2).

The phenomenon of AICs is complex. These churches are not homogeneous by any standard. Characteristically, they are a manifold cluster of units numbering thousands (Coertze 2005:9). This in part is caused by the problem of nomenclature, for it is not easy to give a straight forward label for these movements. According to Oduro (2006:2), researchers have classified these AICs according to general types; Ethiopian, "Zionist" Prophetic/Healing, and Pentecostal/ Charismatic. The healing aspect of the Pentecostal AICs was meant to cover the void left by mainline churches which placed emphasis on physical healing at the expense of the spiritual aspect. Initially it was believed that each of these groups had a flair for a particular ministry, but this belief was later abandoned. As a matter of fact, the AICs were, to use Oduro's coinage, "a potpourri of African churches" (2006:2). However, Oduro maintains that we can still classify AICs under the following labels- conservative, charismatic and reformed (2006:2). The conservatives maintained very closely the teachings of their founders, even if they were at variance in some instances with the wider church or even the Bible. The charismatic AICs were quite the contrary of the conservatives in many respects. Anderson aptly describes them thus:

Their founders are generally charismatic and younger men and women who are respected for their preaching and leadership abilities, and who are relatively well educated, though not necessarily in theology. These churches tend to be more sharply opposed to several traditional practices than is the case with prophet-healing churches, and they often ban alcohol and tobacco, the use of symbolic healing objects, and the wearing of uniforms. The membership tends to consist of younger; less economically deprived, and more formally educated people. They are often seen, particularly by the older AICs, as mounting a sustained attack on traditional African values (2001:19).

The Reformed AICs make up the last type. This group shuttles between the conservatives and the charismatics, while particularly careful to avoid extremes (Oduro 2006:3). This study focuses on the charismatic AICs where the young and relatively young leaders flourish. In Zimbabwe,

Makandiwa, Uebert Angel, Tavonga Vutabwashe, and Oliver Chipunza can serve as exemplars. These leaders are breaking off from established Pentecostal churches and forming their independent ministries. This development is a bit different from charismatic leaders of the early Pentecostal movements, who chose to work within their mother churches.

Thus, one can argue that the spontaneous nature of Pentecostalism, coupled with lack of a well defined centre has resulted in the proliferation of Pentecostal movements. The challenge, then, is to tell which of these are authentically Christian.

In relation to the mainline Churches (i.e. European originated Churches), the AICs are often referred to pessimistically as separatist, perhaps because of schismatic wrenching from European originated churches (Thomas 1995:17). The fact that some AIC's were formed in reaction to the discriminatory practices by the Christian missionary churches to colonial subjects implies that these new churches courted the condemnation of the main-line ones (Motshekga 2007:2). They also faced antagonism from the Africans who remained members of these Western based churches (Coertze 2005:14).

Interestingly, the Pentecostals and the AICs converge in some respects. Most of these AICs are spiritual in that they perform amazing acts purporting to be guided by the Holy Spirit of God (Anderson 2003:178). These miraculous deeds, it is argued, are meant to authenticate the presence of the Holy Spirit in evangelism. Some of the acts of the Spirit include prophecy and healing. However, it is this spiritual dimension which has given rise to serious controversy between the orthodox churches with their Pentecostal counterparts. In one instance, the claim by the AICs to the Holy Ghost is tantamount to reconnecting Africa with her pre-Christian past (Ibid). In another instance by appropriating it to do signs and wonders, the AICs are charged with misunderstanding the functions of the Holy Spirit (Ibid). With respect to the first aspect of the controversy, AICs allegedly draw freely from elements from tradition in their quest to fulfill the authenticity of their churches (Ibid). In this controversy, the problem arises when each of these Christian movements attempts to lay a claim to monopoly over the Spirit of God. Interestingly, the manifestation and ministration of the Holy Spirit in African Independent Churches has been met with a mixture of skepticism or outright dismissal.

In its growth, which has been tremendous (Adeboye 2004), African Pentecostalism has assumed multifarious hues. Perhaps, this is what Mayrargue is pointing at:

African Pentecostalism covers a disparate collection of movements: “mega churches”, able to hold thousands, or even tens of thousands, of worshippers, and microscopic ones; foreign Churches from outside of Africa and local organisations; inter-denominational movements which work together with the whole evangelical movement and more closed ones (Mayrargue 2008:6)

The other dimension of the Pentecostal or neo-Pentecostal movements has been the perceived ministration of the Holy Spirit in the tussles against devils and evil spirits. These churches, as Hackett contends, are oriented towards delivering the converts from Satanism and other forms of demon possession (2003:62). The Holy Spirit came to be regarded more as Emmanuel (*Isheanesu* in chiShona), suggesting the abiding presence of God the Holy Spirit in the church (Phiri 2009). The Holy Spirit equips the church in significant ways. In the words of Adeboye:

... a common thread that runs through Pentecostal Christianity is the experience of a new life articulated in personal narratives of conversion, and the transition from an ‘old’ life to a ‘new’ one. This ‘new’ life is controlled by the Holy Spirit, which is manifested in glossolalia, pneumatic gifts, charismata, and in diverse miracles (2004:137).

Although African Pentecostalism is generally presented as imported, it is important that one also examines its creativity. As Mayrargue claims:

Many Africans turn to Pentecostalism as a result of problems they face. By emphasizing its claims to solve problems of daily life, as well as existential problems, Pentecostalism seduces populations that are faced by a decreasing quality of life, by the “insecurity of modernity”, by feelings of isolation or a loss of traditional points of reference. At the same time, this religion is one solution among many, sometimes chosen as a last resort after having tried “everything else”, and often part of an individual’s complex and unfinished religious path (Mayrargue 2008:4).

Some scholars, mostly from the west and orthodox Christians, advocate that the African variant of Pentecostalism be treated with caution as it is not fundamentally Christian (Mayrargue 2008:4). It is interesting that the authenticity of the African variant of Christianity is held suspect especially by mainline churches mostly from the West, yet nobody questioned their own drive to westernize Christianity. This scenario raises a very profound question; does the cultural distance between the various

African communities and Jerusalem automatically preclude the former from embracing ways of the latter? Or is it that the African mode of being and the Christian way of life are mutually exclusive?

Without recourse to essentialism, it appears that the early phase of Pentecostalism was prone to hostile tendencies. As Hackett warns, "... it goes without saying that antagonism between competing religious groups is hardly new. Nor is the recourse to accusations of false prophecy, wrong authority, or evil foundations." (2003:199). An inescapable consequence from this brief excursion into Pentecostalism is that there was antagonism along lines of race between the AICs and the orthodox Christian churches; as there was between AICs and white Pentecostal groups. There was also rivalry amongst the various Pentecostal movements on claims to authenticity or the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit in acts of exorcism or healing or the proceeds from healing (Matsepe 2002:ii). The AICs came to be considered as peddling a form of bogus Pentecostalism by their white counterparts; while they in turn labeled the latter as hawks and imposters.

Motshekga (2007:1) raises a momentous charge against AICs, namely that they infused African culture and embraced the 'back to Africa campaign'. Matsepe (2002:1-2) singles out the Zionists as having appropriated African traditional healing. Zvanaka, a leader within the Zionist Church in Zimbabwe, says something which substantiates this point:

Life revolves around healing. The prophet is normally the agent through which the Holy Spirit heals people. In the institution of prophecy, our African Christians find something closely akin to and a substitute for the non-Christian spirit medium. The prophet, like a non-Christian spirit medium, always identifies some personal power to be responsible for someone's illness. Serious illnesses are never incidental (1997:74).

Prophetic movements in the AICs have largely been considered as aspects of 'Church of the Spirit'.² These churches are by and large chips from the global Pentecostalism (Anderson 2003:178). The origin of global Pentecostalism is a debatable issue, whose details lie outside the scope of this paper. In brief, however, some scholars, notably Allan Anderson, trace it back to the Upper Room as mentioned in Acts (2:1-4). J. M. Bonino regards contemporary Pentecostalism as just a revival of that initial movement. Nevertheless, David Martin contends that Pentecostal-

² 'Churches of the Spirit' is a coinage I found in Allan Anderson (2003) which refers to those churches which give a preeminent role to the Holy Spirit and its fruits.

costalism is just a form of furtherance of the Methodism begun by Wesley (Adeboye 2004:139). Nehemiah Tile seceded from the Wesleyan Methodist in 1884; whereas Dube and Mokone broke away from the same in 1892 (Motshekga 2007:3). In addition, there are also scholars who suggest that Pentecostalism had simultaneous origins in a black church led by William Seymour and a white church led by Charles Parham in the United States of America at the start of the twentieth century (Mayrargue 2008; Adeboye 2004). A peculiar feature of the black church Pentecostalism was the lack of theological training of the leaders. Baptism of the Holy Spirit was the only qualification indicative of the call to go and preach the Gospel to all nations before Christ's Second Advent. Thus, the urge to evangelize within the African variant of Pentecostalism overrode the need for sound theological education and experience. As a consequence, the African variant of the Pentecostal movement had easy propagation in continental Africa. In Southern Africa, for instance, the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Assemblies of God and the Full Gospel Church emerge as the oldest Pentecostal churches (Chetty 2002:6).

Prophecy has been useful to the Church since its inception, as the institution has always been eschatological in outlook (Feinberg 1964:3). The prophetic tradition of the church was in confronting the sinful defects of society (Kruschwitz 2003:1). In the Old Testament alone, about seventeen (17) books were dedicated to prophecy (Ibid.). Feinberg makes a startling observation as to the importance of prophecy to the church today:

But if possible, the believer of this age has more reason to be interested in prophecy and its themes than ever before, because it is one of the purposes for which Christ sent the Spirit into the world. The Scriptures reveal an eightfold ministry of the Spirit in this age. He restrains evil in the world; He is said to reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment; it is through His agency that regeneration is effected; He dwells in every believer who becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit by faith in Christ; it is His office work to baptize all believers into the body of Christ; the Spirit of God seals every believer, Himself being the seal; the obedient and yielded believer is filled with the Spirit; and the Holy Spirit guides into truth (Feinberg 1964:3-4).

The fact that prophecy was important in biblical literature needs no further emphasis. The same holds for this present milieu as the Church awaits the Second Advent of Christ. Due to historical factors, perhaps there are marked differences between the biblical prophets and those

that emerged with the new wave of Pentecostalism. Questions have and continue to be raised regarding whether these new prophetic movements are Godly – at least in terms of authority and sanction, since God is considered as the author and end of all morality.

The Prophet/Messenger in AICs

The subject of the prophetic in African Pentecostalism has to be understood in terms of the spirit world in African worldviews as well as the Spirit Churches³. According to Desmond Tutu,

The African worldview rejects all dichotomies between the sacred and the secular, the material and the spiritual. All life is religious, all life is sacred, all life is of a piece. The spiritual is real and permeates all existence, so that the ancestral spirits, the living dead, are all around us, concerned to promote the well-being of those who are bound together with them in the bundle of life (Tutu 1995a:xvi).

The chief question is: how best should the African prophet be evaluated? Should it be in relation to the spirit world or to the spirit churches? According to Allan Anderson, “The dominant characteristic of the prophets of the African churches is that they are people ‘of the Spirit’” (Anderson 2003:180). Their following is often determined by the extent to which the people perceive the prophets’ pronouncements to be the utterances of the Spirit and by their ability to demonstrate the power of the Spirit by meeting concrete human needs in times of sickness and other afflictions and evil disturbances (Ibid.) However, Simojoki adds that, the prophetic movements are characterized by syncretism – they are in his words; “a mixture of ancient African religiosity and the Bible” (2002:271). With respect to healing, Zvanaka, an insider and leader of the Zionist Church in Zimbabwe, has this to say:

There is always a cause behind illness. In further diagnosing, the prophet, like the non-Christian spirit medium, identifies the spirit world as the personal power that is causing this problem: one’s ancestors who may feel that they are being neglected, or a spirit of a recently deceased relative who has a complaint to launch, or other alien spirits. A mother who dies before her son-in-law pays the motherhood cow as part of the bride price is believed to cause barrenness in the family. Prophets like the non-

³ Spirit Churches are simply those Christian denominations which believe in the centrality of the Holy Spirit.

the non-Christian spirit medium can identify this in their diagnoses. In the process of identification of problems and diagnoses, the prophet and the non-Christian spirit medium work in exactly the same way except that the prophet claims to be inspired by the Holy Spirit while the non-Christian spirit medium claims to be possessed by ancestral spirits or other spirits (Zvanaka 1997:74).

Simojoki's contention throws the value of Africa's spiritual life into an abyss of skepticism. If it is granted that the African Church surreptitiously taps into the ancient spirituality, then its authentic Christian character becomes questionable. As Hackett comments: "One might reasonably ask to what extent does the current expressions of demonism and Satanism are simply 'modern' reformulations of traditional ideas about witchcraft" (2003:66). On the same note, one may ask the extent to which the current expressions of the ministration of the Holy Spirit are not just the modernization of the good spirits in African traditional religion.

In a study of an African initiated church led by Shonhiwa Mtunyane (alias Johane Masowe), for example, Isabel Mukonyora has found out that the founder used the mask of either John the Baptist or Christ to legitimize his call to be prophet and leader of his African people to the authentic worship of God of the Christians (1989:194). The account of his conversion, according to Mukonyora, mimics the death and resurrection of Christ (Ibid.). Though a prophet, Johane Masowe came to be regarded by his followers as 'the Secret Messiah' (Mukonyora 1998:195). Similar stories surround prophetic leaders of most AIC's all over Africa such as, Johane Maranke and Mai Chaza both from Zimbabwe, Alice Lenshina (Zambia), Simon Kimbangu (Zaire) and Isaiah Shembe from the Republic of South Africa, to mention just a few. In their quest to free African Christians from patterns of worship associated with colonialism and lead their followers towards true African worship, these prophets and prophetesses sometimes harnessed resources found in African traditions. This is the danger of enculturation which was one of the major fears of orthodox Christianity.

Nowadays we have a new wave of Charismatic/prophetic leaders such as Makandiwa, Angel, Vutabwashe to mention just a few. What do we make of them?

In the African prophetic movements, there are always strong suspicions that the prophet is operating at the level of the diviner/healer. As a matter of fact, there are indicators that some prophets in African Pentecos-

talism have simply slipped into the realm of traditional religion. As Anderson (2003) comments:

... Similarities between the healer/diviner and the prophet arise precisely because both provide answers to the same questions. In combating evil forces, both will seek to neutralize the harmful use of sorcery.

There is need to keep the distinction between diviner/ prophet secure so as to separate the African Spirits world from Christianity. Again as Anderson explains:

Radical differences emerge in the solutions offered to these problems. Whereas the diviner points to maintaining ancestor rituals, the prophet's solution is usually aimed at confronting beliefs in witchcraft and providing an acceptable alternative to facilitate a deepening of Christian commitment. The source of God's power is found in the Holy Spirit. Prayer and speaking in tongues during prophetic consultations serve to establish the presence of the Holy Spirit. Instead of pre-Christian rituals and medicines, the prophet lays on hands, exorcises evil spirits, and uses ritual objects, symbolic representations of the healing power of God. Some of the biblical prophets were consulted in much the same way as African prophets are consulted today. Yet all these prophets, Israelite and African, would uncompromisingly reject any "illegitimate" divination. The sources of their "revelation" are not seen as the same as those of the healer/diviner, even when their methods are similar and these two different sources are opposed to each other (Anderson 2003:181).

Does African spirituality point only to one goal – the veneration of ancestors? Mukonyora suggests that prophetic leaders such as Masowe harness in African traditions the idea of mediator from ancestor (*mudzimu/svikiro*) (1998:194). Masango suggests that the Ubuntu conception of spirituality says more than just the worship of the dead. For him, at the heart of African spirituality is the dignity of human beings. Hence, Africans apparently worshipped the dead, but as a matter of fact, they were showing respect to their dead ancestors who had led exemplary lives (Masango 2006:933). Does it mean that when an African converts to Christianity s/he becomes westernized? Does it mean when an African maintains African spirituality s/he worships ancestors? Does it mean that all Africans who are Christians are also traditionalists? Can African spirituality promote goodness or holiness?

Judging by the manifestation of African prophets in the Pentecostal movement, does one encounter the much needed difference? If not, does this imply that African Pentecostals, through the prophetic and

charismatic movements, have surreptitiously been sunk into the abyss of paganism? Does it also mean that the African prophetic movement does not draw its ethics from the God of the Christians, but from the multi-faceted African spirituality⁴? This needs to be examined closely.

The Prophet in the Light of Biblical and/or Christian Ethics

Ordinarily, the words 'ethics' and 'morality' are used inter-changeably. Ethics is the inquiry into norms, mores or values (Raphael 1981:8). It assesses the nature of ethical judgements we make on actions and also examines principles, theories or laws as they attempt to validate or condemn human conduct. There is, however, a distinction between meta-ethics and normative ethics (Harman 1977) and between theoretical and practical ethics (Singer 1993). Meta-ethics is the philosophical study of the language of morals (Harman 1977:vii). Normative ethics studies theories that pertain to the nature of right and wrong, deciding what makes actions good or bad, good or evil and deciding what actions ought or ought not be done (Harman 1977:vii). Numerous normative ethical theories exist, all competing to explain the source of moral value. Some of these are ethical egoism, emotivism, hedonism, utilitarianism, prescriptivism, Kantian ethics and ethics of virtue. However, I will not engage in a detailed analysis of these theories in this chapter.

There is also another distinction of particular interest to this chapter, namely, one between secular and religious ethics. Secular ethical theories seek to determine the nature of moral value outside a deity. By contrast, religious ethics ascribes the source of goodness to a given deity. There is an important dimension which sets these two types of morality apart. As pointed out by Reinhold Niehbur (1935:4):

A secular moral act resolves the conflicts of interest and passion, revealed in any immediate situation, by whatever counsels a decent prudence may suggest, the most usual counsel being that of moderation — "in nothing too much."

A religious morality by contrast demands something quite different. Again, as Niehbur contends:

A religious morality is constrained by its sense of a dimension of depth to trace every force with which it deals to some ultimate origin and to re-

⁴ I got this concept from Simojoki (2002) who prefers to substitute it for 'charismatics'.

late every purpose to some ultimate end. It is concerned not only with immediate values and disvalues, but with the problem of good and evil, not only with immediate objectives, but with ultimate hopes. It is troubled by the question of the primal "whence" and the final "wherefore." It is troubled by these questions because religion is concerned with life and existence as a unity and coherence of meaning. In so far as it is impossible to live at all without presupposing a meaningful existence, the life of every person is religious, with the possible exception of the rare skeptic who is more devoted to the observation of life than to living it, and whose interest in detailed facts is more engrossing than his concern for ultimate meaning and coherence (1935:4).

Some scholars go on to suggest further a distinction between high and low religion, leading also to a distinction between high and low religious ethics. But this distinction lies outside the interest of this chapter. However, it is critical to mention that Biblical and Christian ethics are aspects of religious ethics. The relationship between Biblical and Christian ethics is often confused or blurred. Christian ethics deals exclusively with the teachings of Jesus Christ on right and wrong, while Biblical ethics deals with God's commandments or revelation regarding right and wrong. As a matter of fact, Christian ethics is subsumed in Biblical ethics. This chapter is interested in the broader context for the purpose of evaluating prophetic actions.

Biblical ethics in general and Christian ethics in particular maintain that God is the source of all the ethical principles, which He revealed and made the standard for conduct of all His worshippers as set out in the bible (Eckman 1999:8). Thus, when it comes to the actions of the prophet, the conduct in question would be assessed in relation to God's commands. However, even then it has always been difficult to take the prophet's word at face value as also false prophets who came in God's name have emerged. One of the defining attributes of Biblical prophets, as directed by Biblical ethics, was concern for the well-being of people, particularly the weak and the vulnerable. This point is well captured by Benjamin Scolnic who says:

Starting with Moses, we see that revelations to prophets often come when a new social reality has become necessary. Moses' message was a radical break with the social reality of Egypt (2003:9).

There is a sense in which any prophetic voice is concerned with the well-being of the people of God and the future state of affairs. As was the case

with Moses, he was supposed to bring the Israelites out of bondage. Further down, Scolnic adds:

God sent Moses to denounce the exploitation of people by demonstrating compassion, to oppose the static order and oppression of human empire with a dynamic act of God. The liberation from Egypt, as important as it was, should not be seen as a one-time event. It is an imperative, a directional sign of what we must strive for in every generation. It should undermine the false narratives and distorted social practices of human kingdoms. When God, through Moses, outperforms the Egyptian magicians by bringing the ten plagues, the point is that the real power is from God. No pharaoh or king or human political leader is God. No empire or state, ancient or modern, is God. God rules in freedom and all people must be free (Scolnic 2003:19).

The prophets of Israel were enigmatic and eccentric characters, who, with dramatic and symbolic antics, shocked people with disturbing preaching and bizarre behaviour (Stout 2003:9; Krushwitz 2003:6). Isaiah walked in the streets of Jerusalem barefoot and in the nude like a prisoner of war (Isaiah 20:2), Jeremiah smashed a pot before the elders and priests of Israel announcing the impending judgement (Jeremiah: 19:1-12), Ezekiel performed very strange prophetic actions by digging through the wall of his house and shaving off his hair and beard, much of which he chopped or burned or threw to the winds (Ezekiel 12:5; 5:1). Through these prophetic antics, God reminded the people of the interconnectedness between their religious observances and the 'rest' of their lives. Hence Stout has this to say:

The prophets consistently linked right worship with right living, and idolatry with injustice. They reminded the people of Israel of their responsibility under their covenant with God, that their religious observance and how they lived the 'rest' of their lives were inseparable (Stout 2003:10).

In addition, the religious life which God wanted was clearly articulated by Prophet Samuel as he addressed King Saul; "Hath the LORD (as great) delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22). According to Stout, God has always declared through the prophets how He wanted His people to conduct themselves before Him – fidelity, obedience and holiness (Stout 2003: 10). Prophet Hosea exhorted people to love God steadfastly; "I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt

offerings” (Hosea 6:6). Prophet Amos criticized the rich for trampling on the poor and the traverse of justice (Amos 5:21-22)

Biblical prophets encouraged the people to be righteous before God and to look after the weak and vulnerable members. As Stout puts it:

The righteous God of Israel expected righteousness from the people. God wanted Israel to form an egalitarian society, different from that of the Egyptians or the Canaanites who had a monarchy that survived by the toil of the peasants. The law given with the covenant sought to prevent an accumulation of wealth and power by one group. When the people disregarded the intention of the covenant, their treatment of the poor and the powerless—the orphan, the widow, and the stranger—were indicators of the disease of their society (Stout 2003:10-11).

Apparently, equality in addition to justice is a key value in Biblical ethics. God wanted his people to be treated alike. In addition, God was offended by those who sought to amass wealth through unjust means even if they were royalty. Hence prophets took courage to confront these vices which were an abomination in the sight of God:

The prophets used harsh imagery and bizarre actions to penetrate the numbness and satiation of the wealthy, comfortable members of society. Their critiques were biting and vehement when the obligations of the covenant were ignored. Courageous prophets like Nathan and Elijah stood up to the royal families, insisting that even powerful kings like David and Ahab must obey the covenant (Stout 2003:11).

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is presented as a prophet par excellence. Although the Gospels present him as more than just a prophet, his prophetic actions are worth looking into in order to decipher the extent to which he followed the prophetic tradition as espoused in the biblical literature. In the first instance, he criticized the religious leaders, particularly the Pharisees. No doubt this follows closely the prophetic footsteps of the Old Testament. He sometimes called them ‘snakes’ (Matthew 3:7); whitewashed tombs (Matthew 23:27); he even drove merchants out of the temple (Mark11:17). Jesus’ prophetic stance was quite radical and ultimately resulted in his death.

Likewise, prophets in the Church today should enable us to recognize and resist the sinful defects of our society, and give us hope that we can live in authentic Christian community. Importantly, they also challenge our own sinfulness, when they spot the cultural distortions that crust our congregations (Kruschwitz 2003:6). This point is further stressed by Stout who admonishes the prophets to serve God diligently:

As we deliberate together in church about how to live, prophets call us to fidelity to Christ and keep us mindful of what he expects of his people as we make decisions and face difficulties. They shake us into wide-eyed awareness of the needs of the present hour. They question the religious pretensions that cloud our judgment and expose the idols that we place before God. Those with the gift of prophecy help us to understand our situation in light of God's new way in the world (2003:14).

The gift of prophecy in Biblical ethics is for the edification of the whole Church. It was desirable that all members of the Church of God possess it, so as to transform the entire world. As Mark Stouts observes:

The prophets, as Paul emphasized, build up the entire church to become a prophetic voice to the culture around it. Jesus established and made possible, by his life, death, and resurrection, a new way of being in the world. With his life and his cross as our paradigm, the church lives in the Spirit, in the way of Jesus. Thus, the life of the church should serve as a prophetic word to the surrounding community (2003:14).

Much as we talk of prophecy in the Old and New Testament and in the Pentecostal churches in the West, would we say the same about prophets from Africa? How do Prophets Makandiwa or Uebert Angel fare? The prophet in the prophetic movements in Africa is enshrouded in ambivalence. In the first instance, the whole AIC movement to which s/he belongs has never been cast in positive light. Initial studies on AICs have been according to Paul Gundani (1989:185), "overly critical if not a disparaging assessment." This has been on account of the AICs breaking ranks with main-line churches. However, the second charge has been generally referred to as the Pentecostal apostasy. Pentecostal or charismatic AICs have been believed to have strayed from the Gospel truth by claiming to have been spoken to by God when in fact He had not done so. From such an interpretation, one would not expect the prophet actions of the AICs to be assessed fairly.

However, the assessment of AICs in Zimbabwe has shown signs of change in the last score decades. The tremendous work by Daneel and others suggests a shift in the affirmative analysis of AICs in Zimbabwe. The conclusion reached has been to the effect that:

Independent Churches represent a genuine and viable stream of African Christianity that should be viewed in equal light with historical (mission) churches. These two streams of African Christianity are of equal importance and should embark on a course of ecumenical co-operation that may result in their gradual convergence. Daneel arrives at this conclusion as a result of his recognition that Independent Churches — in par-

particular the Shona Churches that he studies but also including many others in Africa — have undergone many changes necessitated by both internal and external dynamics (Gundani 1989:186).

Naturally, prophetic acts such as Makandiwa's 'miracle baby' and Uebert Angel's 'miracle' money are astounding, to say the least. Perhaps these acts are also as bizarre as those of Elijah, Isaiah or Jeremiah of the Old Testament. However, these prophets were moved by the Spirit of God. If the new wave of African prophets such as Makandiwa and Angel are instruments of the Holy Spirit of God and leading their churches towards the prophetic mission of the Church, then who are we to condemn them? If they are doing wonderful acts through the inspiration of God's Spirit, fine and good. However, if they are tapping into the African spirituality and paganism there must be a way of checking this out. A lot of what these prophets do is dependent on their personalities. However, a major challenge is determining whether the prophetic authority is derived from the spirit world or from the Holy Spirit as promised by Christ. Do African prophets measure up? Are they concerned with the future of the Christian church? Are they concerned with saving God's people? Are they heralding God's will to the Church?

To answer these questions satisfactorily, there is need to establish whether Pentecostalism in general and African Pentecostalism in particular is a form of apostasy. Another consideration, after casting the issue of racism aside, is to determine whether the Holy Spirit is a global phenomenon capable of manifesting anywhere and in anyone who believes. If Pentecostalism is not a form of apostasy and if the Holy Spirit can use anybody who believes to minister the Gospel, then it should not come as a surprise that Makandiwa, Angel and a host of other prophets are performing wonders and miracles to punctuate their prophetic missions.

Conclusion

The new prophet in African Pentecostal movements risks deviation from standard biblical procedure and consequently risks being condemned as pursuing a dangerous adventure either for personal aggrandizement or for service to the sinister forces of darkness. However, a lot of negative assessments are largely historical. If African Christianity has been produced equally by two streams, namely the mainline Churches and Afri-

can Independent Churches and if what Pentecostals are doing is in line with the dictates of the Holy Spirit, there is no reason to be alarmed by the bizarre actions of African prophets. In any case, the actions of the prophet in history have always been eccentric. However, if these new prophets are just lapsing back into African spirituality, they risk losing the souls of the converts to paganism. This, at best represents the challenges of the apocalyptic Age.

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CHAPTER 8

Fainos Mangena & Samson Mhizha

The Rise of White Collar Prophecy in Zimbabwe

A Psycho-Ethical Statement

Abstract

In this chapter we interrogate the rising phenomenon of Pentecostal prophecy or what we call white collar prophecy as opposed to garmented prophecy or spirit-type church prophecy as described by Daneel. We begin this chapter by analysing the current circumstances in Zimbabwe which have given rise to Pentecostal or white collar prophecy which include poverty, disease and spirit possession among others. We also demonstrate how Pentecostal or white collar prophets tackle issues to do with health and well-being, wealth and prosperity, as well as spiritual growth and salvation. In discussing these pertinent issues in contemporary Zimbabwe, we draw our insights from Psychology and Ethics.

Prophecy and the Prophetic Act in Zimbabwe: Background Information

Zimbabwe is smarting from one of its worst post-independence socio-economic and political crises (Mhizha 2010:1). The crisis is punctuated by high unemployment levels, mortality rates, a dysfunctional health system, low industry utilisation, salaries below the poverty datum levels, a number of disease outbreaks, including primitive diseases such as cholera and typhoid and general poverty. The other diseases include malaria, tuberculosis, cancer, diabetes, heart problems and hypertension.

This health situation is within a context where hospitals and clinics have shortage of staff in terms of doctors, nurses and other health professionals (Afrobarometer, 2011:1). Under such conditions all services, including health care, have deteriorated. These conditions have resulted in the average life expectancy dropping from 65 years in 1990 to 43 years in 2005, while the 0-5 age group has increased from 76 per 1000 in 1990

to 82 per 1000 in 2005 (Ibid.). In 2009, it was estimated that 69% of doctors' posts and 80% of posts for midwives were vacant (Ibid).

The unemployment rate is estimated to be close to 90% and the country officially abandoned its currency in 2009 (Ibid). This milieu would generally cause a lot of despair and depression (Chitando, 2009:29). In the context of the above picture, Zimbabweans, having generally been reckoned as highly religious, sought solace in Pentecostal persuasions (Ibid, 5). Okon (2012:70) supports this point by arguing that there is a spiritual view of life whereby everything is given a religious interpretation, with witchcraft being considered to be an invariable problem in Africa. This belief in witchcraft affects Africans of all socio-economic classes; rich or poor, educated or uneducated (Ibid).

The overarching belief is that witchcraft hinders human and social development in the continent (Ibid). For this reason, Africans have developed a witchcraft mentality-which is a permanent condition of living helplessly in fear, mental torture, intimidation and spiritual insecurity (Ibid). It is against this backdrop that Pentecostal prophets or white collar prophets have come on board to provide answers or solutions to the socio-economic problems or challenges which the general Zimbabwean population is facing. Below, we give an outline of the distinction between true and false prophets.

True Prophecy vs. False Prophecy

To buttress the foregoing, it is important to define true prophecy and to differentiate it from false prophets in this section. However, before we make such definitional distinctions, we need to unpack the concept of prophecy itself. Huffmon (1968:103) and Sears (2009:98) define prophecy as having the following features: a message sent from the divine world; inspiration through ecstasy, dreams or inner illumination with the likelihood that the message is unsolicited and the likelihood that the message is exhortatory or admonitory. Sears (2009:98) goes further to say that prophecy is defined according to its purpose as a divine mandate rather than simply an answer to human questions. Thus, most definitions of prophecy focus on prophecy as direct communication with the divine.

In simpler terms, then, prophecy is the communication of a divine message and a prophet is the human agent that both receives and

transmits this message. Sears (2009:98) maintains that in Israel, true prophets were opposed to false prophets as the latter practised apostasy as opposed to representing the will of Yahweh. In some instances false prophets were seen as people who were self-seeking as they prophesied to earn a living. Sometimes false prophets would work in royal courts and mislead Israelite leaders into apostasy for financial gain. False prophets also used the name of Yahweh to mislead their hearers when in actual fact they were not agents of God's message.

A true prophet, on the other hand, was one who was sent by God, especially during a time of crisis to communicate His (God's) message to the people. Examples of true prophets in the Bible are Amos who was sent to Israel to address the problem of social injustice, as well as Elijah and Hosea who were sent to address the problem of idolatry or spiritual adultery and many other true prophets such as Nathan, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah and Habakkuk among others. Most of these prophets were called from humble backgrounds and led humble lives. In most cases, these prophets became unpopular with the rulers of the day, especially Kings who were bent on oppressing the masses. Hatchett (2010:1) writes that the Old Testament uses three key terms to refer to prophets, namely; *Ro'eh* and *hozeh* which are translated as seer and *nabi* which is translated as prophet or one who is called to speak on behalf of Yahweh.

Hatchett (2010:1) further notes that true prophets must be loyal to biblical faith, directing hearers to worship Yahweh alone, their prophecies should be fulfilled, their words should agree with previous prophets' words and should display good character. They should be able to suffer because of faithfulness to God. Best (2007:11), on the other hand, postulates that the word prophet comes from the Greek word *propheteuo* which means "encouraging obedience." For us, the implication of this definition is that biblical prophets in the truest sense of the word were obliged to obey the one who had sent them and were not supposed to alter the message. In the section below, we look at some of the factors that led to the rise of white collar prophecy in contemporary Zimbabwe.

The Rise of White Collar Prophets in Contemporary Zimbabwe

Having defined prophecy generally, we hereby move to defining and explaining white collar prophecy in Zimbabwe. In this essay, we define white collar prophets as those prophets who are motivated by the desire

to professionalize the word of God through monetizing it. In other words, white collar prophets put emphasis on money and prosperity as pillars of deliverance and salvation. They believe that poverty, misfortune and disease are caused by evil spirits and that God wants people to be prosperous and disease free in this world.

In this section we try to show how white collar prophets deal with the socio-economic challenges which most Zimbabweans are experiencing today. To our knowledge, the white collar prophecy in Zimbabwe started with, among others, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) which would invite people to prayer sessions whereby those who were unemployed, the sick, those with irreconcilable differences in their marriages would be prayed for and they would give testimonies of how their problems had ended. The UCKG was founded by Edir Macedo in 1977 in Brazil and was brought to Zimbabwe by its missionaries (Holland, 2013:200).

Thus, in its formative stages, white collar prophecy, as it manifested itself in the UCKG, was not so much about miracle performance as the emphasis was on mass preaching and mass praying. This was also followed by *Hear the Word* now known as Celebration Ministries International which also emphasised preaching, worship and the prosperity gospel. The phenomenon of prophecy was to follow with the coming on board of Matthew and Mildred Ministries where through the performance of miracles; the lame would walk, the sick would be healed, the unemployed would get jobs and irreparable marriages would be restored.

In order to lure converts, these ministries would offer something different from what was offered in mainline churches such as the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Church of Christ, the Methodist Church and others; healing through miracle performance. Thus, they would toy around with the psychology of the people as they knew that Zimbabweans generally believed in evil spirits and would most likely believe in a ministry that addressed the problems caused by these evil spirits. As we noted earlier, every social problem in the life of a Zimbabwean is almost always attributed to the work of evil spirits. This includes unemployment, disease, marital problems and barrenness and these social problems affect most Zimbabweans on a daily basis.

This is the context in which Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa's United Family International Church (UFIC) and Prophet Eubert Angel Mudza-

nire's Spirit Embassy emerged. The only notable difference is that while other Pentecostal persuasions such as UCKG, Celebration Ministries International and Mathias and Mildred Ministries started operating during the Zimbabwe dollar era, the UFIC and Spirit Embassy joined the fray immediately after the dollarization of Zimbabwe's economy. In fact, we learn that the UFIC was founded in May 2010 after breaking away from the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe (Biri, 2012:40).

The Spirit Embassy Church was also founded around that same time. What is important to note is that this was one year after the dollarization phase of Zimbabwe's economy. During this dollarization period, many people, especially the unemployed, struggled to earn a living as the dollar was and still is hard to come by. These people had survived through informal trading during the Zimbabwe dollar era and when the economy was dollarized they could not cope and so the white collar prophets cashed in on that as they told the congregants that through giving the little they had to God, they were going to be blessed abundantly. It will be an understatement to suggest that the message of these white collar prophets only appealed to the poor, the marginalized or those who were struggling to make ends meet. In fact, the rich and famous also fell prey to these prophets as they were told that their wealth and prosperity would only be safeguarded if they could give back to God.

In a gathering dubbed *Judgment Night* addressed by Makandiwa organized during the Easter period in 2012, people from all walks of life ranging from the rich, the famous and the poor were in attendance. Thus, about 100 000 people filled the National Sports Stadium to listen to the message of the prophet. It is important to explain why these prophets have managed to attract people from all walks of life. Hollenweger (1997:1) avers that the reasons as to why people flock to Pentecostal prophets are intricate and sometimes contradictory. Hollenweger further writes that Pentecostal liturgy has social and revolutionary implications, in that it empowers marginalised people (Ibid, 12).

It takes as acceptable what ordinary people have in the worship of God and thus overcomes 'the *real* barriers of race, social status, and education'. In Africa, preaching a message that promised solutions for present felt needs like sickness and the fear of evil spirits, makes the prophet's 'full gospel message' to be readily accepted by ordinary African people. They develop a type of oral liturgy and ministry in which poor people take an active part and thus find a new human dignity.

Even the rich and famous believe that they are also haunted by evil spirits at some point in their lives. Shoko (2006:9) argues that Africans believe that all illnesses and misfortunes are caused by malignant forces like ancestral spirits and witchcraft as directed by Satan. Thus, for Africans, death and diseases like mental illness, convulsions, epilepsy, haemorrhage and paralysis are all caused by ancestral spirits and witchcraft. In the next section, we outline and discuss the strategies which white collar prophets employ as they package their message.

Packaging of the Message

White collar prophets develop innovative ways to attract people to their churches and to their crusades by promising to help them overcome their socio-economic problems. Gathogo (2011:8) argues that the Pentecostal prophets employ accomplished and alluring ‘tailor-made’ sermons to appeal to the psychological as well as the material needs of the church members. The beguiling sermons hold the audience spellbound or captive as they emphasise physical and spiritual breakthroughs on issues of health and well-being, business development, employment opportunities, wealth creation and general prosperity (Ibid.). Sometimes, biblical phrases are used out of context in the preacher's bid to deliver his or her theme (Ibid.). The advertisements which are put on bill boards publicize the promises for signs, wonders, miracles, healing, financial breakthroughs and prayers for the diseased.

Gundani (2001:136) writes that the most vital announcement for these churches is healing. Advertisements invite people for miracles that are performed at their services. Everyone is promised miracles and they put advertisements which regularly include their photographs and those of their wives. They portray themselves as men and women of great power who pray over the sick (Ibid.). They also give their congregants the impression that they are closer to God than any other follower in the church. Hence, statements like “*Mwari waMakandiwa*” (The God of Makandiwa) or “*Mwari waEzekiel Guti*” (The God of Ezekiel Guti) are made within this context.

These statements are started by the believers themselves after seeing some benefits in following such Pentecostal prophets. Indeed, there are many followers of these prophets with strong testimonies about how they have benefited spiritually from following such prophets. When

congregants come up with such divine designations, they are probably trying to say that these prophets operate at the same level with Jesus, the son of God so that no one can doubt the authenticity of their message. In response, adherents call themselves “*vana vemuporofita*” (sons and daughters of the prophet).

The advertisements would be packaged in such a way that they include the testimony of people who claim to have been healed from one form of disease to another, people who further state that they are now employed, wealthy, and prosperous. Maxwell (2006:186) also postulates that crusades are conducted in an inviting manner. Demonstrations of divine power are presented with vivid testimonies of people who are healed from paralysis and barrenness with the latter holding up their babies for all to see. The advertisements promise solutions to everyone’s problems and as a result, they significantly attract large crowds and converts (Ibid.).

Pentecostal white collar prophets also help people to cope with their problems using the collaborative coping style. This style involves the mutual problem solving process by both God and the person. However, Pargament (1997:8) proposes that this style may involve any person who is associated with the divine, particularly the clergy. In this chapter, it is argued that the prophets assume the role of mediator between God and His people that we could say it is a mutual problem solving process between the prophet and the person. The coping style used in Pentecostal churches involves the prophets providing meaning to the people concerning their plight. Thus, prophets interpret what would be making the lives of their congregants miserable.

Having made meaning of the problems encountered by people, the prophets then work with the people in assuaging their plight through a number of strategies. The strategies include divine healing through deliverance, use of icons and portraits, and acquiring blessings through offerings. After the prophetic word has been delivered, the congregants are then encouraged to use icons and portraits to lessen their problems. The process includes buying and using towels and portraits, paying talents and tithes and attending deliverance sessions (Biri, 2012:7; Maxwell, 2006; Togarasei, 2005). Thus, this section has looked at packaging of messages and next we look at the impact of the belief in evil spirits.

Belief in Evil Spirits

As intimated earlier, the white collar prophets' work seems to be premised on the assumption that the lives of Africans are influenced, if not affected, by evil spirits either in the form of witchcraft or ancestral spirits. Indeed, the prophets prophesy that most of the problems facing their congregants are traced back to the work of evil spirits. It is thus instructive to note that these prophets seem to specialise in problems that are associated with witchcraft beliefs. Biri (2012:2) affirms this point when she argues that some of the Pentecostal prophets were born and bred in Muzarabani and Chipinge where witchcraft beliefs are predominant. The witchcraft beliefs inform the "deliverance" activities in these two Pentecostal churches. Indeed, Maxwell (2006:60) writes that Ezekiel Guti, is the son of a traditional healer of note in Chipinge.

Biri (2012:3) argues that the belief in witchcraft activities is widespread among the Shona to the extent that Pentecostal prophets package their message in such a way as to woo people by promising deliverance and healing in these Pentecostal churches. Togarasei (2005:371) observes that illness is one issue that leads many people to religion in Africa and indeed to Pentecostal prophets as Africans believe that some diseases are caused by evil spirits and therefore cannot be healed using western medicine (Ibid.). Healing and exorcism are some of the miracles that Pentecostal or white collar prophets use to advertise their crusades for new members (Ibid.). Thus, the need to address such spiritual problems has led to the birth of the first batch of Pentecostal churches in Africa.

Biri (2012:5) observes that Pentecostal churches use healing methods, including laying on of hands, anointing with oil, worship, healing at a distance, healing by faith in the word and also through faith in the name of Jesus. This aspect of primal spirituality has a dogmatic formulation in classical Pentecostalism (Ukpong, 2008:14). According to Cox (1995:110) this is what makes healing to be central to Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe.

Healing is an essential element of the primary piety which is the archaic spirituality that Pentecostal worship brings to the surface. Healing is central among Pentecostals and this healing is accompanied by signs and wonders (Ayegboyin, 2004:79; Cox, 1994:110 and Biri, 2012:5). The themes of healing, deliverance and protection are stressed at conferences, seminars and conventions. Ayegboyin and Biri underscore the same point when they assert that the zeal by new Pentecostal prophets

in addressing people's problems like sickness, poverty, attacks from evil spirits, barrenness, loneliness and all kinds of unproductiveness and misfortunes demonstrate the centrality of healing and wholeness to the African (Ayegboyin, 2004:79; Biri, 2012:5).

Use of icons and portraits in Pentecostal churches

Pentecostal Christians have been found to have an affinity to use icons for healing and deliverance. To this end, white collar prophets have employed icons associated with them as a way of reaching out to their congregants. Biri (2012:7) argues that Pentecostal prophets use icons like cloths/towels to access healing. Some Pentecostal prophets use their portraits in deliverance and healing and congregants have also accepted the belief that such portraits have healing powers (Ibid.). The portraits have gained the significance of protective charms (Ibid.). It has been noted that people have invested their faith in these Pentecostal white collar prophets to the extent that some congregants claim that they have successfully used towels or healing cloths that were prayed for by these "Messengers of God."

One white collar prophet in Zimbabwe sells these cloths for \$3 (US) to his congregants who use them as healing and protective charms. It has been noted that some congregants wipe a car with that cloth with the hope that they will buy a similar car in the future. Additionally, in another Pentecostal church, people buy objects like peanut butter and key holders from the prophet's wife as icons for prosperity. It was claimed in such churches that those who used the key holders and peanut butter, had positive benefits as the sales of their goods would increase. Other pastors are simply obsessed with getting fame by just demonstrating their power when people, for example, touch an object like a handbag belonging to the pastor and the preacher.

Biri (2012:7) shows testimonies of congregants whose stoves were 'repaired' after using holy towels and someone whose cloth was burnt only for it to be found at the bed of a sick person the following day. Thus, the congregants themselves claim the powers of the icons. Portraits for these white collar prophets are found at church offices, local churches, training schools, pastors' homes and booklets. The church leader's omnipresence is reinforced at every Bible study, prayer meeting and church services. Members pray to the god of their leader and that his spirit

should be in his members. Everything he touched is blessed, including his bed sheets. The Pentecostal white collar prophets, especially the founding ones, are given different titles ranging from Prophet, Man of God (see the chapter by Gunda and Machingura), God's Servant, Mediator, Apostle to Spiritual Father (Maxwell, 2006:138). The other title which is also associated with these prophets in Zimbabwe is *papa*, which means "father." Having looked at the use of icons and portraits in Pentecostal churches, it is pertinent to look at the quest for spiritual power by the Pentecostal prophets.

The Quest for Spiritual Power

It is apparent that Pentecostal prophets actively make efforts to gain healing powers. Recently, a Pentecostal pastor was reported to be making efforts to visit TB Joshua in Nigeria to be given healing powers and was competing against a Pentecostal prophet who was displaying more powers than his (Biri, 2012:6). It is interesting to note that the Pentecostal prophets go out of their way to seek spiritual power that in one instance a prominent pastor in one church approached a traditional healer seeking spiritual powers to demonstrate to his congregants (Muzire, 2011). This particular pastor was caught at a traditional healer after several visits, in the trap set by a member of his congregation (Ibid).

Some Pentecostal pastors have "spiritual fathers" or mentors from West Africa who reportedly give them powers to perform miracles (Ibid). West Africa apparently is believed to be popular for widespread occultism involving the use of traditional medicines (Ibid). These miracles include miracle babies, miracle abortion, miracle weight reduction, miracle money, miracle shoe size, prophesying soccer results, prophesying about the death of prominent politicians and public economic fortunes in the country as well as "knowing" clients' identity numbers. Some of the congregants who are healed during the pastors' public sessions apparently relapse into their former state afterwards (Ibid).

Mushonga (2013) remarks that one Pentecostal prophet justified the use of miracles by saying it was a way to show people that they were true prophets and that their prophetic activities were out of goodwill. Ruzvidzo (2013) also reported that one prophet even dared fellow pastors to a public demonstration of power. Share (2013) writes that a traditional

healer in Ghana claims to have helped over 1700 pastors across Africa to acquire power to perform miracles.

Maxwell (2006:89) writes about a prominent Pentecostal pastor who had a particular gift of curing infertility, and was skilled in healing and preaching who went to American Pentecostal training centres to study evangelism, church growth, charismatic gifts and worship where his charismatic gifts were sharpened to have an impact on congregants. Additionally, this pastor used his American contacts to secure funding for church building. In the next section, we will look at miracles and material wealth.

Miracles and Material Wealth

As we observed earlier, white collar prophets are also evaluated with regards to the gospel of prosperity and the quest for material wealth. Biri (2012:8) observes that the quest for material wealth and the espousing of the message of prosperity betrays the Pentecostal interpretation of the Bible, with the gospel of prosperity seemingly being overemphasized at the detriment of spiritual matters. There are reports that some white collar prophets masquerading as ‘Men of God’ are leaving their churches after being deployed in poor communities or in the rural areas where apparently they cannot make more money (Ibid.). For this reason, Pentecostalism has been portrayed as Christianity which is de-linked from the cross and as such is inadequate and adulterated (Akinwale, 2004:114).

One Pentecostal church was reported to disaggregate congregants into three categories, basing on their contributions to the church: namely the gold class, the silver class and the bronze class (Biri, 2012:8). Togarasei (2005:370) also notes that in one other Pentecostal church, people are graded according to their monetary contributions. It was also reported that in that church any person needing to participate in their prophet’s deliverance session pays \$1 (US) (Biri, 2012:8). In these Pentecostal churches sometimes the sick person needs to “sow” to the man of God in order to be healed.

Some white collar prophets need power for miracles while others need it for healing. The Pentecostal white collar prophets claim that poverty is a curse and a sign of evil spirit possession that one needs deliverance from (Togarasei, 2005:370). There are ructions in some Pentecostal

churches as the pastors specialize in preaching the gospel of prosperity at the expense of the gospel of suffering, the gospel of making material wealth rather than holiness (Maxwell, 1998:10).

Most Pentecostal white collar prophets equate the gospel of giving with the terms “seeding” or “sowing.” Seeding has various forms which include funding church activities and giving to the “man of God,” who is usually the founder of the church. Biri (2012:9) and Maxwell (2006:206) report that most sermons by the pastors are marked by statements like, “To be poor is a sin before God” or “Why are you poor? Check your life/relationship with God!” Pentecostal congregants are encouraged to give money to the church or their pastors in order to get powers for either prosperity or healing. Although Zimbabwean Pentecostalism has a redemptive and empowering theology, one notes that old ideas survive in new forms (Shorter, 1997:547).

Togarasei (2005:370) also argues that Pentecostal prophets consider poverty to be a curse, a sign of evil spirits that one needs to be delivered from. Money seems to find its way into whatever sermon by these Pentecostal prophets (Ibid.). At one Pentecostal church service in 2003, Togarasei counted five offerings that were demanded (Ibid.). The first offering was the grace offering that was made before the prophet started his sermon to ask God’s grace for the sermon of the day (Ibid.). The Pentecostal prophet told the congregants that seed money should be made every day as a way of sowing blessings and the more one puts money in the fund, the more they are blessed by God (Ibid.).

Church members in these Pentecostal churches also pay Talents. ‘Talents’ refer to the money that one gets from buying and re-selling different goods or products such as vegetables. Talents are meant to empower the individual believer financially. Maxwell (1995:15) postulates that Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe promotes penny capitalism, which encourages prosperity through hard work and seeding to the “Man of God.” Seeding to the life of the “Man of God” includes his “Birthday Gift.” In one Pentecostal church, members contribute money as a birthday gift for their church leader annually. The leader then uses the money from the birthday gift to donate to the needy churches. Again, one popular Pentecostal white collar prophet donates cars, houses and groceries to members of the church and the needy from the contributions made by believers.

It is interesting to note the lavish lifestyles of leaders show that the love of the gospel is far outweighed by the love of accumulating material wealth (Biri, 2012:9). A Pentecostal prophet whose ministry was only one-year-old saw him in possession of the latest Mercedes Benz and a house in Borrowdale, one of the leafy suburbs in Harare. The same prophet controversially left the country to holiday with his family in three overseas countries, including the United Kingdom and United States of America. Another such Pentecostal prophet has a church with properties, a farm, training centre and university all named after him. These pastors even move under the protection of armed bodyguards (Maxwell, 2006:141).

Apparently, the Pentecostal prophets promise the poor and broken that they will be uplifted from their curses. The Pentecostal approach may be seen to reflect basic principles of market capitalism – a phenomenon that is driven by the demands of popular consumerism. In this model, what sells best is produced, packaged and supplied as a result, particularly the gospel of prosperity. The teachings that are based on giving by these Pentecostal prophets are characteristically more elaborate than preachers in mainline churches. Their emphasis is that giving, especially tithing, is a sure way of getting one's socio-spiritual breakthrough. This breakthrough can be in the form of healing, finance, marital success, promotion in the workplace and other favours from God. In the next section, we look at deliverance sessions and how they attract people to these white collar prophets.

Deliverance Sessions

Pentecostal prophets also offer deliverance sessions to congregants, particularly to deliver them from evil spirits (Biri, 2011:5). This deliverance is given primacy. The prophets urge the church members to make a complete break with the past by denouncing that past verbally and attending deliverance sessions because the evil spirits that dominate families will continue to haunt the believer and prevent him or her from prospering in life. Maxwell (1995:21) also points out that congregants in these Pentecostal churches look up to their prophets for protection from *ngozi* (avenging spirit), *chikwambo* (goblin) and for fertility, healing, success in public examinations, jobs and troubled marriages (as various forms of life challenges).

Maxwell (2006:207) reports that even the prophet's wife who is usually termed a prophetess also conducted deliverance sessions. The deliverance is from the ancestral spirits. The congregants would kneel in front of the pastor who would shout the word "deliverance" many times, while also speaking in mesmerising tongues. The evil spirits are instructed to get out of the church member. Sometimes the pastors lay hands on the church members who are exorcised of demons. At times the church member fights with the exorcists, others lay down on the floors while others weep. Parents even bring their children for deliverance from evil ancestral spirits.

White Collar Prophecy and Religious Coping

Theoretically, this chapter is premised on the assumption that Pentecostalism is a mode of religious coping. Koenig (1994:16) describes religious coping as the use of cognitive or behavioural strategies that are based on religious beliefs or practices to help manage emotional stress or physical discomfort (Ibid, p.18). Thus, religious coping involves the different ways people use their religion and faith to manage stressful situations. Pargament has been the key scholar and psychologist to explain how people employ religious coping and has written many articles and conducted many studies on the topic. Pargament (1997:15) defines religion as the quest for significance in ways linked to the sacred while religious coping is the quest for significance in times of stress.

Pargament (1988:9) proposes three coping styles people use in times of stress and these are: Self-directing, deferring, and collaborative coping strategies. In the self-directing style, it is the individual's responsibility to solve problems and make efforts to accomplish this (Ibid.). In the deferring style, individuals defer the responsibility of problem-solving to God and they wait for solutions to emerge through God's active efforts (Ibid.). In the collaborative style, responsibility for the problem-solving process is held jointly by the individual and God; both are working together to solve problems. Pargament states that the collaborative style is the most common religious coping style where neither the individual nor God plays a passive role in the problem solving process (Ibid, 95).

Pargament (1997:96) argues that religious coping serves multiple functions which include the search for meaning. He argues that people engage in the process of meaning-making which is related to the coping

itself and he views meaning-making as a process of cognitive reappraisal that is particularly important to a successful adaptation under conditions of stress (Ibid.). This ability to find meaning in times of stress often promotes successful coping, adaptation, and well-being (Emmons, 1999:98). In contrast, the inability to find meaning influences psychological distress, doubt, and uncertainty, which can cause inactivity and the inhibition of effective coping behaviours (Emmons, 1999:17; Krause, 1998:250).

Thus, through meaning-making, religion plays a significant role in changing attitudes and beliefs about the world, self, and others (Pargament, 1988:99). In other words, people use religion to make sense of their lives and the events in their lives as religion can touch on all aspects of life, including work, interpersonal relationships and attitudes (Pargament, 1997:14). Individuals can make sense of events in relation to the causal representation of self, chance (fate or luck), others, and God and the devil (Mahoney et al., 2002:3).

Having said this, we argue that the collaborative style appears to be similar to the coping adopted by Pentecostal congregants in contemporary Zimbabwe. The collaborative style involves engaging God in a mutual problem-solving process (Pargament, 1997:18; Schaefer and Gorsuch, 1993:140). In particular, collaborative coping has been related to more positive outcomes for individuals waiting for a loved one in surgery (Belavich and Pargament, 2002:17). Thus, a collaborative relationship with God appears to provide the individual with a sense of empowerment in the face of a difficult life situation (Pargament and Park, 1995:18) while a deferring style appears to be associated with a reduced sense of personal competence in coping (Pargament, et al., 1988: 94).

For Pargament (1997:19), patients who receive support from their clergy tend to cope more easily with a life threatening illness than those without that support. Koenig (1997:16) also found that clergy visits are related to positive outcomes for individuals with mental health problems. Collaborative relationships involve looking up to God or other individual and institutions associated with the divine including the clergy.

White collar prophecy vs Public Morality

If the distinction between true and false prophecy, as outlined in the second section of this essay, is anything to go by, then white collar prophetic activities must conform to the standard that is represented by true prophets, failure of which the activities will be deemed immoral. One of the key features of true prophets, as alluded to earlier in this essay, is that the prophets were messengers of God, sent to proclaim His word. In the process, they unsettled the authorities of the day.

First, what makes the activities of white collar prophets in Zimbabwe morally suspect is that these prophets sometimes participate in the politics of governance by way of supporting government activities and policies, even if these policies are retrogressive. Second, most of the Biblical prophets mentioned earlier in this essay were concerned with the poor and downtrodden and were prepared to go against popular opinion in order to carry God's message to the people. One example is prophet Micaiah who told King Ahab that he was going to be killed by the Syrians in his attempt to take back Ramoth Gilead. This is despite the fact that other prophets had told the king that he was going to be triumphant (I Kings 22:11-28).

Most white collar prophets in Zimbabwe are not courageous enough to challenge the authority. This compromises their position thereby making people to question their moral integrity. When Amos challenged Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, telling him that Jeroboam was going to die by the sword and that Israel was going into exile (Amos 7:10-16), he put his life under threat but was not worried as he was only doing God's work. He did not hire bodyguards to protect his life as is the case with most white collar prophets in Zimbabwe today.

While most true prophets in the Bible concentrated on the message of salvation and while they remained true to their God, white collar prophets concentrate on healing and the prosperity message which is in contrast with God's calling of salvation and redemption. We find this to be morally repugnant given the fact that God does not revel on the things of this world. God does not call his prophets to perform miracles alone, He wants his messengers who are prophets to preach the gospel of salvation to the people (See Matthew 28:19-20).

John 10:41 also bears testimony to this. It says; "and many came to him and they said, John did no sign, but everything he said was true." Thus, true prophecy cannot be a function of miracle performance alone

but the fact that the conveyer of the message of God leads a truthful and humble life. This is not the case with many white collar prophets who are always seeking fame and fortune and they take pride in driving very expensive cars and owning beautiful houses they acquire controversially. This is against the second maxim of Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative (CI) which says, "Act so as treat humanity as ends and not merely as means" (Timmons, 1990:128-129).

The activities of white collar prophets are also found wanting in that while they do whatever they do in the name of God, they seem to take advantage of the fact that most people who seek their services want material benefits more than spiritual benefits. So, they package their message in such a way that they appeal to these people. The Bible has warned people about false prophets who, in the last days, will perform great signs or miracles without being sent by God, (See for example Matthew 24:24, Revelations 16:13-14, 2 Timothy 3:2).

It is also important to note that the quest for spiritual power has forced other white collar prophets to visit traditional healers and this is not in sync with a version of Christian ethics which says that Christianity cannot be combined with tradition. This is also coupled with the use of icons such as towels and cloths which also characterize traditional healing.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the phenomenon of white collar prophecy as it manifested itself during the dollarization phase of Zimbabwe's economy. The chapter began by considering the context in which white collar prophecy emerged and how prophets packaged their message in order to attract people to them. The chapter argued that this phenomenon of prophecy came on board to 'respond' to people's challenges that were worsened by Zimbabwe's socio-political crisis as experienced in the last decade. Since Zimbabweans in general believe that most of the social and economic problems they face in life are caused by evil spirits, white collar prophecy cashed in on this. This essay concludes by highlighting and explaining some of the moral challenges of the activities of white collar prophets in Zimbabwe.

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CHAPTER 9

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Young, Male and Polished

Masculinities, Generational Shifts and Pentecostal Prophets in Zimbabwe

Background

Zimbabwe has witnessed a burgeoning prophetic wave, particularly since 2009. While there has been considerable debate around the authenticity of the prophets, their miracles and the validity of the gospel of prosperity, there has been less attention to the question of age and gender. This chapter deploys the analytical concepts of generational shifts and masculinities to understand the rise of young male Pentecostal prophets in Zimbabwe. It argues that as there has been a generational shift in Zimbabwean politics marked by the emergence of younger politicians, so has there been a generational shift in Zimbabwean Pentecostalism. Younger prophets have appeared on the scene, marking a shift from older founders of Pentecostal churches. Furthermore, it avers that it is not by accident that these younger prophets are male. The tensions experienced within the Pentecostal movements may, therefore, be interpreted as contestations for power and influence within masculinity. Thus, Brady rightly notes that "...masculinity as a site of critical analysis has become firmly a part not only of the debates surrounding the meanings and definitions of gender in culture and society, but more recently also a revitalized approach to the history and contemporary analysis of religion..." (<http://www.jmmsweb.org/issues/volume/num>).

In some instances, the chapter deploys insights from the late Roman period to appreciate contestation within the contemporary prophetic movement in Zimbabwe. Our justification for referring to the Roman period is informed by the fact that versions of masculinity of the time have persisted and endured (Colleen, 2008:16). It is, therefore, our argument that these versions of masculinity find resonance in our context (in terms of both time and space) as exhibited by the young male proph-

ets in Zimbabwe. We strongly agree with Colleen (2008:16) when he argues that “when the New Testament writers worked out their Christological formulations, they did so alongside the dominant ideology of masculinity that existed in the Greco-Roman Empire.” We are, therefore, strongly convinced that though the kind of masculinities we are witnessing in the young male prophets in Zimbabwe might appear unique, on closer scrutiny, it becomes evident that it is possible to draw some parallels with versions we see earlier in human history. Primary data for this chaptered were gathered through participant observation for the period 2009 to 2012 by all the three authors.

Introduction

The most prominent prophets in Zimbabwe in the period 2009 up to the time of writing (early 2013) were young men. Thus, Prophets Emmanuel Makandiwa of the United Family International Church, Uebert Angel of the Spirit Embassy and Passion Java of the Kingdom Embassy were in their mid-thirties and below. Their movements were attracting a lot of members from the older mainline churches, as well as older Pentecostal churches. Their self-presentation was that of highly successful, confident and assertive individuals. Charging that the older churches were preaching a “cold” gospel, they announced their arrival on the Zimbabwean spiritual market in a dramatic style. Abrasive and creative, they forced the existing religious gerontocracy to reassess its relevance in a rapidly changing religious and spiritual context. Using highly developed media strategies (see for example Ukah 2006), they developed a niche on the spiritual market. Furthermore, they deepened the ideology of men as the more acceptable representatives of God on earth. Operating in an environment that had a rigid gender ideology mediated by earlier movements (Chitando and Biri 2013), they enjoyed the patriarchal dividend, namely, the benefits that accrue to men by dint of their gender.

This chapter focuses on internal changes within Zimbabwean Pentecostalism as an interpretive framework for appreciating the rise of young male prophets in the contemporary period. Whereas earlier (predominantly male) prophets from African Initiated/Indigenous/Independent Churches (AICs) had unsettled the religious economy in the 1930s and Pentecostal founders in the 1970s and 1980s had added to the complexity of the religious terrain, these young prophets were carrying forward

the trend of generational shifts in Zimbabwean Christianity. In the first section, the chapter outlines the theoretical framework that informs this study. The second section is an outline of the phases of prophetic activity in Zimbabwe. In the third section, the chapter summarises the ministries of selected prophets. In the fourth section, the chapter deploys the concepts of masculinities and generational shifts to interpret the contemporary prophetic movement in Zimbabwe.

Theoretical Framework

A study on a contested phenomenon such as prophecy is challenging from a theoretical perspective. To begin with, the very categories in the discourse are controversial. For example, must researchers adopt and endorse the label, 'prophet'? If they adopt the label, are they going beyond their mandate as researchers? In order to try and negotiate such challenges, the article employs the phenomenology of religion/history of religions and gender approaches. The phenomenology of religion/history of religions is particularly appealing in that it encourages researchers to refrain from imposing their views on religious phenomena. It calls for descriptive accuracy, sensitivity to the point of view of believers and understanding religion, that is, not reducing it to economics, politics or some other phenomena (Cox 1996 and Cox 2012: 26). While we admit that these ideals are difficult to meet (for example, it is difficult to refrain from assessing the validity of prophetic claims), we found this approach helpful as it allowed us to view the prophetic phenomenon from the point of view of the believers (Chitando 2005: 300).

On the other hand, the history of religions works closely with the phenomenology of religion to outline the historical development of religious phenomena. It is quite relevant when studying AICs (Schlang 1992). In our case, we utilised the method to appreciate the prophetic waves that have broken out in Zimbabwe at different historical intervals. The method was particularly helpful as it cautions that religious phenomena do not occur outside space and time. This assisted us to locate the phenomenon of young male prophets within its proper historical context. The prophetic waves imply that there have been outbreaks of the prophetic phenomenon at specific historical periods in Zimbabwe. However, it is critical to note that we are not operating with a strictly defined concept of

concept of waves. These waves overlap, thereby giving rise to tensions within the prophetic movement as we shall illustrate below.

The historical approach also assisted in appropriating contestation within masculinity in the late Roman period to understand contemporary challenges in the Zimbabwean prophetic movement. As Conwall (2008: 17) has highlighted, masculinity within the late Roman period was not homogenous. Men had to fight for higher and more socially acceptable levels of masculinity. Furthermore, younger men challenged the authority of older men. This confirmed the contention that masculinity does not pose a united front, but that it is characterised by internal contestation. This idea was quite useful for our interpretation of the tension between the emerging prophets and the more established prophets within Zimbabwean Pentecostalism.

The theoretical approach of gender in religion (for example, Sharma 1987 and King 1995) and more specifically the focus on masculinity in religion (Chitando and Chirongoma 2012) has been particularly helpful in understanding the emergence and dominance of young prophets in Zimbabwe. Although the focus on young male prophets runs the risk of perpetuating male dominance in both the practice and the study of religion, we have made a deliberate political decision to focus on masculinity in order to highlight the problematic nature of the prophetic movement. It was our conviction that the academic study of religion cannot afford to ignore the impact of gender constructions (Sharma 2002 and Chitando, Adogame and Bateye 2013: 3)

Our combination of different approaches to the study of young male prophets in contemporary Zimbabwe serves as a timely reminder that religion is complex and, therefore, calls for multiple approaches (Connolly 1999). Although at the theoretical level the different approaches can generate tension, in practice we established that they can complement each other. The phenomenological approach assisted in the effort to bracket preconceived ideas about the prophetic phenomenon. This went a long way in avoiding taking up deeply entrenched positions regarding the truth or falsehood of the different prophetic ministries that were under study. Although this was a challenge, we feel that we were able to refrain from commenting on the authenticity of the prophets. Such blatant attacks as, "...the new Pentecostal churches are converting religion into some sort of wealth manufacturing industry" (Enang 2012:

358) do not facilitate effective understanding of the prophetic ministries under study.

On the other hand, the historical approach contributed towards appreciating the historical context in which the contemporary prophets must be located. We were able to identify different prophetic waves and to undertake contestation within masculinity from earlier periods. Finally, employing gender perspectives facilitated understanding the dominance of young male prophets in the contemporary period. Phenomenological, historical and gender approaches to the study of the prophetic phenomenon in contemporary Zimbabwe confirm the truth that it is doubly rich and complex. No single approach can do justice to this phenomenon, hence we employed multiple perspectives. As Carl Olson (2003: 13) observes, it is important for scholars of religion to familiarise themselves with diverse approaches to the study of religion. In the following section, we utilise the history of religions approach to describe the prophetic waves that have been experienced in Zimbabwean Christianity.

Prophetic Waves in Zimbabwean Christianity

The emergence of young prophets in Zimbabwe from 2010 is best understood using the metaphor of waves. We appreciate Gunda's (2012: 335) observation that the young prophets in the contemporary period are not the first manifestation of prophecy in the country. Periodically, Zimbabwe has experienced prophetic renewal since the pioneering prophets in the 1930s. Returning from South Africa where they had served as migrant labourers, charismatic individuals such as Johane Marange (founder of the Johane Marange Apostolic Church), Johane Masowe (founder of the Johane Masowe Apostolic Church) and Samuel Mutendi (founder of the Zion Christian Church) instigated profound changes on the national religious landscape. As studies by Daneel (1970, 1974 and 1987) have shown, these individuals successfully mobilised Africans to convert Christianity to the African worldview. Whereas missionaries had predominantly sought to convert Africans to Christianity, pioneering prophets of the first wave were converting Christianity to Africa.

As the colonial presence was asserting itself, Masowe, Marange and Mutendi responded to the anxiety by setting up African Christian movements. Using their charismatic gifts, they reassured their members that conversion to Christianity did not imply embracing a Western

worldview. They were associated with miracles such as resurrecting from the dead, raising the dead, healing the sick and bringing rain. There are some pertinent features to note in relation to the instigators of the first wave of prophetic activity in Zimbabwe. First, they were young men when they embarked on their prophetic activities. Second, they addressed the burning issues of their time: health, rain and relations with ancestral spirits.

Between the 1950s and the 1970s there were significant developments within Zimbabwean Christianity. Mai Chaza, a distinguished woman leader of an AIC, introduced her Guta raJehovah Church in 1954. We draw special attention to her ministry as she is one of the few Zimbabwean women church founders. We shall return to her in our overall interpretation of male dominance in the contemporary prophetic movement. However, for now it is vital to acknowledge that her ministry put her at par with her male counterparts. Lilian Dube (2008: 109-110) provides a detailed analysis of Mai Chaza's ministry:

Mai Chaza became a famous miracle-worker who concerned herself with women unable to have children. Infertility is dreaded in African society, as the African woman who is unable to bear children does not pass on the vital forces to the descendants of her husband's clan. It is claimed that many childless women were healed by Mai Chaza. As her fame spread, she became known as Muponesi, "Redeemer", "Healer" or "Saviour", a title also used to refer to Jesus. Others called her Gwayana, "The Lamb." These are titles clearly borrowed from the New Testament. Did she herself approve of them? She appears to have preferred the name Mutumwa, which means "Messenger" or "Angel" and when referring to herself as Mutumwa used phrases attributed to Jesus, such as "I am doing the work of Him who sent me, I was sent by the Father."

It is striking that more than six decades later, a young male prophet (Uebert Angel) would announce that he was an "Angel," as we shall discuss in a section below. Alongside Mai Chaza, other notable prophetic figures were Paul Mwazha of the Vapostora veAfrica (African Apostles) and Ezekiel Guti, founder of what would become the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA). These male prophets placed emphasis on the African reception of the gospel and the need for Africans to take up Christianity as an African religion. Strikingly, both claimed to be "African Apostles," that is, having missions specifically for Africans. If the nationalists were challenging colonial domination in its political sense, they were challenging it in its spiritual dimension. Where some had

dismissed Christianity as “the religion of the white man,” they were proclaiming Christianity as “an African religion.”

In the early 1980s, Prophet Andrew Wutawunashe announced his arrival on the scene in a dramatic way, setting up the Family of God (FOG) Church (Togarasei 2006). In the meantime, there were splinter movements within the different Zimbabwean Initiated Churches. New prophets were emerging throughout the first two decades of independence (1980-2000). However, with a stable economy and marked national optimism, the prophetic spirit was rather muted. Prophets from various churches concentrated on the healing ministry. In addition, the prophetic office tended to be dominant in Apostolic and Zionist churches. To a very large extent, Pentecostal churches deployed titles such as, “Bishop,” “Archbishop” or “Apostle.” This was to change dramatically after the “decade of crisis,” that is, from 2000 to 2010. We reflect on this shift in the following section.

Young Male Prophets in Contemporary Zimbabwe

In line with the different prophetic waves described in the foregoing section, in recent times, Zimbabwe has witnessed the emergence of a plethora of prophetic ministries that are led by relatively young men. We argue that the new prophetic ministries must be understood against the background of the massive crises that Zimbabwe endured between 2000 and 2010. As the political, economic and social dimensions of life became unbearable for the majority, a new prophetic wave was ushered in. However, the young ages of these prophets has led some critics to question the authenticity of these prophetic ministries. The major problem is on how to differentiate true from false prophets (see, among others, the chapters by Vengeyi, Chimuka, Mangena and Mhizha in this volume). Even in biblical times it appears that this task was a daunting one. The prophet Jeremiah, for example, had numerous confrontations with those he regarded as false prophets. It is likely that they in turn considered him a false prophet. This has led many people to be suspicious of these prophetic ministries and the Zimbabwean media has been awash with debates on their authenticity.

Despite the criticism, it appears that these ministries have become popular, judging by the number of people who throng them. The most popular of these prophetic ministries among others are: The United

Family International Church led by Emmanuel Makandiwa, Spirit Embassy Ministries International led by Uebert Angel Mudzanire and Kingdom Embassy led by Passion Java, as mentioned earlier. In order to understand these ministries, there is need to have a closer look at each one of them.

Emmanuel Makandiwa, the founder of the United Family International Church was born on 25 December 1977. His rural home is in Muzarabani in Mashonaland Central Province. In 2002, he graduated from the Apostolic Faith Mission's (AFM) Living Waters Theological College where he was trained as a pastor in 2002. He then served as a pastor in AFM from then until 2008 when he formed the United Family Interdenominational Ministries (UFIM). By then he was only thirty-one years old. At first it was a lunch hour fellowship which was held at the Anglican Cathedral in Harare. When numbers increased, the space at the Cathedral became small and it was moved to State Lotteries Hall. The fellowship grew and there was need for a bigger place. It was then moved to the City Sports Centre and the time was also moved to Sunday evenings.

People thronged this interdenominational fellowship due to the prophecies they received from the 'Man of God'. This brought Makandiwa into conflict with his superiors who did not subscribe to the prophetic and healing activities the pastor was engaged in. Indeed, it is difficult to isolate only one reason why he proceeded to establish his own movement (Masvotore 2012). However, the AFM President, Aspher Madziyire, insisted that Makandiwa, Apostle Tavonga Vutabwashe of Heartfelt International Ministries and Pastor Oliver Chipunza who left to start their own ministries remained, "his children" (Phiri 2012: 17). The idea of regarding the young prophets as "children" must be interpreted against the background of contestation within masculinity, as we shall highlight below.

There are also others who believe that the conflict arose from the fact that when Makandiwa preached about giving, people would positively respond in ways that they would not when they were in AFM meetings (see Biri 2012: 50). It is believed that this did not augur well with the AFM leadership who felt that all the money which was being received by UFIM could have been coming into the AFM coffers (Manyonganise, forthcoming). When later he was asked to either stop the interdenominational ministry or move out of AFM, Makandiwa chose the latter. As a

result, in 2010 the United Family International Church was started. At the time of writing, the church boasted of quite a number of assemblies across the country. Harare which had the largest assembly, had over 30 000 congregants at any given time. The church also attracted international attention with visitors from as far as Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America among others. Fairly new in this church is the introduction of the doctrine of fatherhood in which a minister of the gospel is expected to have someone to whom they submit. Emmanuel Makandiwa's spiritual father is Ghanaian Victor Kusi Boateng, whom UFIC members refer to as "Grandpa" (Masvotore 2012). Again, this must be understood within the context of distinctions within masculinity; in this particular case the variable of age is at play.

UFIC is involved in many charitable activities. For example, expecting mothers who go into labour during church services are helped to give birth at church (at the National Sports Centre) by professional medical practitioners free of charge. Makandiwa is on record saying to date, he has given out over a hundred cars to people. In 2012, he built a house for Chief Kasekete in Mashonaland Central and also bought a house for a couple whose wife had given birth to a still baby who was later revived due to 'prayer'. The Charity Department which is headed by Ruth Makandiwa (who is now seen as a prophetess in UFIC), the wife of Emmanuel Makandiwa, is involved in providing for orphans and widows in the church. In 2012, the department initiated a 'send a child to school' project in which church members were encouraged to donate money equivalent to fees paid in rural schools across Zimbabwe in order to enable disadvantaged children to attend school. The church also pays rentals and buys food for its poor and financially struggling members.

Closely linked to Emmanuel Makandiwa is Spirit Embassy founder, Uebert Angel Mudzanire. His Shona name is Mutumwa, meaning 'messenger'. Uebert Angel was born on 6 September 1978 and he hails from Zaka in Masvingo province where he grew up attending the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. He founded the Spirit Embassy Ministries International on 12 March 2007 while living in Manchester, England. By then, he was only twenty-nine years old. He testifies that while in the United Kingdom until today, angels visit him and it is widely believed that it is due to these angelic visitations that he changed his name to 'Angel'. Others believe that the change of name was a simple translation from Shona to English of Mutumwa to Angel (see the chapter by

Mapuranga in this volume). Apart from his official names, Uebert Angel is also nicknamed 'the Eagle' or 'Major' by his followers for his said supernatural prophetic powers. He is married to Beverly Angel who is regarded in Spirit Embassy as a prophetess. He is also well-known for his famous statement in which he refers to God as *Jehova Chikopokopo, Mwari vasingade* runway (God the helicopter, who does not need a runway). From his perspective, God does not need anything to justify his blessing of people whom society may regard as unworthy.

In terms of size, Spirit Embassy boasts of twenty branches worldwide, including cathedrals in South Africa, the United Kingdom, Zambia and Botswana. It also owns a television channel, namely Miracle T.V. According to <http://relzim.org/major-religions-zimbabwe/pentecostal-aic/SEmb>, Miracle T.V. becomes Zimbabwe's second gospel T.V. channel, the first being Ezekiel T.V. owned by Ezekiel Guti of Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa who is also regarded as a great prophet in Zimbabwe's Pentecostal circles. Like Makandiwa, Uebert Angel's spiritual father is also Victor Kusi Boateng, which makes Makandiwa and Angel 'spiritual' brothers. Despite the fact that Makandiwa is older than Angel, Angel refers to him as his young brother, probably because his ministry started earlier than Makandiwa's. However, Angel often explains that it is because in the 'world of the Spirit', he is greater than Makandiwa. This must read as part of the contestation within masculinity as the two young prophets battle for supremacy, even as they pose a united front to their followers.

Apart from spiritual work, Spirit Embassy is involved in charity work. It operates a charity called Hand of Mercy (known as H.O.M.E). It basically provides food, education and learning materials to the poor. It also looks after orphans and the elderly (<http://www.justask.org.uk/tag/spirit-emabssy-live-stream>).

The other prophetic ministry that has proved to be very popular and is still growing in Zimbabwe is one that is led by Passion Java who was only twenty-four years old at the time of writing (the first quarter of 2013). The ministry is called Kingdom Embassy. Initially, Passion Java was a member of Tabernacle Ministries which is led by his brother, Apostle Batsirai Java. He is nicknamed 'ID prophet' for his ability to tell people's identity numbers. He advertises himself as, 'Prophet Passion.' He claims that he was born with a special gift and that when he was young he used to have strange dreams depicting him in heaven and

surrounded by angels. He also avers that he has the power to predict and foretell one's future (<http://myzimbabwe.co.zw/news/434-zimbabwe-now-under-the-spirit>). From Java's claims, he started prophesying when he was in primary school. Java is married to Yasmen who is considered a prophetess in Kingdom Embassy Ministries. Java's 'spiritual father' is Uebert Angel.

In terms of charity work, Java's wife runs a foundation for the underprivileged called Heart in Service (HIS) (<http://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-religion-byo-22232-article-flamboy>). During his November 2012 birthday celebrations, Passion Java is reported to have celebrated with street kids in Harare's First Street and also to have donated all the proceeds from his party to the foundation. As we shall articulate below, his behaviour in this particular instance is consistent with his age. With Makandiwa and Angel, Prophet Passion represents the new breed of young and assertive prophets in Zimbabwe.

Age, Gender and Prophets in Zimbabwe: A Preliminary Interpretation

We contend that there has been a generational shift in Zimbabwean Christianity, especially in relation to the popularity of younger prophets. Whereas some older prophets from earlier waves, such as Guti and Wutawunashe were still operating, the younger prophets appeared to have greater verve and visibility. They exuded greater confidence and appeared more attuned to the felt needs of the time, especially by emphasising prosperity and self-advancement. Their age facilitated their energy and zeal. In addition, their self-presentation, including expensive dressing, polished hair-styles and use of the electronic media, is reflective of their age. Older prophets within the Pentecostal stable and most prophets from AICs were not as adept at mediating the "modern and sophisticated look." The capacity of the young prophets to project a "progressive" image has drawn many new members to them. This confirms the observation made by Matthews Ojo (2012: 201):

Uniquely modern, shrewd, imbued with a can-do mentality, market-oriented, success-directed, and charismatic in style, with ever-growing multi-ethnic congregations principally using English as a medium of communication, Pentecostal and Charismatic movements propagate their doctrines to millions who live in urban areas.

The concept of generational shift as propounded by Jonathan Moyo (2004) informs this analysis. Moyo (2004: 17) states that large percentages of African populations are still comparatively much younger than those of Europe and the Americas. However, for Africa to achieve its full potential, there has to be a deliberate and decisive generational shift where the older generation of Africans hands over the reins to the younger, more technocratic generation. However, the younger generation has to acknowledge and seek to complement the achievements of the older or antecedent generation. This has seen Makandiwa acknowledging the role played by Guti in Zimbabwean Pentecostalism. He has consistently addressed Guti as the spiritual father of the Pentecostal prophetic movement. However, this does not imply that there is no tension: the struggle for members is intense among the different churches.

Makandiwa and Angel have also been keen to project the image of power and influence by being photographed with the iconic former South African president, Nelson Mandela. This is part of their media campaign that presents them as influential leaders in the spiritual, economic and political spheres. By participating at events such as the signing of the anti-sanctions document, Makandiwa has been demonstrating his significance. The young prophets have been keen to present themselves as “the only game in town” and “big.” They have dismissed their critics as powerless individuals who do not have the Spirit of God with them. With brazen confidence and youthful arrogance (this is particularly true of Angel), they have declared that they have arrived on the scene to empower Zimbabweans who were starving spiritually and materially.

The generational shift in Zimbabwean Pentecostalism is not unique. Male leaders across space and time have competed for power and influence. For example, there is a sense in which religious space in ancient Rome functioned not only as a site for contesting masculinities between generations, but also as a site where battles for social and political equality were fought. Religious space or occupation of religious office was important for the two social orders/classes, the patricians and the plebeians. The patrician order or class of the rich (loosely speaking) was the one privileged with the auspices and the only class entitled to occupy the office of *pontifex maximus* or high priest. On the other hand, the dress code served to distinguish between men and women (Mlambo 2007).

The struggle of the orders which ensued in 494 BC in which the plebeians appealed to their masculinities by way of withdrawing their military force/power in the face of external threats against Rome reveals the importance of religious office in ancient civilisations. The plebeian class wanted to be granted the right to occupy the office of *pontifex maximus*. Such an office was important as it could afford them the opportunity not only to communicate with the divine on behalf of the people, but also to become socially and politically powerful. The idea of occupation of religious office as prophet or *pontifex maximus* was political in the sense that it challenged the monopoly of such an office by the older generation/class of people. It therefore entails that there was bound to be competition between personalities who wanted to become priests.

The younger generation of prophets in Zimbabwe and their followers, to some extent, exhibit a masculine ethic in proclaiming the gospel. The ancient Romans did not have a word for masculinity. The closest word to it is *virtus*, which means the sum of all the corporeal or mental excellences of man, strength, vigour, bravery, courage; aptness, capacity; worthy, excellence, virtue, military talents, courage, valour, bravery, gallantry, fortitude etc. These masculine qualities are found in other societies also and they represent hegemonic masculinity (Moxnes 2003). We argue in this chapter that such qualities are the ones which the younger generation of prophets in Zimbabwe stand for. The prophetic office as practiced by the younger generation of prophets also promotes these qualities among the followers. The ministries of these younger prophets show a deeper quest to tap maximum potential from believers for their excellence in order that they may live fuller lives.

We note that the newer generation of prophets articulates new and dynamic ideas. As a result, they attract a huge following. The manner in which they demonstrate power brings to mind the biblical song sung by the women of Israel which went, "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands" (I Samuel 18:7). This angered poor old Saul, who interpreted the saying to mean that the young David was bound to take the kingdom (I Samuel 18:8). This graphic picture helps us to relate the politics of and competition for mass conversion between the older generation of preachers on the one hand and the younger generation of prophets on the other.

The prognosis of the concept of generational shift, described above, enlightens the debate on the prophetic movement in Zimbabwe. We

need to emphasize that the generational shift did not only open an array of opportunities for the younger prophets and their followers, but it also brought with it a different dimension to the prophetic office. The office of prophet now functions as a crossroad where competing visions of the gospel of prosperity and power as preached by the newer generation and the older bifurcate. The activities of the younger generation of prophets demonstrate a transition of the prophetic office. The process uncannily mirrors the biblical transition of seership to prophecy in ancient Israel: “He who was formerly called a seer is now called a prophet”(I Samuel 9:9). The role of a prophet as exercised by the younger generation of prophets seems to have become much more complex than before, although this has brought with it considerable controversy.

The new generation of prophets, unlike the older, is more deeply involved in the performance of miracles and predictions. They have also derived mileage from constant media attention, as well as their own effective management of their images. They have sought to cultivate positive images, especially through visible charitable activities. They act like the latter canonical prophets of Israel such as Amos, who were more involved in social activities of their time. As noted earlier, Makandiwa has engaged in numerous projects with the aim of improving the lives of the poor in the communities by making donations in form of food and also building houses. The Minister of Mines (at the time of writing) Dr Obert Mpofu publicly issued a statement that Makandiwa had to be supported (Newsday 13 March 2013: 16).

The new generation of prophets has proved to possess quite unprecedented energy. Their vision is vigorously directed towards expansion. Taking a cue from older prophets such as Guti, they have embarked on a massive scale of either building very huge structures or renting equally big structures for their congregants. They have a different vision from that of older prophets whose gospel philosophy is generally influenced by Prophet Abraham of the Old Testament. Abraham dwelt in tents and did not build permanent structures (Hebrews 11:9-10). David, too, did not construct the temple (I Chronicles 17:1-4). It was done by his young son, Solomon. What this young generation of prophets is doing clearly depicts a fundamental shift in the manner and nature of the religious functionaries of the prophetic office.

The masculinity and fatherhood of the younger prophets is confirmed when their members declare: “*Ini ndiri mwana wapapa or mwana wemu-*

profita (“I am a child of papa” or “I am a child of the prophet”). The concept of fatherhood features prominently in African discourses on masculinity (Richter and Morrell 2006). In Zimbabwean literature and society, the man/father is a provider, disciplinarian and family head (Muchemwa and Muponde 2007). By positioning the young male prophets as “fathers,” their members are bestowing patriarchal honour and respect upon them. It is our submission that most men in Zimbabwe would find it extremely difficult to say they are children of a particular woman prophet/ess. Socialisation allows them to submit to other men on the basis that these men are endowed with spiritual power.

Having a male identity has, therefore, enabled Makandiwa, Angel, Java and others to enjoy high ratings on the Zimbabwean spiritual market. This confirms the adage that “it is a man’s world.” Although we drew attention to the leadership of Mai Chaza in the earlier waves of prophets, we concede that young men have dominated the prophetic scene during the contemporary period. Although women from the Pentecostal strand of Christianity have increased their visibility (Mapuranga 2012), it is young male prophets who are clearly understood as the unrivalled leaders of the Pentecostal movement. An ambivalent gender ideology remains firmly in place and women have largely been reduced to patients, clients and recipients of prophecy, while men enjoy the patriarchal privileges and leadership roles.

Conclusion

Masculinities do not pose a united front. They are always in tension due to the quest for power and influence. In this chapter, we have deployed the concepts of generational shifts and masculinities to understand the dominance of young men in the prophetic movement in the contemporary period. We have argued that the young prophets must be located within the continuum informed by previous waves. We also maintained that their rise to prominence has generated tension with prophets from earlier generations. However, we hazard to suggest that future generations will be excited about the prophets of their own epoch. At that time, which is yet to come, the current prophets will be remembered as having belonged to a distinctive wave that would have since passed. We base this on our understanding of Shona proverbial wisdom which says, “*chinogara ibwe, munhu haagari*” (it is the stone that lives long, a human

being does not). As the younger prophets under study have retired others from earlier generations, so too shall they be retired by later prophets. Hopefully, these would now be women of God.

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CHAPTER 10

Tapiwa Praise Mapuranga

What's in a name?

Names and Titles in Pentecostal Ministries in Zimbabwe

Abstract

The period beginning the late 1990s up until now, (2013) has seen the marked growth of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe. This phenomenon will probably be still increasing beyond the contemporary period. This growth in Pentecostalism is witnessing a major shift in Christianity, with a notable increase in schisms and divisions within the church. This expansion of Pentecostalism has led to a notable increase in the appearance of churches with new names and titles for their leaders. A number of related questions may be asked. What is the significance of these names? Do these names of ministries in Pentecostalism signify some as more important or more spiritual than the others? Do these names in any way defy the common saying that 'a rose by any other name would smell as sweet'? Though the concept of naming has received quite some significant scholarly attention, these studies have focused on names of literary characters, freedom fighters, dogs and death amongst other issues. None of these have discussed names of Pentecostal ministries in Zimbabwe. The thrust of this chapter is to analyse this perceived fissure in the study of names, as well as to clarify the significance of these names in the wake of the phenomenal expansion of prophetism in contemporary Zimbabwe. The chapter also links the emergence of titles of honour and power in the discussion of nomenclature in the wake of the increased visibility of Pentecostalism in the country.

Introduction

Pentecostalism is not a new phenomenon to Zimbabwe. However, there has been an ever increasing change in Pentecostalism. As argued by Togarasei and Chitando (2010: 13), "although Pentecostalism has been part of the religious traditions of urban Harare, the advent of independence and the rise of the black elite has given rise to the expansion of American -influenced Pentecostalism in Harare." Phiri (2012: 5) con-

curs with this argument by suggesting that, “the turn of the new millennium witnessed a great charismatic renewal which saw the birth of indigenous churches with a ‘western touch’ to their singing and church conduct.” Cognisant of the vitality of this religious phenomenon, scholars such as Maxwell (1998) and Togarasei (2011) have analysed Pentecostalism and the gospel of prosperity. In addition, there has been a variety of studies that have an interest in this strand of Christianity (see for example Togarasei (2005, 2010, 2011), Chitando (1998), Togarasei and Chitando (2010) and Mapuranga (2012).

The emergence of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe was largely facilitated by the Apostolic Faith Ministries (AFM) which entered Zimbabwean Christianity in 1915 through an evangelist called Zacharias Manamela (Togarasei 2010:20). Many schisms developed, leading to the formation of more Pentecostal churches. Togarasei (2010:22-23) identifies quite a number of these which include Zimbabwe Assemblies of God in Africa (ZAOGA), led by Ezekiel and (later) Eunor Gutu; Family of God Church (FOG), led by Andrew Wutawunashe and Hear the Word Ministries started by Tom and Bonnie Deuschle, now Celebration Ministries. However, not all of these churches emerged directly from the AFM.

Apart from these Pentecostal churches identified by Togarasei, there is an inexhaustible list of new Pentecostal churches in the country. The list is quite long and this illustrates the vibrancy of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe¹. All these divergent churches are evidence of the claim by Kalu (2008) that Pentecostalism represents the fastest growing brand of

¹ Abundant Grace Church, Abundant Grace Ministries, Alliance Church in Zimbabwe, Assemblies of God Church, Baptist Union of Zimbabwe, Brethren in Christ Church, Calvary Family Church, Central Africa Episcopal Church, Christ Assemblies Fellowship, Christ for All Creation Ministry, Church on the Rock Ministries, Church of Worship, City of Life Ministries, Covenant of Deeper Life, Eternal Life Ministries, Eternal Paths Pentecostal Ministries, Faith in God Ministries, Family of God Church, Four-square Gospel Church, Full Gospel Assemblies International, Harvest House International, Harvest Time Ministries, His Image Church, His Presence International Ministry, His Way Church International, Holy Christian Ministries, Holy Ministries Jesus Life International, Jesus Life International, Kingsway Community Church, Living Gospel Church, Living Gospel World Mission, Multi Ministries, National Baptist Convention, New Covenant Ministries International, New Life For All, Pentecostal Assemblies of Zimbabwe, Pentecostal Blessing Ministries, Pentecostal Evangelism Church, Pentecostal Holiness, Pentecostal Pillar of Fire Ministries, Pentecostal Resurrected Interdenominational, Power of the Gospel to all nations Ministries, Renewal Life Ministries, Revival Crusade Missions, Rock Of Ages Fellowship.

Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa. It is in this light that this chapter looks at the significance of these names of Pentecostal churches. On the other hand, studies that have addressed the theme of names in Zimbabwe (see for example Kahari 1972, Pongweni 1983, Chitando 1998 and 2001, Tatira 2004, Makondo 2007, and Makoni, Makoni and Mashiri 2007) have not addressed the theme in relation to Pentecostal ministries. This study endeavours to fill this lacuna in the extant literature on naming in Zimbabwean Pentecostalism. Furthermore, it engages a related theme, namely, the titles adopted within the burgeoning Pentecostal ministries. It interrogates the significance of the titles that are used for religious leaders within the Pentecostal movement in Zimbabwe.

What's in a name: The significance of naming in Zimbabwe

In order to appreciate the significance of naming in Zimbabwean Pentecostal ministries, it is vital to appreciate the centrality of naming in society. This section pays attention to this theme. To begin with, a name is an important thing. Amongst a variety of studies done on naming, A.J.C Pongweni (1983) provides a classic analysis of the significance of naming among the Shona of Zimbabwe. During the pre-colonial period, names were laden with meaning. According to Chitando (1998:109), “names encapsulated the people’s socio-religious concerns and were meaningful in their given context”. This argument is further supported by Makondo (2007), as he writes on another aspect of naming; death related Shona anthroponyms. The names he identifies illustrate that “naming is a functional and purposeful enterprise among the Shona people of Zimbabwe” (Makondo 2007:106). With particular reference to personal names, Mbiti (1992:92-95) identifies different circumstances under which names were given. These included the way of arrival of the child, a reflection of the feelings of the parents, names relating to the time and place of birth and names that showed religious feelings.

However, the significance of names did not end with the arrival of new religions such as Christianity. If anything, the significance of names persisted. Chitando (1998:111-117) further identifies the circumstances and significance of naming in the Christian era in Zimbabwe. There were early missionaries and indigenous names, educational and traditional names, nationalist struggle and African names, political independence and African Christian names, and those that depicted the the-

ology and language of the time. As such, names were given depending on number of variables.

This section has indicated the significance of names in Zimbabwe. In the preceding section, the study listed a number of names of Pentecostal churches or ministries. The observation is that, despite most of the believers and founders of these ministries being either Shona or Ndebele speakers, they opt to give their ministries English names. It is important, however, to set in context the Pentecostal naming system by pointing out that because they belong to either the Shona or Ndebele groups, they continue to be influenced somehow by their local languages. Although they have adopted English names, the traditional naming system has persisted alongside the English names, for example, Ezekial Guti is also known as Handinawangu. This name has been theologically interpreted and influences the theology of the church alongside the name Ezekiel that he claims to have been given by God. However, his English name seems to be more dominant and popular as compared to the vernacular name. The following section thus questions the relationship between naming practices in general and the preferred use of English as compared to the local languages.

The Use of English Names by Indigenous Zimbabweans : A brief literature review

A number of scholars have written on the impact of the missionaries and colonialism on the aspect of naming in Africa, particularly in Zimbabwe. Amongst other scholars, Mashiri (1999:96) writes about the effect of Western Christianity and colonialism on Zimbabwe's political and cultural systems. This is further supported by Makoni, Makoni and Mashiri (2007:447) who suggest that:

Renewed interest in naming has focused on the ways in which naming interacts with aspects related to cultural change. As urbanization and other colonial developments took their toll on African communities, many cultural practices were under pressure to survive in an environment often not conducive to their preservation.

From this analysis, one can note a pattern in the naming of Pentecostals in Zimbabwe. None of the names of Pentecostal ministries are in the local languages such as Shona or Ndebele. As argued by Makoni, Makoni and Mashiri (2007:447), "the adoption of English names among

Africans is attributed to the coercive power of Christianity and colonialism.” It is because of this argument that Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe have the numerous English names as listed in the preceding discussion.

According to Chitando (2001:145), “Shona naming practices were deeply affected by the coming of Christianity, colonialism and education.” This is supported by Mashiri (1999:96) who argues that “the white missionaries and employers had difficulty in pronouncing Shona names and it was believed that an English or Christian name symbolized salvation.” This idea is also highlighted by Mercy Amba Oduyoye (1986: 33) when she suggests that “the missionaries gave people names that only the Europeans could pronounce ‘correctly’ because they found African names too difficult to say, or too heathen to enter into their book of Life which their God kept in heaven.” Here, one can detect Oduyoye’s African cultural nationalism. She expresses her frustration with the missionaries. They demonised indigenous names and promoted European names. With particular reference to Xhosa speakers, Neethling (2003: 47) argues:

With the introduction of Christianity and education as practiced by the mission schools to Xhosa speakers in the early 19th century, came a new development. English names were bestowed upon Xhosa children by the missionaries (on baptism) and by teachers (at school). These were often referred to as ‘church’ and ‘school’ names.

Perhaps the diverse names of Pentecostal churches are mostly in English because of the influence of the missionaries and the effects of colonialism. As noted by Mbiti (1977:30), “sometimes Africans have been pressured or hypnotized into being converted to a foreign culture, rather than to the gospel.” Willingly or unwillingly, this colonial mentality has had a ripple effect on the naming of most Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. Very few, if any have their names in local languages. As observed by Chitando (2001:146):

Due to the importance of formal education, many young people enrolled in schools and had to adopt European names. Taking up a new name symbolized entry into a new culture, with the express aim of superseding the old. The assault on traditional names was an ideological tool to foster an inferiority complex in the African.

From this discussion, one may thus understand the reason for the prevalence of the English language in the naming of Pentecostal ministries in

Zimbabwe. Apart from this argument, one needs to be critical by considering the transnational/globalisation nature and orientation of Pentecostalism. While the colonial effects stand, there is also need to consider the evangelistic orientation of Pentecostalism that necessitates the use of English language.

This is unlike the case of personal names amongst the Shona of Zimbabwe where the majority still maintain names in the vernacular. In this regard, Chitando (2001:148) observes “a lot of creativity [that went] into the emergence of Shona Christian names in post colonial Zimbabwe.”

This study appreciates the creativity in the naming of Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. The coining of names seems to be an unending task with each church emerging. As listed earlier, the names emerging are so diverse, perhaps for the purpose of identifying the differences within one brand of Christianity; that is, Pentecostalism. The question is: why all these names? As was asked in the popular adage by William Shakespeare, “What’s in a name? A rose is a rose by any other name.” Is this reflective of the naming of Pentecostals in Zimbabwe? The next section unveils the significance of selected names (Cole, 2009) in this brand of Christianity.

Naming and Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe: A critical analysis

As this section details, names carry a lot of weight to their bearers. They can be used for identity, to carry reputation or to show the origins of the church amongst many other reasons. The following section highlights some of the reasons for having all these names. This section seeks to find the significance of names in Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe. These names carry some value in the Pentecostal ministries because they give identity, they are an identity themselves, they carry or build reputation, they may show the geographical origins of a particular church, they may indicate the founder of the church, or simply a name may be chosen because it simply is appealing to those who use it. The next section explains these aspects in greater detail.

A name that identifies a person, place or thing

One of the roles of a name is to designate any person, place or thing that is being communicated about or with. This makes communication possible and grants meaning to peoples’ lives. When one is in a crowded

room full of people all seemingly talking at the same time and suddenly someone across the room, mentions one's own name, it gets one's attention. A name constitutes one's personal designation, so when someone uses it in conversation they are talking about one, and of course this is of interest to one. With particular reference to the many Pentecostal churches that are sprouting in Zimbabwe therefore, it is important that each of these has a name so that it becomes easy to know which Pentecostal church one might be referring to when a topic comes up. Rather than referring to Pentecostalism as a whole, the idea of naming makes communication easier in terms of reference. Below I itemize the significance of names.

A name gives identity to a person, place or thing

Beyond simply being useful in giving identity, names are an identity in themselves. Apart from being purposeful in communication where there is need to select or single out one person, a name does even more to its bearer. It not only identifies them, but it becomes their identity. It becomes almost impossible to separate a person from their name in our minds. A name becomes virtually synonymous with the person, place or thing. As such, names make it easier to identify Pentecostal ministries in Zimbabwe. A specific Pentecostal ministry such as Christ on a Rock Ministries is confident that its name sets it apart from other ministries. A creative name makes the ministry appear unique and contributes greatly to the process of branding. This is particularly necessary in a context of intense religious competition. Founders of Pentecostal ministries in Zimbabwe, like those in Nigeria and Ghana, have had to use the media extensively and impressive names facilitate differentiation. According to an avid commentator on Pentecostalism in Nigeria, Asonzeh Ukah (2006: 85), "the adoption of the media makes the churches appear up-to-date, modern and confident."

Whilst the two roles of names discussed so far may appear as similar, they are not the same. Whereas in the first instance the name is used to select a part from the whole, in the second instance a name is for stating identity. One needs to be very careful in assessing the differences in these two roles that both involve identity.

A name carries a reputation

Names carry with them a reputation. A brand name can mean success or failure for any product. Some brand names are so well accepted that they become synonymous for the entire industry. This situation can be referred to when talking about the first Pentecostal ministries to be found in Zimbabwe. Names such as the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe (AFM), Zimbabwe Assemblies of God, Africa (ZAOGA), led by Ezekiel and Eunor Guti, Family of God Church (FOG) led by Andrew Wutawunashhe; and Hear the Word Ministries started by Tom and Bonnie Deuschle have become household names as they are known all over the country, well beyond Pentecostalism.

Apart from these established movements, it is interesting to note that there have been quite few 'young' ministries that have received so much attention and intense media coverage. Emmanuel Makandiwa of the United Family International (UFI) and his close acquaintance Uebert Angel of the Spirit Embassy are two of the most prominent leaders whose churches they have founded have hogged the limelight on the Pentecostal scene in the country at the time of writing. According to Phiri (2012:6), "within a relatively short period of time, Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa has established one of the biggest Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe." The same can be said of Uebert Angel "whose firm is growing with each day. In May 2011 his Spirit Embassy grew from two hundred (200) to five thousand (5000) members in a space of six weeks" (Phiri 2012:8). A close analysis of a common thread within these ministries is their ability to address poverty by promising their adherents material salvation through their preaching of a gospel of prosperity. Despite the controversies, churches such as the United Family International (UFIC) and Spirit Embassy have managed to build some reputation for themselves amongst their followers, whose numbers have swelled within a short period of time in Zimbabwe.

The naming of these two prominent Pentecostal churches is quite significant. "United Family International" is a loaded name. In the first instance, it echoes its origin as an ecumenical movement. In fact, Makandiwa rose to prominence as the facilitator of an interdenominational (known in popular parlance as, "inter-dee" or "inter-d") movement. The emphasis on, "United Family" seeks to capture this thrust. Secondly, the idea of a "family" is meant to appeal to the African and Christian idea of a family as a source of love and security. It also refers to

the notion of being born again into one fold, belonging to the family of believers. The reference to “International” seeks to project the movement as a extending beyond the borders of Zimbabwe and Africa. It endeavours to characterise the movement as international. Overall, the name is creative and appealing, especially to young people who seek to belong to an international movement. This is not to suggest that Pentecostalism does not appeal to the older people as well. This study notes the shifting trends in Zimbabwean Pentecostalism. In the early manifestations, the movements comprised of the young people but when one considers current trends, it is striking how these movements have tapped the resources of both the young and the old, the educated and the uneducated, both men and women. The reasons behind this are complex (Hollenweger 1997 and Cox 1996).

A name that shows the geographical origin of a church

This is a major source of names in the New Testament. One could talk of the church that is in Philippi or the churches of the Galatian region. There are also references to the church of Antioch or Jerusalem. This is still a common source for a name. With particular reference to Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe, one can identify names such as Alliance Church in Zimbabwe, and Pentecostal Assemblies of Zimbabwe. The significance of these names probably lies in their ability to depict the geographical location of where these churches are found.

The reference to Zimbabwe is designed to appeal to the hearers' sense of patriotism. The name Zimbabwe projects the church as having been established for the sole purpose of meeting the spiritual needs of the “sons and daughters of the soil.” The local leaders in these Zimbabwean churches negate the claim of dependence of Western churches/North American Pentecostalism by such creativity. A movement carrying the name Zimbabwe is marketing itself as an authentic national movement. It is refusing to give its critics the chance to label it as a foreign imposition. On many occasions, African Pentecostalism has been portrayed as a mere extension of the Religious Right in the West or North American Pentecostalism. Such a movement seeks to present its version of Christianity as a truly Zimbabwean faith. ZAOGA is a good example of this notion. Its name captures its geographical origins (Biri 2012). That is why their discourses on nationalism which affirm the black race and Africa in general, resonate well with that of Africa's nationalist fathers.

Names of Founders or to Someone Held in High Regard

This is actually one of the most common derivatives of names in church history. The Montanists were named after Montanus of Phrygia. The Waldenses were named after Peter Waldo. The Franciscans were of course named after St. Francis. There are many Pentecostal ministries in Zimbabwe today that are still named after their original founders. A good example is Mathias and Mildred Ministries that once flourished in Zimbabwe in the early 2000s.

A name that is Appealing

This method of naming churches has become the most appealing and dominant in Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe. Most Pentecostal churches strive to win the souls of as many followers as possible. One way of doing this is through the use of a name that is able to woo crowds. As such, a name that is appealing is becoming one of the most dominant and successful ways of naming a church. Such names include the following:

- Abundant Grace Church
- Abundant Grace Ministries
- Christ for All Creation Ministry
- Eternal Life Ministries
- Eternal Paths Pentecostal Ministries
- Everlasting Gospel.

Such names strive to be appealing to anyone who hears this name and thus might be attracted to this church or seek to remain a permanent member of such a ministry once they join because their hope is to get from the church what is exactly described by the name.

It follows then that “names are useful tools, among others in ethnography, ethnology and ethnohistory” (Kimenyi 1989: ix). As such, names were not just given, but they were “laden with meaning” and that “...a name radiates and deploys a meaning” (Chitando 1998: 119). This is supported by Makondo (2007:100) in his discussion of death related names. He argues that “it is believed that the coiners use these names in their quest to define their space, to project their aspirations...” It is in this light that one may observe the rich plethora of names within Pentecostalism. Each church that emerges strives to come up with a more appealing name, as the Bible says that a good name is better than great wealth (Proverbs 22:1). Perhaps this is why each emerging church seeks

to have a name that is different from the existing ones, striving that it be a good name, better than those that have existed before them.

Apart from the significance of names that have been highlighted in this chapter, another aspect of naming that has become prominent in Pentecostalism is the issue of terms of address or titles. The following section examines the role of titles and terms of address in this growing brand of Christianity in Zimbabwe.

Office Titles in Pentecostalism: For Identity and Authority?

In as much as this study has argued that naming of Pentecostal churches brings with it the identity of the church, this section claims the same for office titles by the leadership of the new churches. It is rare for leaders in the church to be identified directly by their birth names without an accompanying title. There seems to be a lot of competition amongst church leaders as to which titles they should carry. These titles range from Prophet, Senior Prophet, Pastor, Reverend, Bishop, Archbishop, Doctor, Professor, Man/Woman of God, amongst others. It has been observed that the adoption of these titles changes over time, depending on when the leader deems it necessary. It seems generally that there is competition of recognition through the use of titles.

With reference to terms of address in Shona, Mashiri (1999) discusses the significance of terms of address. In the light of titles used in the Pentecostal ministries in Zimbabwe, this study concurs with Mashiri's argument (1999:109) when he says:

...The choices reflect very broad categories of social meaning, including respect, intimacy, praising...patronage, amongst others. Some sociolinguistic dimensions to the naming and addressing process have been illustrated, for example shifts over time in the naming patterns. The changes in the naming practices reflect the redefinition of the social reality within which names are given...Church affiliation plays an important role in the social life of many people, and this influence is reflected in the name giving.

From this argument, this chapter concurs with the idea that titles are part of the naming process within Pentecostalism. They determine the status of the leadership.

Some of these titles such as prophet (Matthew 21:11, John 6:14), have been coined from Christ himself. By adopting such identities, figures in the church want to be associated with Jesus. They adopt his identity,

character and authority, some of which were passed on to his disciples. On this use of such titles as prophet, Uebert Angel's case is equally interesting from a marketing perspective. He dropped his surname, Mudzanire, and popularised the name, 'Angel.' The result is a tautology: Prophet Uebert Angel. Etymologically, the two terms, 'prophet' and 'angel' both mean, "one who is sent." Theologically, he can be accused of exaggerating his position. In marketing terms, however, the new name is highly creative. The double 'sending' presents him as one who has been commissioned by God to deliver prophecies and miracles. He is not an ordinary prophet, but an angel! Furthermore, the church that he leads is the ultimate embassy: Spirit Embassy! One has to acknowledge the use of marketing techniques in Prophet Angel's rebranding of himself and his church.

Some of these titles, one can argue, stem from colonial mentality where there were hierarchies of master and servant, King and servant, etcetera. Rieger (2007: 197) argues thus:

In the history of effects, the titles connected to the three offices of Christ have often fostered empire and colonial attitudes. Asserting Christ's power as King, for instance, has led to images of Christ's kingship that resembled the political powers in control.

It is also interesting to note some of the titles are academic (Doctor, and Professor). Most of these leaders would not have attained their degrees through formal education. Most of these qualifications are earned through honorary awards, especially from theological colleges and universities whose credentials are highly questionable. For the recipients of these degrees, the type of awarding institution does not really matter. Of major concern to them is the title that comes with it. From the investigations made for this study, such titles bestow honour and dignity to the church leadership that adopts them. They are viewed by their followers as 'learned' leaders who have been taught how to read and comprehend the Bible without any questions being raised by their followers. The academic titles essentially seek to intimidate 'ordinary' members and to position the leaders as educated, powerful and informed. However, there is also need to point out that some of the leaders have attained degrees in universities and indeed qualify to be doctors.

Both males and females are increasingly adopting various titles. It was first the males who started using these titles and women followed suit. Consequently, the use of such titles by women in Pentecostal Christian-

ity is designed to reinforce power and authority, as was/is the case with male Pentecostal leaders. Rieger (2007: 198) says modern theology, therefore, has been found as having a 'colonial structure'. This chapter subscribes to the idea that women leaders in the church are indeed bargaining with patriarchy by adopting certain titles. In line with this argument, Rieger (2007: 208) asks the questions:

Is it possible that theologians would resist some aspects of the public colonial sentiment but their work would still remain beholden to colonialist structures? How are colonial dynamics at work below the surface, and thus shaping theological and other assumptions in ways that maybe not less but ultimately powerful?

From this analysis, the church is indeed a political space. Church leaders are using colonial dynamics in order that they may be powerful. Would the works of these church leaders still be equally credible if they simply worked in their churches without such titles and designations as they have? Once again, one has to ask, 'what's in a name? Would a rose by any other name smell as sweet?'

It is interesting to note that this scramble for titles is not governed by gender, as noted above. Women have not been left out as they too get recognition through the various titles by which they are addressed. The following have been noted by Dete (2011:D5):

- Dr Eunor Guti of Gracious Woman's Fellowship
- Dr Rutendo Wutawunashe of Precious Stone's Ministry
- Prophetess A.C Manjoro of Women of Virtue Ministries
- Pastor Florence Kanyati of Grace Unlimited Ministries
- Bishop Patience Hove of Elshaddai Ministries International
- Pastor Victoria Mpofu of Women Weapons of Warfare
- Prophetess Veronica P. Mwale of Intercessors International
- Pastor Bonnie Deuschle of Celebration Ministries (Covenant Woman)
- Pastor Delia Mandisodza of Trinity Deliverance Ministries, and
- Pastor Barbara Bassie of Women of Hope and Honour Ministries

Just like their male counterparts, these women identify themselves with an array of titles such as indicated above. The next section examines whether these women are not bargaining with patriarchy through adopting such titles and identities that are also used by their husbands in these ministries.

Office Titles: Reinforcing Patriarchy?

Apart from amassing power, authority and identity from titles adopted as practiced by men, this chapter argues that women in Pentecostal leadership also reinforce patriarchy through their identities. As illustrated in the list of prominent women Pentecostal leaders given above, they identify themselves using titles such as Apostle, Prophet, Pastor and Bishop, amongst many other male power-oriented titles. Are these women not trying to be like ‘men’? On the one hand, such identities are meant to install power and authority in these women as leaders, just as their fellow male leaders would appropriate the same titles to bestow the same identities and get authority from other men and women in the church (Mapuranga 2012). On the other hand, this study appreciates the liberative gender ideology that has no limit in terms of given women space to exercise their gifts (Soothill 2007, 2010). It also shows the creative nature of African Pentecostalism among many complex explanations/reasons.

Conclusion

This study concurs with Mashiri (1999:93) that naming and addressing practices are dynamic and they reflect linguistic, political and cultural changes and the changes and continuities in the way human relationships and identities are perceived and the factors that determine them. The flourishing of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe has seen many dynamic names of churches and titles of address that are given to the leadership. Names of churches and the titles of leaders within these churches are being adopted for a variety of reasons that include the need for identity, reputation, power and authority amongst other reasons as discussed in this article. These names and titles of address carry a lot of significance to the bearers, be it the church itself or the religious leader. Names and titles thus reflect a diversity of social, political, economic and spiritual significance within the Pentecostal churches and their leaders who adopt them.

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CHAPTER 11

Clive Tendai Zimunya & Joyline Gwara

Pentecostalism, Prophets and the Distressing Zimbabwean Milieu

Introduction

The advent of colonialism in Africa saw the introduction of Christianity and the message of Christ. Though in itself the Gospel in Christianity was not bad in its intentions, it was used by the colonial masters as a way of silencing the indigenous Africans from antagonising the colonialists' despotic and oppressive intentions. To this end, the Bible and its gospel suited this mission for it promised the believer heavenly prosperity at the cost of earthly endurance and repentance from 'sin'. Hence the missionaries managed to find converts and Christianity took root in Africa. The colonisers went about oppressing the indigenous Africans and relegating them from worthwhile endeavours such as mining and agriculture. They plundered Africa's resources and built for themselves a 'heaven on earth' in lavish suburbs where the indigenous people were banned. Although these injustices led to many armed struggles throughout Africa, more so in Zimbabwe, the majority of converts found solace in Christianity, where they endured the oppression and difficult times in anticipation of the heavenly bliss which the Gospel offered. Decades later, after Zimbabwe won its independence, the country has faced yet other challenges in the form of economic and political hardships. These have led to high unemployment rates, low incomes, poor health conditions and an unstable and uncertain political environment. In tough and turbulent times such as these, a new type of gospel has emerged, the gospel of prosperity, coupled with its famous prophets, miracles and miracle workers. It is the object of this paper to analyse the advent of these new churches and determine what has necessitated their mushrooming at such an alarming rate. It argues that although the situations have changed from colonial to contemporary times, the role of the church still remains the same: that of easing the harsh pains of reality. To this end, the paper also argues that Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx

Marx offer intriguing perspectives that could explain this aspect of religion.

Christianity and Colonialism in Zimbabwe

From the 1880s to the early 20th century, a coalescence of Christianity, mercantilism, colonialism and capitalism gradually displaced pre-colonial socio-political and economic formations, bringing about a colonial transformation marked by the emergence of new identities, religions, languages, ideologies, political and economic outlooks and new tastes (www.gta.gov.zw). The myth of a Second Rand lying in Zimbabwe precipitated the launch of the Pioneer Column that established the colonisation of Zimbabwe. While they introduced some positive developments like western medicine, a stop to persecutions for alleged witchcraft and such practices as forced marriages and child-pledging, missionaries were the earliest representatives of the imperial world that eventually violently conquered the Shona and the Ndebele (www.gta.gov.zw). They aimed at reconstructing the African world in the name of God and European civilisation, but in the process facilitating the colonisation of Zimbabwe. Missionaries were consistent and persistent in denigrating and castigating African cultural and religious beliefs/practices as pagan, demonic and evil.

According to Hilde Arntsen (1997), the role of the missionaries in the colonisation of the region was also considerable in terms of cultural and political domination of the people. Although the missionaries' task was to make people accept the Bible and its teachings, Christianity was turned into an ideology which could be used to convince people not to resist white domination. Religion was used to legitimize, sustain and even promote political tyranny and oppression, as well as in other instances for reasons of political liberation of the people. In the words of Charles Villa-Vicencio (as cited by Arntsen, 1997), religion has functioned both as the "opiate of the people" and a "source of the social renewal". Bourdillon, on the other hand, maintains that "missionary Christianity cannot simply be identified with colonialism" (Bourdillon, 1990). Regardless of claims that the missionaries regarded themselves as opposed to the colonial ideology, they were part of the colonial structure and brought with them religions, beliefs and practices which were alien to Zimbabwe.

To this end the missionaries, through their gospel of heavenly prosperity at the expense of earthly affluence, played a big part in tranquilizing the natives whose land, minerals and property was being taken by the colonizers while they were sidelined and relegated (Arntsen, 1997). However, some of the noble missionaries went on to build mission schools and mission hospitals in a bid to adhere to the key Christian principle of meeting both a person's soul and body needs. This brought considerable help into the lives of many local people, who were expertly educated and given medical treatment for ailments that had bedeviled them, because they previously had had no medicines and vaccines to conquer them.

Christianity found many converts in colonial Zimbabwe, and the Church had a huge following from both the rural and the urban populace. The central theme in the Gospel was the second advent of Christ and repentance from sin in order to enjoy heavenly riches. According to Lenmore Zuze (2013), emphasis was also placed on the need to ignore earthly material possessions and focus on the need to acquire heavenly prosperity; hence passages in the Bible like the following:

- Do not build for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust can destroy (Matt 6:19,20)
- Foxes and birds have some where to lay their heads but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head (Matt 8:20)
- But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort (Luke6;24)
- It is easier for a camel to enter through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt 19;24)
- You cannot serve God and money (Matt 6; 24).
- How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Luke 18:12)

These verses point to the fact that the Original Gospel did not seek earthly possession. Poverty and oppression were seen as part of the Christian's normal daily routine while waiting for heaven. As Karl Marx would put it, religion became the opium of the people manufactured by the ruling class to keep the oppressed masses happy (Smith, 2005). In essence, the oppressed people ignored their earthly problems and the colonisers' oppressive ways by finding comfort in the idea of heaven and the Second Advent of Christ.

After independence, the number of mainline and African Initiated Churches grew. With the freedom of forming new churches and con-

gregations that came with independence, this was an easy task. Decades later Zimbabwe found itself in yet another type of trouble, namely economic and political recessions.

Zimbabwe's socio-economic turmoil

Over the past decade, Zimbabwe has experienced an economic collapse that has brought the disasters of poverty, unemployment and low life expectancy. But in this scenario other people have thrived financially. According to David Coltart (2004:1), the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe which saw its climax in 2008, turned one of Africa's most prosperous countries into a country with one of the lowest life expectancies in the world. He notes that since 1994, the average life-expectancy in Zimbabwe has fallen from 57 to 34 years for women and from 54 to 37 years for men. The combined effects of HIV and AIDS as well as poverty and malnutrition also claimed about 3,500 people every week during this period (Coltart 2004:1).

According to Geoff Hill (2003:230), in June 2003, Zimbabwe literally ran out of money. Other shortages that had seemed so inconvenient when first they began in 2000 had become a way of life. It was accepted that one cooked without oil, drank tea without milk or sugar, had bread without margarine (assuming one could find the bread) and walked when there was no fuel (2003:230). Unemployment topped 70% in 2000 and cross-border trading became the only source of income for thousands of men and women. However, according to Indexmundi.com, Zimbabwe's economy is growing despite continuing political uncertainty. Following a decade of contraction from 1998 to 2008, Zimbabwe's economy recorded real growth of more than 9% per year in 2010-11, before slowing to 5% in 2012, due in part to a poor harvest and low diamond revenues. Dollarization in early 2009 – which allowed currencies such as the Botswana pula, the South Africa rand, and the US dollar to be used locally – ended hyperinflation and restored price stability but exposed structural weaknesses that continue to inhibit broad-based growth.

In this scenario of turbulent and uncertain events, Pentecostal churches have sprouted and offered a much needed solace. According to Memory Dete (2009), for many people in Zimbabwe, who are living on a shoe-string budget, or who are trying desperately to make ends meet,

Pentecostal churches have offered to them hope in the desperate situations that they encounter in their lives, which have often been deemed by the world as hopeless, even though, the Bible asks, “*Is there anything too hard for the Lord?*” In this day and age when life seems to be moving at a very fast pace, the New Testament Apostles constantly remind us that we must not just listen to or read God’s word but to put it into practice in our lives. Many Zimbabweans have claimed to witness miraculous signs and wonders that are claimed to be performed through God’s Word. Pentecostalism has had an overwhelming response and many families have taken heed of the call by Christian evangelists to shift from following their African traditional religion in favor of Christianity, which they believe can transform their lives for the better through this charismatic type of worship.

The influx of new membership to Pentecostal Church Ministries has continued to swell due to the fact that many people have through Pentecostalism had their physical and spiritual problems supposedly solved and have also claimed to discover the root causes of generational curses which run through their ancestral lineages and have also managed to solve many baffling and mind-boggling family misfortunes that may have perpetrated in their extended family for many years (Dete 2009).

On this background, it is necessary to come up with psychological and socio-economic dynamics that might explain this unfolding of events in Zimbabwe, especially where it pertains the emerging prosperity Gospel churches. Chief to be discussed are the two forces of Pentecostalism and the psychological framework within which people find themselves in the socio-economic spheres.

Pentecostalism and Characteristic features of New Religious Movements

Pentecostalism is a major force on the religious scene of Zimbabwe today, and it is an important influence on the new religious movements that are appearing in the country, the majority of which can be described as ‘Pentecostal’ in some sense. This new type of Pentecostalism is considerably more susceptible to the trend known as ‘Prosperity Gospel.’ The Gospel of prosperity has been well described by Paul Gifford (1998). According to Gifford, its origins are attributed to Kenneth Flagin on Tulsa, Oklahoma, who received a revelation in 1934 concerning the text

of Matthew 11:23ff. Flagin taught that prayer for health and wealth was infallibly answered, when one genuinely believed that these things would be granted (1998). One of his repeated sayings was that anyone who does not drive a luxury car has not understood the Gospel.

The basic teaching is that God wants the Christian to be wealthy and that poverty is an indication of personal sin. A further tenet, based on a tendentious reading of 2 Corinthians 9 is that in order to reap, one must sow. This means that the Christian must contribute abundantly to the work of evangelism and to the upkeep of his/her Pastors, if he/she wishes health and material wealth themselves. According to Mate (2002) Pentecostalism provides an ideological framework, which legitimises behaviours contrary to tradition. They encourage individualism, which not only enables saving and accumulation but also a process of class formation. In the faith Gospel, personal testimony sometimes occupies an even more important place than the Bible itself.

Born-again Churches preach what has been described as the 'gospel of prosperity', in which getting rich is seen as God's will and a sign of His blessing. Born-again say that God gave humans dominion over creation, so it is Christian to accumulate wealth through hard work. In addition, as Shorter (2001) argues, one has to have faith and give to God through tithes and 'serving' God in order to get richer. In these organisations, laziness and poverty are attributed to the work of the devil, who is inimical to productivity. Generosity of giving, 'conspicuous charity' to the Church (also referred to as 'planting'), enable Church founders and those close to them to live lavish life styles, drive expensive cars and support 'conspicuous consumption'. Church members create a prosperous Church: it is like a high-yielding investment in God. The 'gospel of prosperity' becomes a way of attracting membership and retaining it, especially among the poor aspiring to break out of their poverty.

Unfortunately the sharp contrast between the lavish living of the pastors and the poverty of their audiences become a source of scandal. According to Shorter (2001), people can be quickly disillusioned, especially when continued failure to acquire wealth is ascribed to personal sin or lack of faith. Based on this, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the faith gospel formula is, to a great extent, a child of modern secular materialism, and that for some of its exponents, religion is a way of making money. It is, in fact, a religious form of economic rationalism. One can argue that it is not too much to claim that such emerging religious

movements are part and parcel of the secular global phenomenon. It is also apparent that they pay scant respect to African traditional culture. In fact, the preachers and evangelists of the gospel of prosperity insist on the use of English, with or without an interpreter standing beside them.

New religious movements are arising in situations where the majority of people experience acute poverty and even desperation, while a minority is beginning to enjoy the benefits of the consumer society just like the scenario in Zimbabwe at the moment. There is also a widely felt need for a cathartic experience, enabling individuals to rid themselves of guilt-feelings and other moral burdens, often related to the experience of poverty. Salvation is basically a subjective assurance of deliverance. Paradoxically, members of new religious movements are ready to surrender their material possessions. This is a calculated sacrifice which sows the seed of future prosperity. There is also a literal expectation of miracles, cures and other marvels. Finally, there is a mystique of leadership, of accepting the unquestioned authority of an evangelist-prophet, who possesses special gifts and who is the vehicle for a divine message. Many leaders of the new religious movements also seem to regard their operation as a business, as much as a religious avocation (Shorter, 2001).

New religious movements are strongly influenced by the spirituality and practice of Pentecostalism. Emphasis is placed on the conversion experience, rather than on doctrinal faith. Healing and deliverance feature prominently in their worship. The raising of arms, dancing, clapping, and lively music are always a feature of their services. Testimonies are given during the event and great importance is placed on witnessing afterwards (Shorter, 2001).

New Religious movements differ from African Instituted Churches in the content of their preaching. The former proclaimed a freedom from sin and from colonial oppression. Their preaching has a social and African resonance. New religious movements on the other hand, are preaching personal salvation, a deliverance from ill health and poverty (which is taken as a sin). The rich are not blamed for oppressing the poor. On the contrary, they are evidence of God's blessing and are to be emulated. Poverty is said to be due to sin and a lack of faith. It can be overcome by prayer, fasting and generous donations to the evangelist. According to the new religious movements, the source of evil lies in spiritual forces, evil spirits and the devil. As Rekopantswe Mate (2002) puts it studies of urban Pentecostal (also referred to as 'born again') Churches in Africa

have generally concluded that this variant of Christianity helps people to cope with the pressures and demands of 'modernity'. 'Modernity' here is taken to mean 'leaving' traditional ways of life or 'breaking with the past' (Meyer, 1998), meaning an end to ancestral worship, being tied to kin, 'split families' because of labour migration, use of traditional medicine and health care and belief in the occult. Traditional culture is portrayed as 'the work of the devil' and therefore antithetical to God.

On the whole, the leaders of these movements are not very positive about African culture. Often, they identify the African past with paganism and the empire of Satan. Their prejudice against African culture may be compared to that of the early mainline missionaries. They do not use cultural idioms of African music. Rather they employ modern gospel songs of Western inspiration, which are accidentally very attractive to African youth.

The leadership of the new religious movements is based on the personal vocation, the spiritual gifts and, most importantly, the personal charisma of the pastor, preacher or prophet. The personality of the leader is overwhelming. He/she connects people with God, mediates healing power, and ministers grace to them (Shorter, 2001). One sometimes receives the impression that in the new religious movements the person of Jesus Christ, and even God Himself, is eclipsed by the leader. His words are God's words. To give the leader one's financial contribution is to give it to God himself and to earn a reward from God. The leader is given maximum exposure, like an entertainer or pop star. The setting for worship is also theatrical. Pentecostal churches are built like theatres, with galleries and stalls facing a stage. The leader usually has musical 'backing' as it were, with singers, musicians and dancers. The whole worship takes on the character of a theatrical performance, with spontaneous audience participation (Shorter, 2001).

African Instituted Churches often came into existence in the rural areas and only later made their appearance in cities and towns. New Religious Movements, on the other hand, have targeted the towns and cities right from the start. Being a mass phenomenon, they operate where the masses of rich people live- the urban areas. In the towns and cities it is possible to assemble a crowd fairly easily. Many urban locations, particularly low income areas, are already so densely populated as to provide an instant crowd. The new churches therefore are essentially an urban phenomenon: towns are places of wealth creation and conspicuous con-

sumption. They are the contexts in which the preacher's materialistic goals are most likely to be achieved (Shorter, 2001).

African Instituted Churches arose in a 'liminal' period of socio-cultural change; the years before and immediately after independence. They helped people make the transition from the life of the ethnic homeland to that of the modern world. New religious movements already belong to the modern world, but it is a world full of problems, uncertainties and frustrations. The urban poor are beset with inhuman living conditions, poverty, violence, sickness, stress and unemployment- not to mention sin (Shorter, 2001). They, however, live side by side with an affluent minority that is rich beyond the dreams of avarice. This is the perfect scenario in which new religious movements can flourish. It offers people a problem-solving religion, even a problem-solving God. It identifies with their immediate problems and experiences, offering them a way out of their desperation and a means of emulating their affluent brothers and sisters.

Pastor Miuru of Kenya proclaims that perfect physical and spiritual health is promised to those who believe. Miracles include deliverance from evil spirits, prosperity and success in all financial dealings and an "everlasting good life". Those who are physically cured are told to have their healing verified at a hospital or clinic. He scathingly points to other evangelists who stage miracles. Faith and the giving of tithes are all important conditions for a true miracle (Shorter, 2001).

It's undeniable that the Bible has many scriptures which tell of God's blessings. However, the tragedy of those who peddle the gospel of prosperity is their myopic focus on these scriptures and reluctance to understand the core objective of the Gospel. Did Jesus impliedly or explicitly teach that His Gospel would also be a tool for earthly prosperity? Ministers have become so intoxicated with preaching wealth with the effect that the poor feel out of place or like sinners in today's churches.

The Prosperity gospel teaches that one needs material prosperity in their life. It doesn't teach that primarily one needs prosperity in their 'spiritual' life, which the Bible teaches. The prosperity gospel was designed to serve a real practical purpose which is to remove focus from the real matters of this world. The prominence given to it relegates the Second Coming of Christ (which was characteristic of the Gospel in times just after independence to the time the economic meltdown began in Zimbabwe) to the peripheries. Preachers hardly preach of the second

coming of Jesus Christ. According to Alexander Paul (2009), it is common for both preachers and practitioners of the prosperity message to say things like “Receive your miracle!” and “If you have a need, plant a seed.” This is sometimes known as “seed faith.” You show your faith by giving money-plant a dime to reap a dollar, or tip your bellboy to bring you the car that you want- God is your ultimate errand boy. Of course, planting a seed means giving dollars to a particular minister. And the thousand fold return is a miracle, not simply the result of prudent investing or financial planning (Paul, 2009). These preachers teach that the poor are poor because of sin in their lives and lack of faith. Therefore, if they would quit sinning and have more faith, they could be wealthy. They use the terminology of “claiming” to try to get what they want.

According to an article by Learnmore Zuze (2013) on Nehanda.com, Christ knew human nature too well that once the pursuit of wealth becomes our goal in life it becomes a god on its own. Christ would not have told the rich young man that it was impossible to serve God and money if money were not a master in its own right. Money is a master which demands to be served just like God. The rich young ruler had faithfully kept the Commandments but his heart was embedded on his wealth. He valued his wealth so much that he was willing to lose Christ for it. Prosperity preachers and seekers likewise are striving after material things of the world instead of God. The wealth gospel stands in stark contrast with Christ’s advice, “...a man’s life does not consist in his earthly possessions.” (Luke 12; 15)

It is interesting to note that the peddlers of the gospel of prosperity continue to teach that affluence is an indicator of godliness. However, Christ was an embodiment of humility and he identified with the poor. He even had to make the point by being born of a poor carpenter yet he was God. The most misleading and most mischievous belief to come out of the gospel of prosperity is the promise that being born again spells an end to poverty, pain, and suffering. Church members today give testimonies that they were always sick and poor before they turned to Christ. God in the Bible never promised man that once they convert to Christianity they become immune to the sufferings of the present world. To the contrary, Paul’s conversion to Christianity marked the beginning of untold suffering for him. The impression given by the prosperity gospel is that this sinful world is our home where we ought to build mansions and drive obscenely expensive cars. If there was any man who could

have amassed wealth by use of miracles and attain earthly prosperity beyond measure that man was none other than Jesus Christ. He could have led the way and enriched Himself as an example for His followers. With an average of five thousand people following Him, He could have easily wrecked in thousands of dollars daily in offerings and buy all the gold of this world but He did not.

Psychological and Socio-Economic Explanation

As Mate (2003) notes, equating poverty with the work of the devil and individual choice is unfortunately very simplistic: it makes it impossible for people to critique poverty as a socio-political and economic process connected with structural relations and with an ideological basis.

The psychological factor is an important element in the background of the new religious movements. They are 'problem-solving.' They address a whole catalogue of social and personal issues of the very same kind that traditional healers address. God is seen as a problem-solving God, offering immediate relief from present affliction (Shorter, 2001). Traditional, integral healing is, in many ways, comparable to the integral health-wealth promised by new religious movements to believers. Whereas the former is often vitiated by magical practices and magical beliefs, the latter is penetrated by an expectation of 'miracles.' The word 'miracle' is much used by the evangelists in these movements, and it may be that, in the popular understanding of miracle, there is an overtone of magic. At a popular level, people are credulous about the marvellous. This is a common trait of human nature, but Jesus did not encourage a pursuit of the marvellous. He played down the miraculous element in healing and wonder working, putting the emphasis instead on people's faith.

'Faith' is another word that is much in use among the evangelists and their followers. Many of the new religious movements claim that lack of faith or true repentance is responsible for the absence of a miracle. This is like blaming people for their own suffering. The problem with new religious movements is that they often encourage a too literal understanding of the marvellous and they impose their own agenda in these matters upon God. More so, because people demand miraculous signs from God, there is an ever-present temptation to stage manage miracles.

Psychology is a response to socio-economic realities. The needs and aspirations of people, to which the new religious movements provide an answer, stem from the socio-economic conditions of a country at a particular time. In Zimbabwe, for instance, the national economy is currently unstable and in decline, and a majority of Zimbabweans are experiencing poverty, unemployment and a variety of related stresses. This in turn affects education, food, housing and living conditions. To make matters worse, a minority in the country are entering upon the affluent life style of a consumer society. The poor and the desperate yearn for this unattainable 'good life.'

According to Alexander Paul (2009), complexity and confusion confronting people in their daily life experiences compel them to look for solutions of ultimate meaning. The new religious movements apparently provide the answers for this particular need as well. The miracle service may often be actually therapeutic for those who feel abandoned, harassed, disappointed or betrayed. For many, the new religious movements may be a passage into a new routine or new community which helps them to cope with life's stresses and the disappointments they feel. But for many, the promise of fulfilment turns out to be an empty promise, and the new religious movement is more a part of the problem than the solution. These religious movements cater especially for the more frustrated and disadvantaged sections of the population, namely, the youth and women.

Generally speaking, these new movements need to be more pragmatic, to give people self-confidence and the ability to cope with the real difficulties of life, rather than to lull them into a false sense of salvific security. Whereas the shepherd and follower of Christ of the past focused on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and repentance, today's follower has been schooled to believe that the focus of the Christian is the acquisition of worldly wealth. The prosperity Gospel teaches that God wants Christians to be prosperous financially, physically and spiritually. This Gospel has taken center stage influencing millions of people and has had startling success because of what it promises the believer. Marketers of this gospel have touched the hearts of millions of eager listeners seeking to escape from the jaws of poverty. This gospel is premised on the idea that God wants people to be rich and to have excess in their lives and that material possessions indicate spiritual worthy.

Sigmund Freud's famous book, *The Future of an Illusion*, makes a similar point. An atheist and lifelong critic of religious belief, Freud used scientific analysis of religion to present a father-child model of religion due to "a store of ideas...created, born from man's need to make his helplessness tolerable and built up from the material of memories of the helplessness of his own childhood and the childhood of the human race" (Frazier 1975). In fact, according to Freud, humanity's developed religions, worshipping gods or divines, initiated and condensed within the ideas of the intimate relation between the child and the father; namely during childhood, one looks up to the father to provide the protection and support; likewise, in dealing with unpredicted natures of life, humanity looks up to the superior intelligent and benevolent gods to offer the safeguard from all terrors, evils, sufferings, hardships, as well as the reward of good and evil, and of life after death (Frazier, 1975). Explicitly, he foresees no future for religion because it is just an illusion of mankind's wishes and expression psychologically and biologically. In the meantime, Freud also acknowledges that widespread atheism could undermine social stability. Even he wants to restructure the interplayed relationship between religion and civilization, including material, economic, social and mental factors. But whereas Freud postulated God as the fatherly protector from earthly evils, in Zimbabwe today this is the role that has been assumed by the prophets and pastors who have assumed a divine status.

When the growing individual finds that he is destined to remain a child forever, that he can never do without protection against strange superior powers, he lends those powers the features belonging to the figure of his father; he creates for himself the gods whom he dreads, whom he seeks to propitiate, and whom he nevertheless entrusts with his own protection. Thus his longing for a father is a motive identical with his need for protection against the consequences of his human weakness. The defence against childish helplessness is what lends its characteristic features to the adult's reaction to the helplessness which he has to acknowledge—a reaction which is precisely the formation of religion. This explains why people have turned to these new religious movements where they have acknowledged their helplessness and sought refuge in the earthly prosperity offered there.

However, despite this analysis of religion by Freud, it should be noted that Pentecostalism can be credited for having been able to meet the

needs of many on the margins of society and church. It has been effective in bringing people into a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. It encourages its members to share their personal testimonies with others, to live their lives with an eye to "holiness", to embrace good works as part of the "Spirit-filled" life, to be open to the sovereign movement of the Holy Spirit through charisms, signs and wonders, and to support the work of the church through regular tithing. On the whole, it does seem as a very important, if not necessary, aspect of our society today.

Conclusion

Today, the success of the church in Zimbabwe is derived from the fact that the Pentecostal Church takes on board people's problems in this earthly life. No longer does the church promise heavenly riches in times of earthly need, like what the colonial missionaries did, but now promises earthly riches and success. In light of the problems that Zimbabwe is currently facing, economically and politically, the church, especially Pentecostal churches, has been a great tranquilizer, shifting people's attention from these problems to the promise of earthly riches and miracle. It has given the people great hope in a period of great economic and political uncertainty.

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CHAPTER 12

Nisbert Taringa

“For with God nothing is Impossible”

Reflections on African Initiated Churches’ (AICs) Prophets as African Traditional Religions (ATRs) Fundamentalists

Abstract

The chapter explores what AICs prophets retrieve and use from one of the key African traditional religio cultural fundamentals: religious healing. The chapter argues that prophets and their movements are reactive movements that intend to protect the past in African traditional religions, particularly the beliefs and practices in religious healing. This makes the old more powerful than the new in the paradigm that the prophets use in their healing rituals. AICs prophets are Shona traditional religious fundamentalist championing what is perceived to be one of the fundamentals of Shona faith, namely (i) that the causes of illness are the behaviour of the individual, other human beings and evil supernatural powers and (ii) that the role of the diviner-healer is to locate the source of the misfortune and to identify the failure which needs to be rectified. The paper contends that AICs prophets can therefore be regarded as ATR fundamentalists who have rescued Shona traditional religious healing paradigm from oblivion.

Introduction

Much work has gone into finding out the relationship between African Traditional Religions (Shona) and African Initiated Churches prophets. Daneel (1971) explored the thesis of the convergence of the old and new. Other works have considered whether the prophets are not in actual fact *n’angas* (traditional healers). No work has considered this relationship using fundamentalism as an analytical term, that is, in the context of theories and debates about religious fundamentalism. The chapter explores what AIC prophets retrieve and use from one of the key African traditional religio cultural fundamentals: religious healing. It begins by reflecting on definitional issues related to the term fundamentalism and settles for a particular understanding of religious fundamentalism. After

this, the chapter considers what the Shona AIC prophets consider to be the crisis that they as fundamentalist are responding to. The chapter then moves to identifying and discussing beliefs and practices related to religious healing as one of the Shona traditional fundamentals that the prophets select, retrieve and use.

Religious Fundamentalism

Like many terms, the word fundamentalism defies a single definition. Ruthven (2004:15) observes that:

The 'F-word', however constructed, should never be taken at face value: even at its origin, in the Fundamentals, its meaning was contested. In no tradition does one find a complete consensus, even among conservatives, about what the fundamentals of the faith really are. Fundamentalists are nothing if not selective about the texts they use and their mode of interpretation. They are also much more innovative in the way they interpret the texts they select than is often supposed. In this respect they may be contrasted with traditionalists.

This section considers a few reflections on the definition of fundamentalism. This will make it possible to settle for a particular sense of fundamentalism that this chapter assumes. In this chapter I consider three possible understandings and settle for a particular nuance in the light of these.

First, from a historical point of view, Sacks (2005:77) observes that;

The word was coined in America in the 1920s in the wake of a series of pamphlets setting out the fundamentals of Christian belief. At its simplest level it is just that- a kind of common sense defense of Orthodoxy in a highly secular age, a reaction against what is seen as liberal intelligentia's subversion of established beliefs.

Sacks (2005:77) is more elaborate when he writes:

What makes this a peculiarly twentieth century phenomenon is that our culture has moved so far from its religious roots that it now takes almost an act of defiance to use words like revelation, truth and authority in their traditional sense. A fundamentalist refuses to let faith be relativised by history or science or sociology.

Secondly, religious fundamentalism:

...is a tendency, a habit of mind, found within religious communities, which manifest itself as a strategy of a set of strategies, by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as a people

or a group. Feeling this identity to be at risk, in the contemporary era, they fortify it by a selective retrieval of doctrines, beliefs and practices from a sacred past. The retrieved 'fundamentals' are refined, modified, and sanctioned in a spirit of shrewd pragmatism. They are to serve as a bulwark against the encroachment of outsiders who threaten to draw the believers into syncretistic, arreligious, or irreligious cultural milieu (Munson, 2005:339).

Thirdly, Armstrong, (2000: xii), on the pattern of fundamentalisms, notes that:

They are embattled forms of spirituality, which have emerged as a response to a perceived crisis. They are engaged in conflict with enemies whose secularist policies and beliefs seem inimical to religion itself. Fundamentalists do not regard this battle as a conventional political struggle, but experience it as a cosmic war between the forces of good and evil. They fear annihilation, and try to fortify their beleaguered identity by means of a selective retrieval of certain doctrines and practices from the past.

In the light of these definitions, this chapter assumes that the prophets are traditional Shona fundamentalists who have emerged as a response to a perceived crisis. They fear annihilation and try to fortify their beleaguered identity. They select and retrieve traditional Shona beliefs and practices from a sacred past. The retrieved Shona faith 'fundamentals' are refined, modified, and sanctioned in a spirit of shrewd pragmatism.

Having settled for this understanding of Shona fundamentalism, one can raise the question whether the term can be used outside its Protestant context. This chapter agrees with Ruthven's, (2004:8) justification of the use of the term fundamentalism. Ruthven (2004:8) captures the problem aptly. He comments; "One would think that the term fundamentalism must be used in its Protestant closet in which it began its semantic career around the turn of the twentieth century".

In terms of the solution, Ruthven (2004:8) is more penetrating when he writes, and I agree that:

The applications or meanings attached to words cannot be confined to the context in which they originate: if one limits 'fundamentalism' to its original meaning one might as well do the same for words like 'nationalism' and 'secularization' which also appeared in the post enlightenment West before being applied to movements or processes in non-Western societies.

The Perceived Crisis: Missionary Assault on African Traditional Religion

The missionary attitudes to African traditional religion have been recently well documented by Amanze (2010:307). Amanze (2010:307) summarises the missionary attitude in what he refers to as the Christian model of rejection and conflict. He notes that the missionaries adopted the following attitude, which boils down to cultural imperialism whose objective was to annihilate African culture and religion:

- No attempt to adapt themselves to African setting
- Intolerant of anything that seemed to conflict with the form and content of the Christian tradition
- Condemned everything in the African way of life and religion
- Insistence on that all their converts abandon all contacts with African religion and culture
- Considering Africanness as a manifestation of the devil.

This was a crisis that bred schizophrenic attitudes among African Christians in mainline churches. They made contact with the African traditional diviners at night while pretending that they did not indulge in such practices. Yet they found help and satisfaction from the services of the traditional diviners. The only way to do something about this is to take seriously the traditional attitude to healing (Amanze, 2010:307). This gap is filled in by Shona traditional fundamentalists masquerading as prophets in the context of AICs.

Kealotswe (2010:232) captures the crisis well when he writes in relation to the situation in Botswana. He observes:

...there was a general and common trend in the theological development of the AICs into the mid-twentieth century to resist the mission founded theologies. The major characteristic of AIC theology was enculturation; many elements of African Traditional religious beliefs and practices were taken into AIC Christianity as a way of resisting the condemnation of African religious beliefs and practices. In Southern Africa such condemnations were typical among London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries, such as Robert Moffat, who sincerely believed that the Batswana had no concept of God.

This means that the heart of the crisis was that the missionaries dismissed African traditional religion as magic, superstition, heathen, animism, witchcraft and idolatry. They also dismissed ancestor worship and veneration. As a result, there was a general consensus that the Africans were destined for hell.

This attitude was a result of a shift in attitude of early missionaries after the Berlin Conference in 1885. The missionaries had changed their way of thinking concerning the colonization process. There was an attitude of evolutionary evaluative comparison. In this thinking African society was regarded as inferior and that it would dwindle with the progress of modern bio-medical approaches to health and wellbeing. So the missionaries assumed that biblical faith always stands in judgment upon African culture and opposed it at numerous points (Barrett, 1971:151-2).

Disillusionment

The assault on African Traditional Religion sent some sentiments of disillusionment among the Africans. Barrett captures the disillusionment well. His observation is worth quoting at length. He notes:

As result, numbers of Africans now realized with some bitterness that the hopes aroused by the early days of Christian preaching would not materialize. They had not anticipated the consequences in the severe strain being put on their traditional institutions. They had failed to obtain the force vital, the mysterious power of the whites- material, financial, cultural, religious, spiritual or ecclesiastical. Their societies were not being fulfilled by the new religion, but were being demolished. In place of the secure old religion, there was now a religious void. A wide spread sense of uncertainty and insecurity therefore arose. Hope was replaced by frustration and resentment as they saw their traditional complex further disrupted by the expansion of white settler areas and the growth of towns (Barrett: 1971:152).

If we go back to the definition of religious fundamentalism that this chapter assumes, we will agree that the crisis that Amanze and Kealotswe characterize and the disillusionment that Barrett characterizes is bound to force the Shona to respond. The Shona, therefore, engage in a selective retrieval of traditional beliefs and practices from the sacred past. In the following section the paper considers some of the beliefs that the Shona prophets retrieve in fear of the annihilation of their traditional healing paradigm.

Prophets Tapping into Religious Healing in the African Sense of the Term: Holistic Approach to the Situation Affecting the Person

AIC prophets are tapping into the traditional Shona paradigm of a holistic approach to the situation affecting a person. In Christian terms, sin/wrong doing “was seen basically as a wrong relationship between the individual and God, leading to disease and frustration” (Oosthuizen, 1992:167). In the traditional context, diseases are due to malicious external factors or the victim’s own doings. Sorcery, witchcraft, spirit possession, pollution, mal-relationships with one’s ancestors, relatives, community and environment are the main causes of disease. The quest for harmony, that is equilibrium in social relationships which can be disturbed in many ways, is of utmost importance. In order to restore this equilibrium it is necessary to take a holistic approach to the situation affecting the person. Bad and negative influences have to be detected and removed before normal health is restored (Oosthuizen, 1992:167-8).

Hardly any sickness is treated in the African context without a fellow human being coming into the picture. Sickness and disturbed human relationships are bound together. Thus the traditional approach to diagnosis of disease is important. It is not a matter of diagnosing the illness. The factors that led to it are also considered important. The main task of the diviner in African society is to restore and to create harmonious relationships (Oosthuizen, 1992:168).

Healing is a much more extensive concept in the African context than it is in the western mechanistic approach. Religion has been divorced from medicine, psychiatry, often from social relationships and other factors basic to a community. In the African context religion plays an important role in the healing process. In mainline Christianity it often seems as if the individual is seen from a completely western perspective, where religion is only for the soul, the medical doctor for the body, the psychiatrist for the mind, the economist for the economy, the politician for the community. For the diviner these aspects are one whole. Religion will continue to play a major role for blacks in all dimensions of their lives-not least in healing (Oosthuizen, 1992:189). For the traditional community, the diviner was the guide and protector against adverse forces responsible for ill-health, sickness, mal-relationships, misfortune and that which beclouded the future (Oosthuizen, 1992:164).

The appropriation of these African traditional fundamentals takes place in part of the healing ritual by the prophets called *tsanaguro*.

Tsananguro can be more or less the equivalent of divination. This comes out clearly for example in the HIV and AIDS healing activities of prophetess Suzan Ziki-Dube of the Holy Apostolic church. She deals with HIV/AIDS related problems in the context of what she believes to be the cause of HIV/AIDS. She diagnoses the causes/origin of AIDS in a way that is more or less consistent with traditional Shona beliefs about misfortunes. Mrs Ziki-Dube shared with the researcher three possible causes of AIDS that involve the supernatural other than God (Mwari). The first one is related to the behavior of the individuals or his/her relatives. It is a form of punishment signifying guilt. The belief is that people offend supernatural powers by neglecting ritual duties, breaking taboos and exhibiting anti-social behaviour. So the cause in this context involves transgression of social or religious norms. The second belief is that other human beings who are believed to be instigators of illness/disease cause AIDS. These are witches and sorcerers. In this case there is more of suspicion than guilt. The third belief is that AIDS is caused by supernatural powers. In this case AIDS attacks a person without provocation. Mrs Ziki-Dube explains this as *Munyama* (misfortune). (Taringa, 2010:154).

So, it appears that first the prophetess has to battle with cure/healing at the level of belief, which is the mental level. This is what the AICs refer to as *Tsananguro*. In relation to the first belief the healer wrestles with removing the person's guilt by suggesting rituals that have the effect of propitiating the angered spirits. In removing the person's guilt the healer encourages or solicits confessions. In dealing with the angered spirits the healer prescribes *miteuro* (healing icons) that render the powers of the angered spirits ineffective. With regard to the second belief the prophetess locates the human source of AIDS. She identifies the witch/sorcerer and also prescribes *miteuro* that wade the effects of these human agents. In the context of the third belief the blame falls on the supernatural powers alone. In this case she prescribes cure through *miteuro* that exorcise the spirits (Taringa, 2010:154).

So in the light of the three causes of AIDS involving the supernatural AIDS is not equated with divine punishment meted out by God (Mwari). It is known as *chirwere chenyika* (earthly disease). This means ultimately it is people that are responsible even if they manipulate magical and spiritual forces. Most followers of this church assume that life in this world is intricately linked to the existence of the spirits of the dead, ma-

gicians and witchcraft. As with most illnesses, AIDS is usually diagnosed as a sent sickness, that when it comes can also be acquired. They do not emphasize the causal link between AIDS and sin. In her diagnosis the prophetess takes into consideration the spiritual framework that pertains to the care of ancestral spirits (Taringa, 2010:154).

AICs Tap into ATR's Emphasis on the Present Reality

AIC prophets tap into an observation that Amanze (2010: 299) notes about ATR: that African religions emphasize the present reality. They explain and control immediate experiences of human existence here and now. They do not promise personal salvation in the afterlife and they do not proclaim the end of the world at some distant future. "They are concerned with the life of the individual and the community in the present plane of human life in which case punishment and salvation are considered as present realities"(Amanze, 2010:299). So, a number of rituals and ceremonies are carried out to effect salvation to those who are afflicted by sickness, natural disasters and other misfortunes. They believe that people are the architects of their own misfortunes. As a result the blame for misfortune is placed on people's misdeeds. The misdeeds offend ancestors who punish the offenders.

African religion is characterized by the presence of religious specialists or intermediaries in the form of diviners, traditional healers, herbalists, rainmakers and spirit mediums. These mediators provide healing services. Healing in Africa has to do with preservation of restoration of human vitality in the context of community as a whole. So the chief function of religion in Africa is healing of physical, spiritual and psychological diseases which affect the lives of many people (Amanze, 2010: 301).

In Mrs Ziki-Dube's case, emphasis on present reality comes out clearly in her *kushandira* rituals. These rituals involve healing prescriptions involving material objects such as soap, water, cooking oil, salt, Vaseline, coke, raspberry and many others depending on the nature of the problem. These material objects are ritually used in relation to problems related to unemployment, the need for promotion at the work place, successful applications for jobs, success in interviews, success in applications for passports and scholarships. In this context one can therefore argue that this prophetess's activities tap from the African

traditional religion's emphasis on healing of physical, spiritual and psychological disease. She uses African traditional fundamentals in an innovative and pragmatic way (Taringa, 2010:158).

This is closely related to ATR's emphasis on atonement and on sacred objects. Atonement is secure through sacrifices, offerings and festivals. Africans have an intense feeling of wanting to be at one with one another, with ancestors and ultimately with God. Rituals in Africa are not an end in themselves but a means to an end and so are the prophets' prayers, offerings and sacrifices. In using material objects for healing it appears Mrs Ziki-Dube appropriates the ATR belief that practically everything is sacred; the profane participates fully in the sacred or spirit world. And so the African belief that certain places and objects are sacred. These range from mountains, rivers, forests, caves, stones, trees and many others. Places and objects are objects of revelation of the supernatural. In the light of this, one would be quick to agree with Kealotswe, (2010:237) that:

The appeal to the past is not just utopian dream. It is a recapturing and re-living of the past in a transformed manner that makes life have value and meaning in the midst of fast social changes of the twenty first century. The consolidation of the major beliefs of Christianity, by appeal to traditional culture and its transformation, is a way that with God, everything is possible.

AICs Tapping into ATR's Perception on Ultimate Causes of Illness

AIC prophets tap into ATR's perception of ultimate causes of illness involving the supernatural. First, they tap the belief that illness is brought about through the behaviour of the individual or his/her relatives. This rests on the assumption that traditional African life is characterized by close knit communities which people in numerous obligations toward one another and toward the ancestors, gods, and spirits. These obligations are sanctified by tradition.

For example, the child owes respect to his/her parents, the younger brother to the older brother, the ordinary person to the chief, the junior wife to the senior wife, the son to the deceased father, the worshipper of a particular deity to that deity, and so on. When these obligations are fulfilled and the forces are in balance, a community is healthy. If an obligation is not fulfilled, either through deliberate neglect or insult or through a simple act of forgetfulness, a possible cause of misfortune is

created. The offended party may manipulate mystical forces through magic, as in the case of a person laying a curse on a kinsman, or may use inherent power, as in the case of an ancestrally caused sickness.

Generally, these misfortunes are individual, but sometimes the violation of a taboo will threaten an entire community. If a person is ill as result of his /her own behaviour it is regarded as punishment. The patient has offended the supernatural powers by ignoring his/her ritual duties, by breaking taboos, or by exhibiting anti-social behaviour (de Waal, 1970:248) In the case of taboo the issue is that a taboo is a kind of supernatural “no-no” and if violated will lead to retaliation by the world of the supernatural. This comes as form of illness or a run of bad luck (Collins, 1978:106). This type of explanation prevails in the divination rituals of the prophets.

Secondly, in the case of illnesses that come as a result of the behaviour of other human beings ATRs believe that the instigators of disease are witches and sorcerers. The explanation also touches on strained social relationships. The tensions could be between co-wives and also between brothers. So, there is an emphasis by the ATR healer on first and foremost locating the human source of evil-to identify the witch or the sorcerer(de Waal, 1970:249) in healing the healer may attempt to purify the patient, counter the evil influences and/send the magic power back to the sorcerer by reversing the spell.

Thirdly, ATR believes in illness brought about by evil supernatural powers. Supernatural powers can attack a person without provocation and make that person ill. So the blame falls on the supernatural powers alone. This can actually be spirit intrusion, which is the presence in the body of evil spirits. In this case curing will take the form of exorcism or pacification by forms of sacrifice or other material concessions (de Waal, 1970:249). The spirit may be bribed into leaving the body; good spirits may be placed in the patient’s body to drive out the evil spirit. The spirit may also be transferred into the body of the healer, who is capable of dealing with it. The prophets call this traditional Shona practice *kuhakira mweya*. The procedure involves messages and purification.

Fourthly, the prophets employ the Shona recognition of disease concept as disease-object intrusion. This is based on the idea that an illness is caused by some kind of object in the body of the sick person. The foreign object may be a hair strand, splitter bone, a small grub, or the like. The supernatural essence contained within that object is responsible for

the cause. The disease object enters the body of the victim either by human agency—sent by a sorcerer or by a supernatural act of spirit being. In curing the patient the object is commonly sucked out by the lips of the healer or through a special tube and is disposed of ritually.

What the AICs prophets practice, therefore, is consistent with the African thinking that disease has a spiritual cause where it is ascribed to witchcraft or to the anger of neglected ancestors and ancestral spirits or to possession by *shave* (alien spirit). So, like the Shona, the prophets tend to assume that healing cannot merely be a secular affair performed in a purely scientific way in hospital (Martin, 1971:115).

AICs Prophets Tap into ATRs' Emphasis on Diagnosis

AICs tap into the ATR notion that the diagnosis of the cause of illness is an important first step toward subsequent therapy. They recognize that illness has a variety of causes. So, even where people attribute the illness to witchcraft, as is the case among the Shona, it is deemed important to search out the identity of the witch and to discover which particular magical means the witch used. The person who does the diagnosis attempts to identify the disease and its causes. The diagnosis of illness sometimes takes place after the patient has died. For the Shona diagnosis is often valued as curing. It has important psychological connotations. The identification of the source of ailment makes it possible for the patient and his/her family to understand the suffering, which will tend to reduce anxiety, and the suggestion of proper cures gives further relief as well as reassurance and hope. It is in this context that one notes the AIC prophets tapping into the Shona beliefs in *midzimu* (ancestral spirits) and *n'angas* (traditional healers).

The Centrality of Beliefs in Ancestors and Traditional Healers in the AICs

If one observes the activities of AICs prophets and traditional *n'angas*, one gets a clear idea of precisely how the Shona are preoccupied with their ancestors and alien spirits. The prophets tend to follow African traditional religious healing premised on the beliefs that the patient holds. Daneel (1971:167) offers a clear observation of this when he writes:

Unlike the European medical doctor, both *nganga* and prophet ascribe the cause of illness to a personal agent, be it ancestral or alien spirit, operating alone or in conjunction with a living enemy (*muvenge*). The great influence attained by the prophet is due to treatment that follows understandable customary patterns, and treatment that is directed towards elimination of the causes of illness, believed in by the patient himself. His distinct advantage over the European doctor lies in a closer and more intimate identification with the patient on a level of mutual experience, where the vast and direct importance of the spirit world is taken for granted by both of them.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the possibility of considering AIC prophets as African traditional religious fundamentalist figures. It has highlighted what AIC prophets retrieve and use, in an innovative and pragmatic manner, from one of the key African traditional religio-cultural fundamentals; religious healing. The argument in the chapter is that they may be considered African traditional religious fundamentalists in the sense that these prophets and their movements are reactive movements that intend to protect the past in African traditional religions, particularly the beliefs and practices in religious healing. This makes the old (African traditional religion) more powerful than the new (Christianity) in the paradigm that the prophets use in their healing rituals. The chapter contends that AIC prophets can, therefore, be regarded as ATR fundamentalists who have rescued Shona traditional religious healing paradigm from oblivion. This may be consistent with conceptualizing fundamentalism a search for meaning in which one can talk of the persistence of African traditional religious faith in the age of religious pluralism.

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CHAPTER 13

Tabona Shoko & Agness Chiwara

The Prophetic Figure in Zimbabwean Religions

A Comparative Analysis of Prophet Makandiwa of the United Family International Church (UFIC) and the *N'anga* in African Traditional Religion

Introduction

The phenomenon of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe has developed and given birth to various ministries led by different Christian individuals. Pastor Emmanuel Makandiwa is one such individual who, after being nurtured by the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) of Zimbabwe, left it to form the United Family International (UFI). It started as an interdenominational Church. However, close scrutiny of Makandiwa's praxis shows that the church is characterized by some religious features that may seem to resemble those of the *n'anga* found in the Shona Traditional Religions. This chapter shall, therefore, deliberate on whether Makandiwa is a Prophet or a *n'anga*. A comparative analysis of Makandiwa and the *n'anga* will be done through certain religious features such as belief in the world of spirits, the call narratives, prophetic utterances or prediction, the concept of spiritual fathers, cultism, and miracles, among others. An analysis of African Traditional Religion as a dynamic religion shall also be undertaken to come up with a position as to whether Makandiwa is a Prophet or has common features with a *n'anga*.

The background

Initially, Emmanuel Makandiwa ministered in the Apostolic Faith Mission of Zimbabwe (AFM). As summarized by Pastor K. Sithole of Mutare South, Nhedziwa Assembly "the church is a Pentecostal church, led by the Holy Spirit and is not led by an individual. The church elects its own leader, thus the adherents have the right to choose a leader democ-

ratically. It also has a constitution that guides the structures and the general running of the church” (Sithole, interview, 7 May 2012). It is from this background that Emmanuel Makandiwa emerged. He served in the Apostolic Faith Mission as a Pastor and spent the early part of his ministerial service at Hebron Parish in Chitungwiza. According to Pastor Sithole, some conservatives within the AFM call him a rebel because of his approach to ministry. Reasons for Makandiwa’s departure from the AFM seem to vary from theological, doctrinal and some restrictions imposed by the structures of the church. For instance, in one of his DVDs, named “Redeem the Time”, he spoke boldly against the pronouncement of AFM leadership and told the audience to leave the church if the name of Jesus is not mentioned. This may probably suggest that Makandiwa left the church out of discontent and the zeal to express what he has to offer to the people. Thus, it is important, to distinguish his ministry from that of a *n’anga* in African Traditional religion.

Definition of Terms

A n’anga (diviner-healer)

There are some essential terms that need to be defined before they are applied in the discussion. In its general sense the Shona term *n’anga* is used to refer to a person who heals through extra-ordinary or mysterious powers. A *n’anga* is a diviner or healer who deals with medicines and charms (Hannan 1974:448). It follows that many people who have different kinds of problems and misfortunes may consult a *n’anga* for assistance. Most *n’angas* have the power and ability to forth tell, foretell, heal, exorcise demons and protect their adherents (Shoko 2007:71). It is generally believed that these special powers are given to the individual concerned either by a *mudzimu* (the spirit of departed relative) or by a *shavi* spirit (the spirit of someone unrelated) (Gelfand, 1985: 3).

The other characteristics of a *n’anga* (traditional healer) include ecstasy and prophetic authority. S/He utters prophetic oracles that may even influence the general socio-political structures of a given community. Some *n’angas* get their powers and status through imitation by other *n’angas* who are already practicing. Thus the concept of prophetic imitation is clearly at play. It is these and other religious features that will be analyzed in order to determine whether Makandiwa is a prophet or

n'anga. The above definition and characteristics would want to suggest that, “the *n'anga* is not only a Minister of religion but also a diagnostician and healer” (Gelfand 1985:3). Be that as it may, it warrants the study of their nature.

A Prophet

Prophecy may seem to share a common ground with the *n'anga* concept. By general definition, a prophet is “one gifted to utter divinely inspired revelations, one gifted with more than ordinary spiritual and moral insight, one who foretells future events, predictor, and an effective or leading spokesman for a cause, doctrine or group” (Gelfand, 1985:3). In most cases, prophets are called by the divine into the ministry although in some cases they pass through a prophetic initiation process. For instance, the call of the prophet Isaiah (6.1-9) in the Bible involves the divine who called and commissioned Isaiah to become a prophet. If Elisha son of Shaphat is to be considered prophet then his commissioning was through prophetic initiation by Elijah as his mentor (1Kings 19:16-17). This same phenomenon of prophetic call is also prevalent in the African Traditional Religions, especially the call of a *n'anga*. This may seem to suggest appealing similarities between a prophet and *n'anga*. For example, many assistants of a *n'anga* (*makumbi*) eventually become *n'angas*.

A Comparative Analysis of Makandiwa and the *N'anga*

The analysis, by definition and characteristics done above prepared a way for the scrutinization of Prophet Makandiwa's ministry to determine whether he is a prophet or *n'anga*. There are certain religious features discussed above that are prevalent in Makandiwa's ministry. There is a general feeling that the success of the Zionists and Apostolic prophet churches through healing has been a result of that they have modeled their practices on traditional pattern (Daneel, 1970:25). It is this same style and pattern that is drawing thousands of people into the UFI of Prophet Makandiwa. It is also important to note that, “here again”, the process of adaptation was not determined by foreigner who had an entirely different approach to the powers of spirits, but by people to whom the threat of the afflicting ancestral spirits, the deadly avenging spirit (*ngozi*) or wizardry, was as real as it was to the patients they treated

(Bourdillon 1977:189). We now turn to a comparative analysis of Prophet Makandiwa and the *n'anga* of Shona Traditional Religion.

Belief in the world of spirits

First and foremost, Prophet Makandiwa believes much in the world of spirits. By so doing, he acknowledges the existence of the good spirit (Holy Spirit) and evil spirits (demons). This belief in spirits is found in both contexts, that is, the traditional belief and in the UFI Pentecostal church belief. In both contexts it is claimed that the *n'anga* or the prophet achieves this by being spiritually endowed (Gelfand 1985:3). It, therefore, means that when Prophet Makandiwa claims to minister under the influence of the Holy Spirit he can be regarded to be having the same status as a *n'anga* ministering under the influence of the ancestral spirit, which is the Holy Spirit according to African traditional religion. It implies that, in this case Makandiwa “is able to contact the spiritual world and so learn which of the ancestral spirits in a family is responsible for the illness or death or if it should be an evil person who caused it and what measures should be taken to remove this influence” (Gelfand 1985:3). Makandiwa, therefore, claims to be able to uproot anything that is of evil influence from the lives of his adherents. In his DVD which he dubbed “*Zvisina kudyarwa naBaba*” (What was not planted by the Father) he pronounces the uprooting of all the things and spirits that are not of God from the people. This belief in spirits and the way of dealing with evil spirits using the power of a spirit which possess an individual makes Prophet Makandiwa similar to a *n'anga*.

The call narrative

The call narrative of Prophet Makandiwa as he narrated it, seemed to have taken him to extraordinary places through extraordinary means. This resembles some call narratives of many *n'angas*. For example, one *n'anga* stated that he was called by the water spirits when he was aged thirteen (13) and he disappeared into the Sabi River, reappeared in Lake Malawi after eight years learning his profession (Gelfand 1985:4). It means that a *n'anga* can narrate or write about his or her call in the same manner Makandiwa can do. This trait shows similarities between a *n'anga* and Prophet Makandiwa.

Prophetic utterances or predictions

Prophetic utterances or predictions characterized by the ability to forth tell and foretell seem to be some of the religious features followed by many at Makandiwa's UFI church. It is very important to note that, "in our world today there are 'good Christian people' who maintain their distance from the suffering of the world" (Verstraelen 1996:59). It, therefore, means that there are Christians bound to follow a certain individual or church for protection from the suffering of the world. Traditionally a *n'anga* was consulted for many things, for example, about the future. If for example, a person was about to undertake a long journey he would ask a traditional healer if he would reach his destination safely (Chavunduka 1994:1). This issue as to how people resort to the Makandiwa UFI for these predictions seem to liken him to traditional healers. In one of his worship services held recently at the City Sports Center in Harare, Makandiwa used his ability to forth tell, to expose the infidelity of a certain woman. Traditional healers also have the same ability to expose unfaithful and adulterous people. Thus, those "---who believed that their wives were unfaithful to them approached traditional healers for assistance" (Chavunduka 1994:1).

Spiritual Fathers

The concept of having a spiritual father is another feature which is found in both contexts. Some traditional healers were mentored by their biological fathers, but others even travelled long distances to look for other spiritual mentors who are not even related to them. In this case, it is often easier to trace some behavioural and operational traits of the some traditional healers to their spiritual mentors. S. Muwomo, an evangelist in the AFM Church based at Odzi Assembly said, "we really knew that Makandiwa's mentor was Evangelist Chiweshe (the late), only to be surprised that he claims to have a foreign spiritual father (Muwomo, interview 13 May 2012). The fact is, when he was still in the AFM Prophet Makandiwa underwent prophetic initiation from Evangelist Chiweshe. He was, therefore, Chiweshe's assistant, similar to that of a *makumbi* during that time. The implication is that Makandiwa got some skills and training of the prophetic trade from Chiweshe. The way he organizes his crusades resembles that of Chiweshe. Probably, he felt that

he needed more mysterious powers and Chiweshe was limited, hence he went to Ghana for more power.

In a bid to try and find more power, he was then mentored by a foreign spiritual father who sometimes visits him to assess progress. Makandiwa usually instructs the praise team to sing his favourite song, “More power,” when he is in a deliverance session. When his spiritual father Prophet Victor Boateng preached at the City Sports Centre in Zimbabwe on the 29th of October 2010 he confirmed that Makandiwa is his son and was actually proud of the progress made then. Makandiwa’s association with a spiritual mentor, therefore, makes him similar to a *n’anga*.

Prophet Victor Boateng claimed that when he was praying in Ghana he was told that some people (Zimbabweans) were planning to kill Makandiwa, hence he decided to come, as the grandfather of UFI, to protect him from any harm (Boateng, DVD:2010). He said this in his message entitled “Switch” during a prophetic conference with signs, miracles and wonders. It implies that he may be the source of power or else he knows the source of power of Makandiwa’s ministry. Be that as it may, it means that Makandiwa must frequently visit Boateng for the renewal or rejuvenation of power. If that is the case, it is, therefore, problematic to regard the power of Makandiwa as derivative from the Biblical Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is able to protect people from any danger. For example, when Paul was attacked by a snake at Malta (Acts 28:1-6) it caused no harm to him because the Holy Spirit protected him. Paul did not call for any spiritual father to come to his rescue. The fact that Prophet Victor Boateng claimed to have come to rescue and protect Makandiwa leaves a lot to be desired. The Holy Spirit is believed to be omnipresent but Makandiwa’s power seemed to diminish and he called for Victor Boateng to come and assist. This is exactly what happens in the case of a *n’anga* who invites senior *godobori* (specialist *n’anga*) to boost their traditional powers.

There is a general traditional belief that a *n’anga* is always less powerful than his mentor. Generally, the concept of honouring thy parents is most important amongst the Shona who love and respect their parents. “No one would dare treat them cruelly, lest if they were angry with him when they died they would return afterwards, even many years later and cause him to lose weight and become very ill” (Gelfand 1985:71). It follows that the concept of honouring one’s father is generally acceptable in

the Shona traditional religion. Traditional healers also have their spiritual fathers whom they respect and visit or consult regularly for more power. Among the Karanga, a Shona sub-group, people from a one local community, when confronted with an abnormal problem or illness, they prefer to seek the services of an “alien” traditional diviner-healer on the basis that his or her medicines are more powerful and efficacious than the local one (Shoko 2007:89). In Manicaland, a *n’anga sekuru* Hlupani Sithole of Chakohwa in Chimanimani District said “*Musharuka wangu uriyo Chipinga yo ndinombopota ndichidzikeyo kootora amweni masimba*”, (My spiritual father is in Chipinge. I often go there for more powers) (Sithole, interview 8 May 2012). This, therefore, means that *n’angas* have their own spiritual fathers, just like Makandiwa.

Furthermore, we need to consider the biblical view that those who can be referred to as prophets today were originally priests (1 Sam 3 vs 1ff). For instance, there are priests reported among many societies including the Ankore, Yoruba, Igbo, Akam, Shona, Baganda, Basoga, Ewew, Sonjo and others (Mbiti, 1969: 187). This being the case, it means that these traditional priests could have evolved into prophets. “Of this Parrinder writes that priests and devotees, mediums devoted to the gods, are set apart for diviner service and receive some kind of initiation and training for it. These prophets belong to the category of diviners, seers and mediums and may have other religious or political functions in their societies’ (Mbiti 1969:188). Thus, it suggests that probably Makandiwa went to Ghana to borrow some prophetic traditions of a foreign tradition. In which case, therefore, he may use the powers of the Ghanaian traditional healers to lure many people to the UFI church. A revealing case is a Ghanaian traditional diviner-healer who claimed that he gave 1700 prophets power to produce money, start big churches and perform miracles (Herald Sat23 Feb 2013). Makandiwa is renowned for producing “miracle money...raining gold and diamonds” (News Day, 21st Jan 2013). This, therefore, indicates that Makandiwa is like a *n’anga* using supernatural powers solicited from foreign spirits to minister to his own people.

Tenets of Cultism

Looking at Prophet Makandiwa from another dimension, one may be tempted to call him a cultist. The way Makandiwa preaches, quotes and

interprets Biblical texts is in many instances contrary to that of the orthodox and the principles of Biblical exegesis per se. There are also other tenets of cultism which are prevalent in his church. For example, “keeping pace with the rapid rise of cult propaganda in written form has been the use by cults, of the use of television and radio, as particularly displayed in the activities of Unity, Christian Science, and Jehovah’s witness” (Martin 1957:17). Like other cultists, Makandiwa has been accorded coverage time of his worship services by the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Co-operation (ZBC TV) every Saturday around 23:30pm. Thus, basing on these and other factors, Makandiwa can be regarded as similar to a cultist. This would mean that Makandiwa, having been groomed by the spirit of Pentecostalism, probably sought cultism in the process and now has some characteristics of a *n’anga* in the traditional religion.

Miracles

Miracles are another religious feature that characterizes Makandiwa’s church. The same phenomenon is also performed by *n’angas* in the Shona traditional religion. It seems many people would want to identify with miracle performers for their own security. As G. Parrinder states, “magical practices occupy a large part of the thought and time of many people all over the world” (Parrinder 1961:27). The miracles performed by Makandiwa vary from healing, exorcism, resurrection of the dead and prosperity. “Quite often especially where there are psychological problems, the traditional interpretation of disease attributed it to possessing spirits that need to be accommodated or exorcised” (Bourdillon, 1995:91). It follows that in both contexts, there is the general understanding that diseases are caused by possessing spirits that need to be exorcised. The healing miracles, therefore, take a central position in Makandiwa’s ministry as they do in the *n’angas* ministry in the traditional religion. In which case, therefore, the two share a common ground. It is important therefore to consider the various types of miracles that the two have in common.

Exorcism of Evil Spirits

Exorcism of evil spirits is a form of healing “miracle” which is common amongst men endowed with spiritual powers. These miracles in

Makandiwa's ministry are necessitated by the failure of orthodox churches to address the spiritual problems of people in their society. On the one hand, ministers of orthodox Christian churches do not, on the whole, know how to deal with sickness related to social tension. On rare occasions such a minister who gets involved in healing or the exorcism of traditional evil spirits, is likely to get into trouble with his church. It seems, Makandiwa capitalized on this weakness of orthodox churches and demonstrated his miraculous healing and exorcism powers to advertise for his church and lure thousands of people. He even uses the media, both visual and audio to advertise his ministry at large and his healing and exorcism miracles in particular. It is also a common feature these days that a *n'anga* can advertise his expertise through the media and even posters which are now a common feature at various gatherings mostly in high density suburbs in urban areas (Shoko 2010:100).

Healing method

The healing miracles usually follow some stages. For instance, "once the spiritual cause of the illness has been established, the next stage in the treatment of the patient is the prescription of medicine" (Gelfand 1985: 15). The use of elements in a miraculous manner is also prevalent in the healing miracles. In one of his healing sessions Makandiwa used a tin of yoghurt to heal a woman who was ill. He also used anointed oil as demonstrated in the worship conference led by his spiritual father Victor Boateng. "Ointments are prepared by mixing the prepared portions with oil from the seeds of the castor oil plant (*Ricinus communis*) (*mupfuta*)" (Gelfand 1985:15). It shows that the way Makandiwa heals people using a variety of methods and elements is similar to that of a *n'anga*. Looking first at diagnosis, both *n'anga* and prophet concentrate on the personal causes of illness or misfortune (Shoko 2007:57). A striking resemblance between the *n'anga* and prophet is attained.

Resurrecting the dead

Prophet Makandiwa also claims to have power to kill or resuscitate people back to life. For instance, in one of his worship services on the 18th of October 2010 it is claimed that he brought back life of a dead child who had passed away during the worship service. Likewise, in one of

Makandiwa's healing sessions on November 12 2010 a 66-year old woman, Rhoda Mafungautse died after having travelled from Chinhoyi to have her leg healed. Eyewitnesses present said Rhoda limped off to her death after the Prophet had attempted to perform one of his "miracles" on her (file:///G:/EmmanuelMakandiwaReligioninZimbabwe.ntm-25/08/2013). On the other hand Makandiwa also claims that he has the power to kill people's enemies. For instance, the prophet said, "As I was praying for this great night, God gave me a word. Gather my people this particular night (April 6) from every corner and on that night, I want you to tell them that I am going to kill their enemies before morning" (<http://www.myzimbabwe.co.zw/news/1066-ufi-church-founder-prophet-emmanuel-makandiwa-declares-6-april-as-judgement-night.html>, 25/03/13). This night was known as the night of judgment. Kadzunge of Harare said he could not hold back his tears after watching "God restoring back to life a baby born dead. The umbilical cord was rotten (Kadzunge, interview 4/12/12). This kind of a "miracle" is also prevalent in the ministry of some *n'angas*. For instance, some *n'angas* can use a needle (*tsono*) and a mirror to kill a victim even if he is not there physically. This may seem to suggest that Makandiwa and traditional healers share a common ground in dealing with enemies.

Gospel of prosperity

The gospel of prosperity and its manifestation is the central message of Makandiwa's ministry. For example, Prophet Makandiwa declared 2012 as a "Year of Results". Already some members of the ministry are enjoying the declared results of 2012 evidenced by posters and stickers which are seen on many vehicles in town and other properties which read: "This is a result". The gospel of prosperity is alive and manifests in wonders that Makandiwa offers to his people. He expects his adherents to come back to him with some appreciation packages to acknowledge that they would have been blessed with the miracle of prosperity. For instance, in his DVD entitled "The Raven must go", he emphasizes that he blesses people and sends them off for prosperity and what he only expects in return from them is a "Leaf". He further told them that he eats from their pockets. The same scenario is also a common phenomenon found in the activities of many *n'angas*. They expect their clients to

come back and offer some token of appreciation for services rendered to them. This suggests that Makandiwa is more or less a *n'anga*.

With reference to Pentecostal churches in Harare, L. Togarasei (2010:30) noted that in these churches getting rich is seen as God's will and an outward manifestation of His blessing. Poverty is attributed to the work of the devil who, in the words of R. Mate (2002:552) "is inimical to productivity." To, therefore, move from this poverty one needs deliverance from the spirit of poverty (Maxwell, 1988). Hence, besides holding deliverance sessions from poverty for his church members, Makandiwa also teach the born again to use their hands to get rich.

Some *n'angas* give their clients some prescriptions for prosperity. Various charms are used as lucky charms (*mushonga weraki*) to bless the clients in a miraculous way. Some use animate and inanimate objects (*madumu*) for prosperity. Most *n'angas* require sacrifices or offerings from clients before they bless them. The nature of sacrifice normally determines the level of prosperity. For Makandiwa, the more one gives the more is likely to be blessed. Thus, Togarasei (2010:31) argues that:

To get rich, members of Pentecostal churches are taught to "sow seeds" of prosperity. This analogy of sowing and reaping is derived from 2 Corinthians 9:6-11. One should sow generously in order to have a big harvest. Giving to the church is equated to giving God, so the measure you give is the measure you will get back. The churches therefore, receive huge sums of money from members.

Thus Makandiwa and traditional healers have the same requirements for the phenomenon of prosperity.

Singing and Dancing

Singing and dancing are also important features found in both contexts. There are particular people who are responsible for leading praise sessions and they are believed to have been blessed with the spirit of singing. Those who are gifted in singing, playing instruments and dancing are given enough time in order to evoke the spirit. Makandiwa uses prominent musicians as his praise team. The Mahendere brothers had to desert their ZAOGA church for the UFI Church. Other musicians who sing at the UFI include Joyce Simeti, Diva Mafunga, Gospel Power and Sebastian Magacha. In the church they use modern musical in-

struments such as electric guitars, modern drum kits, keyboards, among others.

Traditional healers also use the same order in their rituals. They start with singing and dancing. Instruments such as drums, rattles and “*mbira*” are used and those who have the spirits of playing them are given enough time. The *n’anga* himself is part of the team involved in singing and dance. In both contexts, every session starts with eulogy and the religious leader will be possessed by the spirit and then starts to ‘minister’ to his people. During sessions such as healing and prophecies, in both contexts musical instruments are often softly played as if to give the prophet or *n’anga* more power. Prophetic utterances, spirit exorcism, healing and other miracles are done within such as environments. Hence this may suggest that Makandiwa is like a *n’anga* of African Traditional Religion.

Personal Assistants

Makandiwa often relies upon his personal assistants to execute his prophetic ministries. These are trusted brothers and sisters who serve as religious aides in the ministry. He often works with Pastor T. Makandiwa and Pastor R. Makandiwa who are his brothers whom he has elevated to the role of pastors in the UFI church. A similar set up prevails in the traditional healer’s operations. When a *n’anga* is absent or is committed elsewhere the clients will wait for him or follow him wherever he goes, unless he delegates some lighter duties to a “*makumbi*” or one of his kinsfolk, normally a brother. According to M. Schoffeleers, “It is sometimes maintained that lineage cults constitute the centre of African religions. This seems correct when religion is looked at from the viewpoint of the individual and his kin-group (Schoffeleers 1979:7). A *n’anga* usually trusts his relatives so much that he gives position of authority around them. The reason may be for security purposes or, on the other hand, the spirit behind the power may be derived from a family ancestor hence he cannot use outsiders. In which case, therefore, a closer relative is to be delegated. For example, Makandiwa took his brothers and made them pastors in the UFI church. These are Pastor T. Makandiwa and Pastor R. Makandiwa. One, therefore, wonders whether the powers used by these three brothers are derived from the Holy Spirit or probably from their ancestral spirits. Furthermore, one must see the

succession issue already at play here. Makandiwa has already initiated his own brothers so that they can inherit the ministry in the UFIC. The same happens with a *n'anga*. A young brother or a son is initiated and trained whilst the *n'anga* himself is still in existence. The would-be successor is even shown the source of power, charms and how to perform all the miracles. In this case, then Makandiwa becomes similar to a *n'anga*.

The *n'anga* in the Shona society takes care of the traditional leaders of that place and it means that he sees into the health and welfare of the community leaders. Similarly in the Christian context, the kings and chiefs' welfare is the responsibility of the prophetic powers in their midst. For instance, the Biblical prophet Isaiah acted as an advisor to the King (chs 7-9). It became widely known in April 2012 that Makandiwa was building a house for his chief Kaseke Changara of Mashonaland Central. It is difficult to separate a *n'anga* from his traditional leaders in particular and his traditional home or community at large. Thus Makandiwa has similar attributes to those of a *n'anga*.

Conclusion

Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa can be regarded as both Christian and traditionalist because of the nature of his ministry. His call resembles that of a *n'anga* initiated with a *njuzu* (mermaid) spirit. Makandiwa and his UFIC reveal similarities with African Traditional Religion. It, therefore, means that his UFIC is a 'christianised version of tradition' or 'traditionalized version of Christianity.' Thus from his call, his gospel, miracle performance, order of service up to the leadership structure of the UFIC, one can be tempted to conclude that Makandiwa may be considered more or less a *n'anga*.

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CHAPTER 14

Canisius Mwandayi

Traversing the thin line between ‘*chibhoi*’ (indigenous spirituality) and miracle working

A case study of miracle working in the Impact for Christ Ministries in Gweru

Introduction

It is almost coming to or over a decade now since the media has been awash with news about the miraculous wonders being done through the hands of some pastors beyond the Zimbabwean borders. It was thus a common phenomenon in Zimbabwe to find Bible lovers attached to their TVs watching people like Pastor Chris, Jimmy Swaggart, Prophet T. B. Joshua and others. Of late, however, things have begun to change as there are locally bred pastors who are now performing the same wonders people used to see on TV. This has seen people rushing to the City Sports Centre, for example, to listen to Prophet Makandiwa or attend Uebert Angel’s deliverance sermons. The wonders being done by these local pastors have taken the media by storm to such an extent that it has become commonplace to find names like Makandiwa on the lips of young kids, even small as those still attending kindergarten. While much has been popularized about Makandiwa and Angel, very few people know that in the small town of Gweru there are also miraculous performances being done by Prophet Khuleya of the Impact for Christ Ministries. This development in Gweru has generated interest for this chapter to explore details about this man, hidden as it were from the general public and from the outside world. In the first part of this work I shall look at the ministry being carried out by the Impact for Christ Ministries in Gweru, paying particular attention to the ministry of Prophet Khuleya and in the second part, I shall try to examine the broader ministry of deliverance and healing against the background of African traditional religion, for it is my assumption that there is an interplay between

the miracles being done during these days and *chibhoyi* or *chivanhu*, ‘traditional spiritualism.’

Impact for Christ Ministries in Gweru

Before taking a closer look at the Impact for Christ Ministries, it is perhaps worthy to make reference to Gundani (2001:136) who rightly observed that there has been, since the 1990s, a marked increase in the use of the print media by churches in Zimbabwe as a means of disseminating information to targeted audiences. In comparison, however, to what the mainline churches are doing, one finds that Pentecostal and Charismatic churches have taken a lead in putting up notices either through street corner posters or electronically via the Internet. Such advertisements, as further noted by Gundani (2001:136), regularly include a photograph of the church founder and leader, the man or woman of great charism beckoning followers and possible converts to come and witness for themselves God’s mighty acts or the pastor praying over the sick. In line with the powers that the pastors of such churches claim to have, the advertisements call attention to the miracles that are performed during the services that they hold. A look at website of the Impact for Christ Ministries in Gweru incidentally authenticates the above observation made by Gundani. Below is one such advert I took from their website:

The adverts show the photograph of Prophet J. S. Khuleya and Pastor F. Khuleya who are the founder members of the Impact for Christ Ministries in Gweru.

Right in the middle of the advert and in bold letters one’s attention is drawn to what the masses are to expect when they attend their services — **miracles!**



To authenticate what is written on their adverts, Prophet J. Khuleya has taken Gweru by storm through the miracles that are ostensibly being performed through his hands. Indeed, many are said to have been amazed by the great wonders that are flowing through his hands and cannot resist except praise the Lord. The social network Facebook is awash with such praise and appreciation of what the Prophet is doing. One finds, for example, comments like: 'We give glory to God Prophet!! may the Lord take you to higher levels in JESUS' NAME!!!!!!', 'U're faithful Lord Jesus....', '*Ndi Jehova weminana* – 'It is God of wonders,' 'Glory be to God the same yesterday, today n forever,' '*Na Jesu zvinoita* – with Jesus it is possible' and so many other praise ejaculations.

One miracle, for example, which has drawn so much attention, is that of a woman who had problem with her feet and had eating and drinking problems. The prophet is said to have prayed for the woman and she recovered.



The healing of the woman is one among many of such healing and deliverance miracles that are said to be taking place in the Impact for Christ Ministries. A narration of them all is beyond the scope of this chapter, but I think it suffices here to reiterate that it is not only the Makandiwas and Angels who have stolen the limelight in Zimbabwean society, but there are also other prophets in Zimbabwe who are capable of doing the same miracles. Prophet Khuleya is one of them. The desire to bring this man to the fore, as noted earlier on, triggered the writing of this chapter. In order, however, to put Prophet Khuleya's healing ministry into its proper perspective, it is necessary to appreciate the meaning of healing in the environment in which he is operating.

Healing and Deliverance

Looking at Prophet Khuleya's healing and deliverance ministry and drawing from an African perspective in general, one would find that healing is not a phenomenon limited to a cure for physical ailment only; rather it embraces all aspects of suffering which affect even the moral, psychological and spiritual life of the sick person. The process of healing, therefore, involves the taking away from a sick person a stumbling block or disturbance to his/her physical or spiritual life, inhibiting him/her from human self-fulfillment. Leading to this blockage in human fulfillment is a plethora of causes ranging from ancestors to even attachment to vice, not granting forgiveness or the refusal to accept it (Mwandayi, 2011). Where the cause of illness is interpreted as cultural or spiritual, people seek deliverance from those forces that may be tormenting them. Africans, just like all peoples of the world, love life and aspire for a life free from constraints that may enslave them to any force. Healing and deliverance thus are central in living a fully human life and this accounts for the reason why some pastors are now in full force to explore this once neglected area of ministry. A flashback into the New Testament times would reveal that the healing ministry appears to have been practiced during the Apostolic Age (Acts 3:1-10; 9:32-43; 16:16-18) and that after the death of the first apostles we do not seem to find so many references to the deliverance and healing ministry.

The search for well-being among Africans answers why many are prepared to embrace whatever comes their way, as long as it assures that they are free from the unwanted worrisome problem. Before the advent

of Christianity and Western medicine, the traditional healer was held as the kingpin of the African society, for people believed that traditional healers had the capacity both to heal as well as to cast out spells of the dark forces. While Christianity, aligned with Western culture, made frantic efforts to cast a dark shadow over the traditional systems of healing and deliverance, many of the propagators of Western medicine and Christianity were annoyed due to the fact that they saw people still flocking to traditional healers, for people were convinced of the power in the traditional medicines. The traditional medical system stood the test of relegation because many of those who consulted traditional healers and even today do not do so solely on medical grounds. Many have psychological, spiritual, political, religious and social problems which they are convinced traditional healers are quite competent to handle. Some view traditional medical services as much better than the Western medical system because of its tendency to 'treat the whole man/woman.' It addresses a person's physical needs concurrently with his/her psychological needs. In affirmation to this H.E. Sigerist says,

The very unity of primitive medicine, the fact that it never addresses itself to either body or mind but always both, explains many of its results also in the somatic field. That a ceremonial in the course of which the patient comes into complete harmony with nature and the universe must have a strong psychotherapeutic value goes without saying (Sigerist cited in Chavunduka, 1998:14).

Leaving room also to the persistence of traditional medical system was sometimes the failure of modern medical science to get better or satisfactory results in certain types of illnesses like chronic dysfunctions. A. Barker, a modern medical doctor who worked in Zululand had this to admit,

Where we failed, in hopeless cancers or in chronic ailments, the spirit world again would be invoked but often only in despair, which prompted fond relatives to leave no avenue unexplored which might lead to a last minute restoration of their sufferer's health. When this happened, European know-alls were ready to point a finger: 'You see doc? They're a primitive lot at heart, and given a chance, always go back to their old ways; you'll never change them'. Yet I fancy that the return to the magician owed more to love than to fear; more to a desire to help in an extremity than to the persistence in superstition (Barker cited in Chavunduka, 1994:10).

Related to the above factor is the fact that most locals tended and even now tend to put illness into two broad categories. The first category consists of those illnesses people view as normal or natural like coughs, colds, slight headache, fevers or stomach-aches. For most of these minor complications people have no problem in consulting a modern medical doctor. The real problem begins when that which was initially viewed as normal tends to persist over a long period of time and worse when treatment with modern scientific means had been sought but no sign of improvement is in place. People would be left with no choice except to regard it as abnormal. To deal with illnesses of this second nature, people believe that consulting a traditional healer is the only way out since most modern doctors are believed unable to attack the ultimate causes of abnormal illnesses. Such causes range from witches, sorcerers, ancestor spirits and angered spirits to alien spirits. Cases of people vacillating between the traditional healer and the modern doctor are thus a common reality. As demonstrated above, an illness which was initially viewed as normal and thus referred to a modern medical doctor may be re-defined as abnormal by the patient or by members of his/her social group, requiring thus the service of a traditional healer. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the same patient or members of the social group seeking the services of a modern doctor again if, for example, their suspicions about the abnormality of the illness is not confirmed by traditional healers or when traditional healers fail also to effect a cure or even when symptoms which were initially viewed as strange just disappear.

While many indeed among Africans have embraced Christianity it does not mean that they have forsaken their traditional values and what they know brings well-being. One finds so much dependence on their indigenous knowledge systems (IKSs) in almost all spheres of their lives. IKSs are forms of knowledge that have originated locally and naturally (Altieri cited in Mapara, 2009:140). These knowledge forms are known by other names, and among them are indigenous ways of knowing, traditional knowledge, indigenous technical knowledge, rural knowledge as well as ethno-science (Mapara, 2009:140). It is this count on IKSs that leads them not only to avoid going to modern practitioners but to also shun consulting some of their pastors whom they know are not able to attack the ultimate cause of illnesses linked to cultural and social issues. In mainline churches, for example, many shun the pastor for fear of being misunderstood, especially if the pastor concerned is an expatriate. Many of the expatriate pastors are known to dismiss many of the cultural

issues as mere superstition, hence calling for no serious attention. In those cases involving the local pastor who may be thought to understand the sick person's cultural background better, chances of being turned away without the much needed help offered are also there.

Certain illnesses, as we saw, require the deliverance of the sufferer from the forces of the dark-world. This indeed is a challenging area and the dread in many pastors when it comes to dealing with such evil forces need not be overstated. Many pastors know that exorcism is not a mere repetition of a given formula but rather demands purity of life and a determined effort towards sanctity on the part of the exorcist. Aware of their failures here and there, many would not dare enter into that field. In comparison to Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, however, one would find that there is less emphasis on exorcism in mainline churches and when a pastor in the latter churches tries by his/her own initiative to get involved in healing and the exorcism of traditional evil spirits, he/she is likely to get trouble with authorities (Bourdillon:1993). Among the popular figures of our modern times, one needs to think of Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo in the Catholic Church and Fr Nerwande in the Anglican Communion for a confirmation of this. Pentecostal and Charismatic pastors, Prophet Khuleya being among them, have utilized this loophole in mainline churches to lure more followers to themselves for they claim to have that authority and prowess to deal with problems of any spiritual nature.

Seeing the need in people to retain both their traditional culture as well as their imported religion - Christianity, some healers have gone out to provide both services to their clients. There are some who let their clients choose the best way they want to be helped, either using Christian means or traditional ones. What it means then is that it would be up to the client to prioritize what he/she may see as most fitting given the situation and his/her background. The healer on his/her own part is versatile in such a way that he/she is able to handle whatever option the client would have chosen. If it demands of the healer to enter the world of the ancestors and mediate on their behalf with the client then that would be so and if it demands him/her to invoke the 'Holy Spirit' to come and heal/deliver his/her client then that would be done also without any challenge. As noted by Gundani (2001:140),

With these two faces of Janus, they appeal both to adherents of Shona or Ndebele traditional religions and to those Christians who are not yet pre-

pared to make the huge leap towards Christ and thus become transformed into new creatures.

Charismatic Pastors and the Role of Traditional Healers

An interesting development, and which is now a phenomenon seen also in Gweru with the Impact for Christ Ministries, is the new crop of charismatic pastors who are almost taking over the roles which have long been associated with that of traditional healers. As a mark possibly of being distinct from other ordinary pastors, these pastors are now generally referred to as prophets; hence the new title 'prophet' in the case of pastor Khuleya also. As seen from their live shows on TV, such prophets now have the power, for example, to identify people in the congregation by their national identity numbers; tell the address of the home where someone grew up; others name a few relatives by the first name. Others have the power to tell the color and design of furniture pieces in people's houses or how someone may have visited the doctor for a pregnancy test five days previously. Others even expose marital affairs and call the culprits forward to confess, lest they die. In moments of political crisis even, some have claimed to be messengers of hope to the people. As the results of 2013 harmonized elections were beginning to trickle in and people were beginning to become agitated at the possibility of another Zanu Pf landslide victory and a possible repeat of the unforgettable 2007/8 crisis, prophet Khuleya on the 29th of July 2013 delivered what he claimed was God's message to Zimbabweans:

Though we are in Zimbabwe we are in the hand of the Lord, Daniel was in the hand of the Lord in the Lion's den and the lions did not feast on him, Shadrek, Mishek and Abednigo were in the Lord's hand in the fire and the fire did not burn them, I say to you Zimbabweans, don't be afraid [...] (Khuleya, 2013).

It is the accuracy of these prophecies, as observed by one writer, that mesmerizes their congregations and people attend church for long hours with their friends and family, hoping that the "man of God" will single them out of the crowd and tell them what has happened and perhaps point a way into the future (False Prophets in Zimbabwe, 2013). The essence of what is done looks essentially the same with what is done by traditional healers, and what appears only to have changed is that one service is provided by a man/woman in the regalia of traditional spiritualism whilst the other is provided by a man/woman of the cloth.

What is mind boggling, however, about the whole issue is the source of power used by these charismatic prophets. This an area which has fascinated many researchers, especially considering the ability of these prophets to perform mysterious actions which are similar and which may even surpass what people are used to seeing their traditional healers perform. While such actions have helped lift the flag of some churches, in some cases it has dragged them into the mud of controversies. Making reference to the St Elijah Church of Mberengwa, Tabona Shoko notes that the close alliance with African traditional religious beliefs and methods of healing gives the faith community a somewhat schizophrenic stance and this has resulted in divisions and accusations of witchcraft (Shoko, 2006). Due to all this, doubting Thomases have been quick to dismiss charismatic prophets as fake while others are convinced in the powers of these prophets which they would like to believe is of divine origin as claimed by the very prophets engaged in this ministry. A look at the literature which has been proffered so far shows the mixed feeling among researchers and the general public who are trying to come to terms with this phenomenon. One writer noted that apologists for the new crop of prophets often quote texts like 1 Chronicles 16 verse 22 which says: "Touch not my anointed ones and do my prophets no harm!" or Matthew 7:1 which says: "Do not judge and you shall not be judged" (False Prophets in Zimbabwe, 2013). Such texts are at most interpreted literally, a typical style of how the Bible is used in the public discourse in Zimbabwe.

Some believe that the prophets offer excellent and affordable service for the poor majority in Zimbabwe. Due to abject poverty, many cannot afford medical insurance and therefore cannot get quality medical service from either public or private health systems. As pointed out by Gundani, the government of Zimbabwe in 1991 removed free medical service from its public health institutions, a development that left the poor with no cushion. Such a move earned the government sharp criticism and many began to see "professional prophets," as a viable alternative to a society that had become grossly irresponsible. As the apologists for charismatic prophets would argue, prophets are servants of God and are some of the few people who offer affordable and culture-friendly health service (Gundani, 2001:141). Still others argue that it is unfair to criticize them on the basis of hearsay and rumour. "The taste of the pudding is in the eating," so they would argue. Others go on to argue that a true prophet is known by his or her works. A mark of genuine-

ness, as they would argue, is seen, for example, when a prophet refers a patient to another prophet following a realization that he/she cannot prescribe the right medicines to the client.

While some approve and believe in the powers of prophets as of divine origin, the testimonies given by some who appear well versed on the ongoings in the spiritual realm tend to show that there appears to be something fishy about the whole exercise. In an article titled: "Prophets, Sangomas use the same power. We turn people into prophets: Chipinge Sangoma," published in *My Zimbabwe*, the writer reports of a traditional healer known as Sekuru Chigadzira Panganai Chirimambowa of Musikavanhu village in Chipinge who claimed that nothing was impossible to him and that he sells powers to any willing buyer who wants to become a prophet or a traditional healer. Sekuru Panganai is alleged to have further confirmed that some prophets use a vulture's head to predict what the future carries or make prophecies. Basing on his vast experience, Sekuru Panganai is said to have revealed: "A vulture's head is so powerful and I also use it. You will never miss in prediction. A vulture can foretell when an animal will die. That's why you see some prophets now predict anyone's National ID number" (Sekuru Panganai cited Prophets, Sangomas use the same power, 2013).

What is more revealing possibly is a testimony given by the renowned Ghanaian sangoma Nana Kwaku Bonsam who claims that he has been helping not only his countrymen but also people from other countries to get supernatural powers. In an interview, Nana Kwaku Bonsam is said to have acknowledged:

I'm a fetish priest; a powerful one of course, and I use my powers to heal the sick, help people who want to travel abroad, help traders get better sales, protect people from fraudsters, dis-empower witches and wizards or help people who have one problem or the other. I am well-known for the wonders I perform in this country so I receive people from all parts of the country and even people from other countries (Nana Kwaku Bonsam cited in *Ghana sangoma who gave 1700 prophets powers*, 2013).

Probed further to ascertain his powers, Nana Kwaku Bonsam is said to have openly and publicly dared any of his critics to challenge him in a battle of supernatural powers. He went on to boast of his capabilities when he claimed:

I produced money, a gold watch, handkerchief and other things there and that was so wonderful before the chief of Techiman. At the palace, I was able to plant cocoa seeds and they germinated on that same day; I

planted a mango seed and it germinated the same day and I killed a house-fly, resurrected it and made it fly round for all to see (Nana Kwaku Bonsam cited in *Ghana sangoma who gave 1700 prophets powers*, 2013).

A stunner to many was the testimony he gave that his god 'Kofi-Kofi' provides him with supernatural powers that are desperately needed by different pastors from all walks of life to start prominent churches and perform miracles. On being questioned whether pastors were really seeking his services, Bonsam is said to have answered:

Yes it is true. I give powers to perform miracles to a lot of pastors. Currently I have over one thousand seven hundred and something pastors; I might need to look into my register for the figure. When they come to me I give golden rings to some of them after taking them through a ritual bath. I give them the ring and a Bible and the power I want them to get is what I put in the ring. I give some the power to heal, others to see into the future and or the past, or do anything I want them to do. It helps their churches get more members who always want to see signs and wonders (Nana Kwaku Bonsam cited in *Ghana sangoma who gave 1700 prophets powers*, 2013).

While the claims by Nana Kwaku Bonsam could be taken as somehow apologetic so as for him to be feared and revered, one cannot dismiss them as total falsehood. As most Nigerian films even try to portray also, there are some in Africa who possess 'bombs' more mysterious and powerful than the atomic bomb itself. Further providing evidence that there could be something fishy in what the charismatic prophets are doing is the testimony from the Apostolic groups of Zimbabwe. As revealed by the news crew of *My Zimbabwe*, one member of the Vapostori (Apostolic) sect who spoke on condition of anonymity alleged that some senior prophets in his sect, annoyed by the exodus of their followers to follow the emerging prophets, had consulted with Higher Powers to find out whether these Christian prophets were really what they claimed to be, that is, sent of God and they were shown by divine insight that these new prophets were using devious ways to gain power and be able to see into the future (False Prophets in Zimbabwe, 2013).

Such testimonies from people like Sekuru Chigadzira Panganai Chirimambowa, Nana Kwaku Bonsam and others are not only an eye opener to the mysteries that are the order of the day in the supernatural world but also cast a shadow over today's prophetic world. What the testimonies show confirm my earlier assumption that there is some sort of interplay between the miracles being done during these days and *chibhoi*

or *chivanhu* ‘traditional spiritualism.’ If we take a transect walk through *chivanhu* we would surely realize that all seems possible to those who are into it. From the testimonies I grew hearing, it is not a surprise, for example, for one to turn into a hyena, ride of a hyena at night, fly to distant places seated on a *tsero* (winnowing utensil), enter a grave with the intent to feed on the flesh of a dead person as well as come out unnoticed, sniff out chicken bones from either the forehead or part of the body of a person and so many other mysterious acts. If such acts were done in a church context surely one would be tempted to call them miracles too and indeed they are if one is to go by the simple definition of a miracle as an amazing event that breaks the laws of nature, especially something that happens unexpectedly (South African Student’s Dictionary, 1996). All these acts generally classified under the term *chibhoi* or *chivanhu* can hardly be said to be different from the alleged amazing wonders we hear now of charismatic prophets who are said to have caused a baby to be born after a ‘three-day gestation period, making the crippled walk and promising people that bald heads will grow hair while others without teeth would develop new teeth (Staff Reporter, 2013).

One, however, can neither claim with certainty that today’s charismatic prophets are deriving their powers from somewhere else other than God nor can one argue with absolute certainty that God is behind all their miraculous performances. Buttressing, however, the testimonies given by Sekuru Chadzira Panganai Chirimambowa, Nana Kwaku Bonsam and others which reflect that there could be something fishy about the moves of our contemporary charismatic prophets is the reported case of the once renowned prophet Muponda who became famous for making barren wives beget children. Muponda is known to have later confessed that he was a true traditional healer in religious gab. As attested in a newspaper article titled: Muponda— part prophet part traditional healer, the healer resurfaced and revealed that he was now leading an apostolic faith sect while at the same time practising as a traditional healer in Uzumba, Mashonaland East. Speaking to the news crew he said:

I am still a prophet and I go to ‘Kutenda Kuna Mwari’ Apostolic Faith Church which is a new church. People from the church that I founded (Kutungamirira Apostolic Church) wanted to make me an archbishop of the church but I refused. I pray for people from as early as 5am in the morning to noon and thereafter I put on my traditional garments and

consult the spirits. (Muponda cited in Muponda – part prophet part traditional healer, 2010).

The same is almost true for the Matthias and Mildred Ministries which once took Zimbabwe by storm around 2000. Later developments in their ministry showed that all was not well in their house and this saw their ministry nosedive to such an extent that one can hardly hear of them anymore.

Conclusion

Since no one can possibly claim to know or have an undisputed insight into the mystery behind the miraculous performances being done by today's charismatic prophets, perhaps the best position then one could take is the Gamaliel one (Acts 5:33-42). Faced with the mighty works which were being done under the hands of the apostles, Gamaliel is said to have advised his Sanhedrin colleagues: "[...] keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail; but if it is God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" (38-39). Surely if Prophet Khuleya's work and that of fellow pastors who are in the same fold is from God, nobody will have the capacity to destroy it no matter what critic levelled against it, but if it is from the other world it will suffer the same fate as the movements led by Theudas and Judas the Galilean.

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CHAPTER 15

Anna Chitando

Reading Zimbabwean Writers on Churches and Prophets

Insights from Maredza, Mungoshi and Chinodya

Background

Zimbabwean creative writers continue to play an important role in society as they tackle economic, political and socio-religious issues. On the question of religion, they have had some decisive views concerning Christianity in general and the emerging Pentecostal churches in particular. With most other African writers, they have associated Christianity with the loss of African identity. From the deceased Chinua Achebe to the rising stars of the contemporary period, many African writers complain that Christianity causes “things to fall apart.” Their criticism is more acute when they make reference to the “new churches.” This chapter focuses on selected Zimbabwean writers’ depiction of churches and prophets in their works. Using the works of Charles Mungoshi, Shimmer Chinodya and Claude Maredza, the chapter examines how creative artists respond to Christianity in general and the “new churches” in particular. The chapter shows how the writers uphold the power of indigenous spirituality and question the relevance of both the “old and new churches.” Overall, the chapter draws attention to the withering criticism of the young Pentecostal prophets by Zimbabwean writers. It maintains that creative works are a very important resource that must be utilized when trying to understand the status of prophets in Zimbabwe.

Introduction

This chapter “reads” Zimbabwean writers, paying particular attention to the popular prophets in Zimbabwe. It employs a textual analysis of selected works by Claude Maredza, Charles Mungoshi and Shimmer Chinodya. These creative writers respond to Christianity in specific ways.

They regard it as an interfering foreign ideology that robs Africans of their identity. They have very clear views regarding the young prophets who have dominated the religious scene in Zimbabwe between 2010 and 2013. These creative writers tend to oppose the prophetic movement quite strongly. Maredza is sarcastic in his attack on the young prophets. He criticises them for what he views as their arrogance. Mungoshi is equally critical of the prophets' claim to be bringing "good news" to Africans. He is a complicated writer who exposes the limitations of the prophets. On the other hand, Chinodya is not convinced that the churches in general and the new churches in particular bring elevated forms of spirituality as they claim. According to him, African traditional beliefs continue to be powerful. Those who convert to the new churches remain rooted in ancestral beliefs, even as they appear in the public eye as true converts. However, they continue to make use of the services of traditional healers and to fulfill the demands of traditional religion. I have selected these three Zimbabwean writers to interpret prophets and new churches because they are clear on what they regard as the limitations of the prophets and the church in Zimbabwe.

It is, however, problematic to plunge straight into a discussion of Zimbabwean writers and contemporary prophets without appreciating the historical background. In the first section of the chapter, I examine the theme of Christianity and African culture that has been quite prominent in African creative works. Conflict between Christianity and African culture is clearly visible in pioneering works such as *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe 1957). Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1965) describes the divisive aspect of Christianity in his *River Between*. In such works, the missionary religions are in continuous clashes with African or indigenous spirituality. Most African writers take the side of African spirituality but are aware of its vulnerability in the face of new and competing religions. To weaken these new and aggressive religions, they portray them negatively. Understanding these earlier negative descriptions of churches sets the scene for appreciating the stinging criticism of prophets by Zimbabwean writers.

African and Zimbabwean Literature: Attitudes towards the Church

As argued above, before concentrating on Zimbabwean creative writers' interaction with the church, there is need to put them into a larger con-

text. This larger context is linked to the general behaviour of the educated African elite towards the church. African intellectuals, including creative writers, do not exhibit positive views about the church. It is ironic that although most of them received missionary education, they rebel against the teachings of the church. Missionaries played a significant role in African education during the colonial period. As a result, famous African writers such as Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and others benefited from mission education. However, these creative artists are very critical of the church. This leads J. N. K. Mugambi (1992: 2) to wonder:

“But why should those who have gone through the mission schools and through a systematized indoctrination against their own heritage and in favour of an alien culture, reject what they have received and strive to affirm their disrupted heritage?”

One possible response to Mugambi's question is based on the general observation that African creative writers regard themselves as custodians and representatives of the very African traditions that the church has been attacking. They see the church as an insensitive institution that has trampled upon African identity. They resort to African culture to withstand the assault by the church. It is not surprising that “many African writers expose the suffering Christianity inflicted on Africans as missionaries insisted on the dismantling of indigenous culture” (Loflin 1988: 55). As I shall illustrate below, Zimbabwean authors charge that young prophets do not respect African culture.

The other reason concerning the trend by African creative writers to oppose the church lies in their having become “insiders” at one point in time and noticing directly the hypocrisy and double standards. African creative writers became familiar with the key values taught by the church on paper. Such values included respect, transparency, love, faithfulness and modesty. However, they witnessed the betrayal of these values by the missionaries and African church leaders. In Mongo Beti's *The Poor Christ of Bomba* (1971), Father Drumont, a French missionary in West Africa, is portrayed as hypocritical in nature. For instance, he hates children, yet Christianity preaches love for one another. Beti satirizes Christianity when he presents Father Drumont who insists on the payment of cult dues instead of concerning himself with the spiritual welfare of the people. Father Drumont is indicted for being a divisive element in families when he discourages mothers from visiting daughters who are mar-

ried to polygamous men. He is also accused of being in alliance with the colonial administrators as they keep the local people in a subjugated position, exploiting their labour. Zimbabwean authors on prophets appeal to this theme and accuse them of milking their members.

The double standards such as those exuded by Father Drumont led to disillusionment on the part of the African creative writers. They became certain that the church does not put into practice the values that it teaches. They saw many missionaries dominating Africans and not demonstrating love and acceptance. This led to unyielding attitudes on the part of African creative writers. Mugambi (1992: 3) observes that “East African literature, both creative and historical, is characterized by complaints against the way in which Africans were mistreated during the colonial period.”

The third reason why most African creative writers became critical of the church is that they saw African church leaders abusing their positions to enrich themselves. These leaders used religious beliefs to confuse their followers while they accumulated resources at their expense. Some of these African church leaders got involved in fornication- a theme that is also common in Shona novels such as Francis Bvindi’s *Kumuzinda Hakuna Woko* “No one is perfect” (1981) and Mumvuma’s *Imbwa Nyoro* “Still waters run deep” (1982). This led to the negative portrayals of the church in African literature. The authors writing on young prophets in Zimbabwe charge that some of them abuse their positions and end up having sexual relationships with women.

In addition to the corruption of African church leaders, creative writers also allege that the new religion upsets established gender patterns in Africa. African men who convert to Christianity have to forgo cultural demands and take up new masculinities. For example, in *Things Fall Apart*, “Nwoye’s conversion to Christianity marks a significant departure from the life Okonkwo desires for him” (Etter-Lewis 2010: 163). This has a disruptive effect on African culture as he can no longer be a possible heir to Okonkwo. As I show below, Chinodya argues that young prophets in Zimbabwe destabilise marriages by empowering young women to question their husbands. He finds this divisive and unacceptable.

Most African writers, therefore, place themselves as defenders of the African cultural heritage. They consider conversion to Christianity as a sign of defeat. Africans ought to retain their cultural identity in the face of contending foreign ideologies. Since Christianity is associated with

colonialism, radical African writers call for a rejection of both. Such a stance is not limited to creative writers. Many African historians, philosophers, political scientists and others insist on recovering cultural pride. Ngwabi Bhebe (2000: 14) articulates this when he says:

It is clear that the cultural holocaust of the colonial period destroyed our science, our technology and industrial creativity, and that Europe took advantage of all this to drain our resources for use in her own scientific and technological advancement and thereby widened the gap between us and the Europeans. In the circumstances, we were forced to survive on cultural hybridization, a process which unfortunately contains in itself mixed blessings for us in that it enables ruthless enemies our people to thrive by its skilful use.

Zimbabwean authors follow the trend I alluded to above. Histories of Zimbabwean literature in English (Zhuwarara 2001 and Veit-Wild 1992) and Shona literature (Chiwome 1996) show the influence of the church on different generations of writers. Like writers from other parts of Africa, Zimbabwean writers challenge the church's association with missionaries and the displacement of black people from their land. They also lay blame on the church for undermining African culture by attacking traditional beliefs and practices.

Most Zimbabwean writers challenge the assumption that the church brought 'civilisation' to the indigenous people. They regard ancestral traditions as powerful. For them, the church waters down the spiritual liveliness of the black people. This is so because the church has preached against the ancestors and encourages converts to abandon their traditional beliefs and practices. In protest, most Zimbabwean writers portray traditional beliefs and practices in positive light. Yvonne Vera (1993), for instance, celebrates the female guardian spirit, Nehanda, in her novel carrying the same title. Vera represents the attachment to traditional beliefs in Zimbabwean writing. Christiansen (2005: 206) describes her approach:

In this spiritual narrative there is only one force which leads to the destruction of colonial rule: the spirit of the struggle that drives the people. This spirit is eternal, and therefore Nehanda's death at the hands of the Europeans is not a spiritual death. In Vera's representation, Nehanda surpasses the moment of her own death and becomes the driving spiritual force behind the greater battle of the 'Second Chimurenga' i. e. the liberation war.

The church and its representatives are generally not portrayed in positive images in African and Zimbabwean literature. Creative writers seem to be certain that the church has played a major role in suppressing African spirituality and stripping people of their cultural identity. They also regard the church as an intruding institution that does not consider African beliefs seriously. The criticism heightens when creative writers respond to the new churches that celebrate prophets and lively founders. Creative writers see them as rather detestable and alienating. They also depict prophets from the new churches as operating fundraising projects whereby they become rich while their followers become poorer. Zimbabwean creative writers indict the new churches for causing tensions in families. For example, women who convert to these churches assume new forms of behaviour that amount to rebellion in the eyes of their culture-bound husbands. In the next section I focus on how Zimbabwean authors respond to the rise of young prophets. The themes raised in this section enable us to anticipate their criticism of prophets.

Claude Maredza: Christianity as a Billion Dollar Industry

One of the most contentious characteristics of newer Zimbabwean Pentecostalism is the emphasis on wealth. The prosperity message has been promoted by young prophets such as Emmanuel Makandiwa of the United Family International Church. They appeal to the Bible to support teaching and preaching on wealth. The message puts emphasis on members achieving high levels of prosperity. It associates failure to thrive with the devil's machinations. Members and visitors are encouraged to give generously to the "man of God" in order for the God of the "man of God" to bless them. However, critics allege that this has turned churches into businesses. One such critic is Claude Maredza.

Maredza is notable for his style of writing. He adopts an approach that captures the anger of a Zimbabwean cultural nationalist. While his works will not be included in the list of standard publications in Zimbabwean literature, he deserves to be noticed, particularly in a chapter such as this, which analyses prophetic ministries. In *The Blackness of Black* (Maredza 2000), he maintains that Christianity was imposed on black people. Maredza says this was grossly unfair as blacks used to communicate with God through their ancestors (2000:10). He uses direct and undiplomatic language to criticise Christianity and Islam. In

actual fact, Maredza's insensitive language can be viewed as quite insulting at times. This is purposeful and on the cover the reader is warned: "Some of the language used herein is not suitable for people of a nervous disposition or for minors." Maredza attacks Christianity and Islam, labelling them "religions of imposition" (: 76). Unfortunately, according to him, Africans have embraced these foreign religions.

Oh yes, you see black hot gospellers et al crying in praise of Jesus against their own ancestors or shouting a lot of Bismillahs which is strange Arabic. Yet if you tell that Arab to pray through your ancestors he will declare a fatwa on you. So why pray through his ancestors Mohammed. Jesus probably laughs at blacks who cry through his name asking them what happened to their own ancestors. Are blacks so naïve even in prayer we think that a prayer with some whiteness is the only one God will hear! (Maredza 2000:11)

Maredza sounds enraged and declares that most of the men who claim to operate under divine inspiration, such as the prophets, are hypocrites. Although they persuade their members to lead righteous lives, they are busy leading earthly lives. He challenges, "Just check how many of these Praise The Lord Alleluia mother fuckers end up with secretaries or on trial for fraud or pure molestation of women in their services. Thats Christianity for you! Jesus Christ is a billion dollar industry! (:13). Here, Maredza underscores one of the main arguments that surround new forms of Christianity in Zimbabwe. This relates to the emphasis on wealth or prosperity. Maredza feels that this takes away from Christianity whatever authenticity it had in the first place.

According to Maredza, Pentecostalism convinces Africans into believing that their ancestral religions are evil. This has resulted in some religious leaders, such as prophets, leading in the attack against their own culture and traditions. They even have the boldness to suggest that Christianity be adopted as the official religion in Zimbabwe (: 44). Worse still, they use English in their services, suggesting that African languages are inferior. Young Pentecostal prophets are fond of using English when communicating with their members. Maredza encourages Zimbabweans to become proud of themselves and to refuse to worship at the altars raised by other races. He criticises prophets for adopting an "unZimbabwean" outlook.

Maredza refuses to accept that Zimbabwean indigenous religions did not have their own prophets. Whereas Christianity and Islam have come up with their 'sacred prophets,' Maredza brings up his own ancestor,

Prophet Nemeso (: 64). Here, he accuses missionary religions of refusing to acknowledge the liveliness of indigenous prophets. He calls for black people to celebrate their identity. Maredza writes,

“It is our assertion therefore that any black man (sic) worth his salt must look twice about who he is and completely discard Christianity and or Islam or any other imposed religion for that matter in exchange of our own religion” (: 64).

Maredza is convinced that religions such as Christianity have become popular because churches frighten people into submission. Prophets and preachers use terror tactics to get people into church. He challenges his readers:

“Have you noticed that the more fear these religions of imposition instill into people, the higher the following. Mother fuckers have been told about hell and my God! The churches are full to the brim!” (: 76).

Maredza’s complaint about Pentecostal churches’ emphasis on wealth is carried forward in his other book, *oooooh to celibate?! (Maredza 2003)*. He argues that the prophets’ “...specialty most of the time is stealing money from their innocent God fearing flock” (:16). Maredza seems to be sure that founders/prophets of new churches are not sincere about their ministries. Instead of trying to save lost souls, they are busy lining their pockets. He sounds bitter that prophets appear to be more interested in generating money for themselves at the expense of their members. He condemns the prophets for being more concerned about money.

Charles Mungoshi on Prophets and Power

While Maredza is unswerving regarding the motivation of the prophets, Mungoshi is rather restrained. Mungoshi has come to be known as one of Zimbabwe’s leading creative writers (Vambe and Chirere 2006). Due to his interest in the theme of religion and spirituality, it is difficult for one to provide a detailed account within the limits of this article. Malaba (1997), Nyota (2006) and Chitando (2006) have addressed this theme. In this chapter, my focus is on how Mungoshi responds to the prophets who take up the religious space in Zimbabwe.

Sharing the same perspective as Maredza, Mungoshi is not convinced that older forms of Christianity and its newer version represented by the prophets have changed the spiritual outlook of Zimbabwe in any dra-

matic way. Actually, Mungoshi queries the power that the prophets claim to have. He is not convinced that the prophets can succeed in accomplishing the miracles that they advertise. For Mungoshi, African spirituality is stronger than the miraculous acts that characterise the prophets. In different stories, Mungoshi challenges Christianity's claim to be a powerful religion. He shows Christianity as powerless when faced with African spiritual demands.

One of the stories that confirms Mungoshi's cynicism regarding the power of Pentecostalism and the young prophets is quite moving. The short story, "Sacrifice" in *Walking Still* (Mungoshi 1997) depicts the experiences of a young girl, Tayeva, who must be given up to another family as payment for *ngozi* (avenging spirit). Tayeva ought to get married to an old man in order to appease the spirit of the murdered man. Mungoshi creates a scene of confrontation between Christian teachings on liberation and human rights and traditional spirituality. Tayeva is a member of the Union of Veronica's Girls and attends St Michael's Mission. Furthermore, there are preachers who constantly move up and down, promising deliverance.

When Maria and Marita, representatives of the churches and supposed to have powerful prayers, come on the scene, contrary to their biblical namesakes, they exemplify the powerlessness of prophets and the church they represent. Instead of praying to God to liberate Tayeva from the purported negative traditional practices, the two representatives of the church fail completely in their spiritual endeavours. All they do is to offer prayers of conformity. Tayeva must agree to traditional beliefs and practices and the church can do absolutely nothing about it. For Moyana (2006: 163), "...the pair's power of prayer is there to reinforce this negative tradition instead of functioning as a liberating force."

Mungoshi emphasises the inflexibility of indigenous religious inclinations. As alluded to by Maredza in the previous section, no "religion of imposition," can answer the spiritual problems of the Africans. Mungoshi suggests that although prophets and churches take pride in their so-called deliverance and miracle services that attract thousands of troubled Africans, they are unable to resolve the challenges. This is shown when Tayeva has to be sacrificed, no matter how painful this might be. While the young prophets might continuously declare that Christ sacrificed His life for humankind, Mungoshi maintains that traditional spiritual demands must be fulfilled. According to Nyota (2006: 202):

In a sense, Tayeva can be likened to Jesus Christ who was sent into this world in order to die for the sins of humanity. If this line of argument is accepted, then Mungoshi seems to be saying that Christianity is a foreign religion that has neither roots nor relevance in the realities of blacks in general and the Shona people in particular. In this short story, Christianity is depicted as a farce.

Young prophets have become prominent and rich through breaking covenants, curses, yokes of bondage and ancestral ties. Burgess (2008: 36) makes an interesting observation about Pentecostals in Nigeria that is also applicable to Zimbabwean Pentecostals. He argues that they “promote deliverance as a means of severing ties with social and religious pasts (especially those associated with ancestral curses, blood covenants and sinful lifestyles), thus removing obstacles.” Through his portrayal of Maria and Marita, who are absolutely powerless in the face of the avenging spirit, Mungoshi challenges the ability of Pentecostals to secure deliverance. Mungoshi suggests that the young prophets are unable to overcome spirits from traditional religions.

Nyota (2006: 202) contends that in “Sacrifice,” “Mungoshi deliberately sets out to mock one of the many Pentecostal churches that mushroomed after independence.” Nyota’s interpretation of Mungoshi’s central message is significant. Mungoshi is not of the opinion that the new churches afford their followers any form of spiritual liberation. Instead, he criticises these churches and their representatives for their powerlessness. It is as if these prophets are ineffective, even when they repeatedly shout, “Power in the name of Jesus!” Mungoshi is of the view that they do not possess the capacity to perform genuine miracles.

Had Mungoshi believed in the prophets and churches he writes about, Tayeva would have been delivered from her bondage to ancestral demands. Further miracles would have been performed by Maria and Marita to confirm that the sacrifice of Christ was adequate. This would have confirmed the Christian belief that Jesus’ name conquers all wars. As it is, Mungoshi suggests that there are many wars that Jesus’ name does not defeat. Young prophets may be zealous and work their audiences into hysteria, but they do not address in a meaningful way the material conditions of the Africans.

Shimmer Chinodya: Showy and Divisive New Churches

Shimmer Chinodya is one of Zimbabwe's most successful writers. His works have won various awards. Just like Mungoshi, Chinodya is quite prolific and it is not possible to review all his publications in this chapter. In this section, I focus mainly on his portrayal of churches in general and the newer Pentecostal churches in particular. Ideologically, Chinodya endorses the conclusions reached by Maredza and Mungoshi. According to him, the church does not succeed in its encounter with indigenous spirituality. The young prophets who are becoming popular do not accomplish any miracles: the real miracle they pull off is the extent to which intelligent people are gullible.

In *Chairman of Fools* (Chinodya 2005), the author attacks the church in two ways. In the first instance, he charges that the new churches lead to the alienation of husbands and wives. Secondly, founders of new churches lead lavish lifestyles at the expense of their followers. However, the church continues to be powerless against challenges such as mental illness. Like Mungoshi in the previous section, Chinodya argues that the church does not have the power that it advertises so lavishly. It is clearly limited when it is confronted by medical and spiritual challenges. This is a forceful criticism that contrasts the prophets' claim to be spiritually well-resourced in such matters.

Chairman of Fools opens with Farai showing the tension between him and Veronica, his wife. He gets home when Veronica is already asleep and she denies him sex. He feels that she is not being fair with him. In their quarrel, it becomes clear that their perspectives have grown so far apart that it will take a lot to harmonise them. Farai attributes Veronica's transformation to the new church that she now fellowships with. He says to her:

You contradict yourself. On the one hand you preach thrift but on the other hand you are obsessed with the image of wealth and prosperity held up by your church (2005: 3).

Chinodya demonstrates that he is against the emphasis on prosperity in the new churches. In the exchange captured above, Farai is his mouth-piece. Farai criticises the new churches for having contradictory approaches towards wealth or prosperity. This worsens the tension between couples as mostly the wives want to save money and therefore they place bans on beer drinking. In addition, the new notions of purity mean that the husband can no longer drink beer at home (2005:4). Ve-

ronica now has “churchy” friends and appears closer to her church mates than to Farai. Farai feels that he has lost his wife to “those Pentecostals” (2005:23). The reference to “those Pentecostals” suggests that the leaders of these new churches are notorious for brainwashing their members.

Akin to Maredza and Mungoshi, Chinodya argues that people convert because of fear and the different problems that confront them in life. For example, Farai used to be a Christian but he has now lost his faith. The reader is told that “[o]nce upon a time, at the age of thirteen, Farai had attended his (Reverend Mwaita’s) service in a huge tent and had accepted the Lord. But his new faith, prompted by fears of hell and brimstone, had worn off in a welter of pubescent sin”(25). Now, Farai can no longer stand his wife’s Pentecostal friends. He describes their profiles in an informative way when he says:

They are nearly all women in their thirties and early forties – middle class – with one or two men hitched along. Sometimes a pastor comes with them. Some of them are widows and divorcees. Their eyes are bright with the Word and their skins glow with clean living. They sing wonderful Pentecostal songs and pray in a babel of tongues. They turn otherwise mundane incidents, both personal and impersonal – into fantastic testimonies. They drink tea, eat biscuits and sell each other mushrooms, peanut butter, eggs and sweaters, while trading news of promotions and investments. And, of course, they pay the church tithe (2005:161).

The paying of the church tithe is linked to the author’s unvoiced critique of the show of wealth by the prophets. Farai visits a Pentecostal church service and sees Pastor Wiseman Phillip Matambo who drives a gold Mercedes. He describes him further: “Today he is clad in an immaculate grey suit and red tie. In the bright light his forehead glistens with good health and clean living” (2005: 79). It is not by coincidence that his name is “Wiseman.” He is using his wisdom to secure a high standard of living for himself and his family. Chinodya accuses leaders of Pentecostal churches of exploiting their followers.

In *Strife* (Chinodya 2006), the themes of the continued existence of indigenous spirituality, divisiveness of the church and the churches’ insensitivity to the contributions of Africans are pronounced. Wives who attend Pentecostal churches do not tolerate traditional rituals and separate their husbands from their families (2006: 211). Pastors from established mainline churches, such as the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe

(RCZ) do not respond to the needs of their long-time members: the young priest refuses to have Dunge Gwanangwara's body in the church because he was no longer actively involved in church activities and was now "living in sin" (2006:188-189). This is insensitive as Gwanangwara had sacrificed a lot when the church was built. The demands of traditional religion persist and converts to Christianity have to retreat periodically to meet these demands. Chinodya, like Mungoshi, acknowledges the strength of traditional religion.

In a short story, "Infidel," (2012) Chinodya's attack on the new Pentecostal churches and their prophets is more unrelenting. He is now writing when the prophets have become more popular and their preaching on prosperity is attracting many Zimbabweans. In the story, Chinodya suggests that the new churches with spectacular names were the result of the economic problems that began in the 1990s (2012: 166). He observes that most of the founders of prophetic ministries are too young, interested in money and are not accountable. I quote him at length below as he makes his contempt clear:

Song, prayer, testifying and Bible study are now the order of the day. Tithing became another cardinal rule. Joining up is like mortgaging your soul to the big bank of life and forever paying off a fraction of your monthly income to secure your future bliss. Giving to the Lord is a way of asking for blessings, and an investment. The more you give to the church, the more you receive in return. Like cleanliness, material prosperity now sits next to Godliness. Where the rich young man in Matthew 19 was told he must give up everything in order to enter heaven, God, it now preached, despises poverty – the poor must be sinners – and tacitly approves of the amassing of wealth. To be rich is to be blessed. The latest clothing styles are in vogue. The churches are run like businesses, but no tax is paid to the state. Most of the entities lavish praise on the country's oppressors in order to escape official scrutiny. The pastor has become the chief executive of the new 'bank' and he or she can readily cook the books. Few ask how the money is spent; those who are too curious, too close or know too much, can always be paid off (2012:167-168).

An Assessment of Zimbabwean Writers' Views on the Church and Prophets

I have painted the trend found in African and Zimbabwean literature when it comes to describing the church and prophets. The picture is quite negative. Zimbabwean creative writers accuse the church of being

a foreign and imposed institution. They portray prophets in emerging Pentecostal churches as people who are showy and exploit the trustfulness of their members. For these writers, prophets are entrepreneurs who have discovered a viable industry which involves trading on false promises. Even when these prophets genuinely believe that they possess spiritual power, for the creative writers analysed in this study, they are mistaken as they are quite powerless when faced with traditional spirituality.

Maredza, Mungoshi and Chinodya all attack the churches and prophets. They find very few, if any, positive values in the churches and their prophetic founders. Church leaders are corrupt and manipulative. They are determined to have posh cars by exploiting their members. Although Farai in *Chairman of Fools* consistently observes the “clean living” of Pentecostal founders and members, he does not take time to reflect on what this would mean to him as a person. In the same way, Maredza’s anger aimed at the church needs to be weighed against the fact that a large number of quite intelligent Africans who have become members of the church. Are they simply gullible, or they find something positive in these prophetic ministries?

As male writers, Maredza, Mungoshi and Chinodya totally disregard the importance of both new and old churches to the lives of women. Moyana (2006) fittingly laments the negative portrayal of women in Mungoshi’s works. When demonstrating the powerlessness of Christianity, Mungoshi chooses two women, Maria and Marita, to represent the church. This is not representative of typical Pentecostalism where men dominate positions of power. One is left to wonder why Mungoshi does not use male preachers to put across his point. On the other hand, Maredza makes use of sexist language to attack missionary religions, while Chinodya has negative images of women who convert to Pentecostalism. In both *Chairman of Fools* and *Strife*, Chinodya shows that wives who are members of Pentecostal churches do not contribute to the cohesion of the family. For him, they are a source of tension within the family as they are fanatical.

The male writers whose works I have analysed in this chapter do not do justice to women’s spirituality as expressed in Pentecostal churches. To describe women who convert to Pentecostal churches as easy to fool and in need of “help” is to rob them of their agency (Chitando 2012). Women have the right to choose the religion they want to belong to.

They are capable of assessing whether they are being cheated. They have actually demonstrated their independence by moving away from churches that do not meet their spiritual needs. To characterise such reasonable women as gullible is to exhibit condescending attitudes.

Notwithstanding the limitations I have drawn attention to, the creative writers (Maredza, Mungoshi and Chinodya) need to be acknowledged for their efforts to criticise extreme positions taken by some Pentecostal churches and their prophetic founders. The power enjoyed by some prophets and founders of churches has led to cases of sexual abuse. Many women have fallen prey to prophets who abuse their positions. Maredza is right when he draws attention to this aspect. Regrettably, he overstates his case by creating the impression that all church leaders abuse women.

From the stance of Africana womanism (Muwati et al 2012), it would be more helpful for creative writers to communicate new visions on how men and women could collaborate to build viable families and communities. Maredza, Mungoshi and Chinodya tend to concentrate on challenges in the lives of individuals and families. Although identifying problems is useful, it is more useful to suggest new forms of life that lead to overcoming the problems. In this light, male Zimbabwean writers reviewed in this chapter can be criticised for providing limited readings of prophets and churches.

Conclusion

Conforming to the role of the artist as a social commentator, Zimbabwean writers have paid attention to the increasing influence of churches and prophets in society. Above all, they have noticed the appeal of Pentecostal churches to young women. In their works, they depict the impact of churches and prophets on the lives of individuals and families. In keeping with their counterparts in other parts of Africa, Zimbabwean writers do not portray positive images of churches and prophets. They tend to exaggerate the perceived weaknesses of the churches and prophets and minimise the known strengths of these movements. Some male writers also miss out on the appeal of the churches to women. As a result, one can conclude that the writers whose works I have analysed in this chapter give positive but incomplete interpretations of churches and prophets.

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CHAPTER 16

Pauline Mateveke, Clemenciana Mukenge & Nehemiah Chivandikwa

Media Representation of Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa

A Comparative Study of *The Herald* and *News Day* (2012)

Abstract

This study makes a comparative analysis of the portrayal of Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa by two national newspapers in 2012, namely: *The Herald* and *News Day*. Recently, in the social circles, there have been endless debates on the authenticity and exuberance of upcoming contemporary prophets, with Makandiwa at the core of these deliberations. The major aim of this study is thus to establish the concerned newspaper's affiliation on the matter and how its views could potentially influence the public perceptions of Makandiwa and his ministry. To achieve this objective, this research focuses on selected articles that report on Makandiwa, his deeds, his followers and his ministry activities. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Fairclough (1995) provides both a theoretical guide and a methodological thrust for analyzing the language used to discuss Makandiwa. CDA is the study of language in use and it views language as socially constituted and in turn socially constituting. Using CDA as a theory entails that the linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, wording and text structure, mirror the ideology of the author and the social institutions that produce them.

Key Words | representation, critical discourse analysis, *The Herald*, *Newsday*, Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa

Introduction

This study carries out a comparative linguistic analysis of the apparently biased portrayal of Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa by two prominent Zimbabwean newspapers; *The Herald* and *News Day*. Born in 1977, Makandiwa has made inroads in Zimbabwean religious circles and has established one of the biggest Pentecostal churches, namely United

Family International Ministries (UFIM). After serving in the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) for most of his life, Emmanuel Makandiwa founded the UFIM between the years 2008 and 2010. In April 2012 Zimbabwe's Minister of Tourism, Walter Muzembi, described Makandiwa as a tourist attraction due to the immense crowds that assemble at his ministry. Makandiwa was also featured on the fifty most influential Africans list that was compiled by Kubatana.net and this list was based on a poll among their readers. He was also named one of the 100 most influential Africans in "New African" a Pan African publication. A survey (at the time of writing) of Makandiwa's Facebook page reveals 4806 friends and 5852 followers and these figures somehow validate the popularity that Makandiwa has gained. Makandiwa's popularity has garnered him a lot of support but it has a downside as it has also attracted much criticism.

Currently, there is an emerging prophetic school in Zimbabwe and Africa in general, which departs from the traditional methods of prophecy in notable way attracting both admiration and criticism. Consequently, an ongoing social debate has emerged to address the contemporary prophets' authenticity, motives and their sources of power. Thus, contemporary prophets such as Makandiwa have received a lot of media coverage, but there is not much scholarly engagement with the nature of the representation of these contemporary prophets in the media. The media plays a central role in this discussion and a scholarly inquiry into the media reveals key traits or tendencies and variations in the representations of these prophets. Hence, a critical discourse analysis of the representation of Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa in the named newspapers is warranted.

This study argues that, the apparently partisan manner in which Makandiwa is portrayed in the papers reveals the individual ideology of the newspaper itself and also manipulates how the society conceptualizes the man, as well as the judgments imposed upon his ministerial work. It also discusses the controversies surrounding the media's construct of prophet Makandiwa and its possible influences and implications in society. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides both the theoretical guide and methodological impetus for the study. CDA is the study of language in use, and focuses on the relationship between language and society which is interdependent. According to CDA, language shapes social views and in turn the social ideology and its structures

influence the structure of language used by the society. As such, in this study, the language used to discuss prophet Makandiwa in the selected newspapers is perceived to reflect the separate world views of the papers on the issue of the prophet and at the same time constructs social ideas and images of the man and his prophetic deeds. Research data, which comprises a list of catchy words, phrases and lexical items used to refer to prophet Makandiwa in selected newspaper articles, is presented in the form of tables, 1 and 2, respectively.

Contextualising Prophecy in Africa

In order to have a reasonable understanding of the representation of Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa in the Zimbabwean media, it is essential to appreciate prophetic movements in Africa and the socio-economic and political environment that have influenced them. In the African context, prophetic voices have been speaking for time immemorial and from different religious backgrounds. Thus the study of African prophets has attracted substantial scholarly consideration and discussion. Defining what a prophet is has garnered noteworthy discussion with varying yet insightful suggestions. Abioje (2010) advocates the transcendence of layman's conceptions of the figure of the prophet as a soothsayer and to consider "...a prophet as someone who speaks divine words and engages in divine action" (790). Central to Abioje's definition is the indication of "critical prophecy" which allows religion to contribute meaningfully and fundamentally to a society's progress socio-politically and economically by being vigilant and critical of inhuman conduct (Abioje: 2010). These impressions by Abioje are useful to this study as they would help in ascertaining whether Makandiwa has managed to actively engage in the socio-political and economic issues of the day through his prophetic activities.

Nyiauwung (2010) regards prophets as divinely inspired spiritual persons, commissioned by God to warn their contemporaries of the perils of wickedness and to pave the way to what God wants by giving guidance on moral issues. Accordingly, Nyiauwung insists that a prophet should be a mouthpiece of God. Shields (2004) reiterates Nyiauwung's assertion by arguing that the ethical concern of the prophet derives from the fact that God is holy and righteous and demands the same from his people. Shields and Nyiauwung seem to suggest that it is the prophet's duty to

instill and actualize moral virtues. These views are essential to this study when considering the questions and doubt that has surrounded Zimbabwe's Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa's prophetic activities and the sources of his power.

There are several explanations to the rise of the prophetic phenomenon in Africa but the standard explanations and indicators that account for its stupendous growth relate to oppression, economic and social deprivation and political disturbances (Fernandez: 1978). Thus, the rise of prophecy is generally related to people's need to be assuaged from the problems they are faced with (Martey: 2006). Martey's study shows how the rise of Prophet Simon Kimbangu of Congo was directly related to their situation as colonial subjects hence they openly embraced Kimbangu as their saviour and liberator from the clutches of colonial repression. Fernandez (1978) argues:

...the illnesses men and women suffer are a symptom of the sickness of their society. When the collective sicknesses grow out of hand, prophet healers, today and in Africa...step forward to turn the illnesses of the body into that healthy social order it can itself reflect (p 211).

Underlying Fernandez's argument is the notion that the human condition has been the root of the trend towards prophetic movements in Africa. God's salvation in Africa is said to occur at the individual and community levels (Mbiti: 1978). Mbiti states that at the individual level the African believes God rescues him/her from dangers of sickness, witchcraft, bareness, failure and other problems that affect a person as an individual. At the community level God's rescue comes from dangers such as drought, war, oppression, foreign domination and other problems that are likely to affect the community as a whole. Consequently, the rise of prophetic movements especially in contemporary times is linked to Africans' contemporary difficulties such as HIV/AIDS, hunger, poverty and so on. Ochieng (2013) shows how Prophet Edward David Owuor of Kenya gained substantial recognition after revealing that he could heal HIV/AIDS through prayer. Thus, studies seem to agree on the view that prophetic ministries seem to attract a large clientele because of their promises to rescue people from material and physical dangers.

However, African prophets have had their fair share of criticism and Abioje (2010) argues that it is difficult for society to distinguish between the voice of God and the individual voices and this has put the credibility

of contemporary prophets into question. Abioje also suggests that the criticism of prophets in contemporary experiences lies in the contention that the title of prophet is far-fetched and contemporary prophets are rarely comparable to the ancient authentic prophets.

It is not surprising that the subject of the prophetic and prophecy has started to attract some media attention and the ensuing section is therefore an effort to summarize how the media has been relating with the subject.

Media, Religion and Pentecostal Prophets

The rise of charismatic and flamboyant Pentecostal prophets has not generated sufficient interest among academics and media institutions in Africa generally and Zimbabwe specifically. This is surprising because contemporary Pentecostal prophets like Makandiwa, Matthew Ashimolowo, T.B. Joshua and Pastor Chris make extensive use of both the print and electronic media. However, there is an emerging corpus of literature which focuses on the ministries, theology and general characteristics of Pentecostal prophetism which at least acknowledges the centrality of media in the ministry of Pentecostal prophets (see Fernandez, 1978; Chitando, 2008, 2009; Gundani 2001, Gunda, 2012; Abioje, 2010; Shields, 2004; Nyiawung, 2010; Ochieny, 2013; Martey, 2006; Nyandoro, 2013; Chavhunduka in Mlambo, 2011; Quayesi-Amakye, 2013). These works identify key features which characterise Pentecostal prophets and these include (i) the controversial nature of contemporary media-based prophets (ii) the pre-occupation of these prophets with contemporary socio-economic deprivation (prosperity gospel) which attracts the public and the media and (iii) the way the prophets appear to “exploit” the media to popularise and legitimate their prophecies.

The authenticity of contemporary prophets in Africa has been questioned and some critics indicate that prophetic ministries are a façade and are meant to make their leaders rich (Nyandoro, 2013). Nyandoro further associates modern prophets with “marauding hustlers” who have used the shield of God to politely rob the poor of the little they have. Critics condemn modern prophets for taking advantage of the African people’s problems to garner popularity. Prophets such as Nigeria’s T.B Joshua have been convicted (in public discourses) on the basis of commercializing prophecy and using prophecy to seek glory and heroism.

Chavunduka in Mlambo (2011) blatantly warns against the current crop of prophets in Zimbabwe and describes them as fake and riding on Zimbabwe's economic meltdown. Chavunduka further argues that if people's lives improve economically, then there is likely to be an end to these prophets.

Thus the above scholarly works contend that a distinguishing feature of Pentecostal prophets is their use of the media in massive evangelisation, publicity and advertisement (Chitando, 2005; Gunda, 2001; Quayesi-Amakyesi, 2013). This media 'frenzy' (Chitando, 2005), has been characterised as, "... aggressive media campaigns that have been adopted by some churches and prophets who have professionalised their charisma ..." (Gundani, 2007:143). Thus the media is very critical in legitimising or challenging contemporary African prophets. Some critics argue that Pentecostal prophets are 'obsessed' with media as they style themselves as celebrities who seek positive public images and they deploy the media in pursuit of this goal (Quayesi-Amakye, 2013).

While the above cited religious scholars contend that prophets 'exploit' the media, some media scholars ironically posit that it is in fact the media which 'exploits' the prophets for commercial and politico- ideological purposes (Chari, 2010; Glascock, 2008). In the Zimbabwean context, Chari (2010) criticizes the media for projecting negative and distorted images of religious institutions, rituals, teachings and practitioners. He notes that such bias can complicate religious tolerance, diversity and harmony. To this extent, he advances the argument that religious issues and personalities are "... preyed upon to boost sales and advertising ..." (Chari, 2010: 169). However, Chari's article is broadly focused on religious leaders and formations, and it is preoccupied with the apparent marginalization of some religious groups. This chapter, however, examines how in contrasting ways the selected papers 'prey' upon the popularity of Makandiwa. It further seeks to establish possible influences and implications of this apparent religious partisanship.

Framework of Analysis and Methods

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) mainly propounded by Fairclough, van Dijk, Wodak, Blommaert and others provides a theoretical guide to the analysis of the language used to construct Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa in the selected local newspapers under this study. Discourse

is defined as language in use and CDA essentially analyses the intrinsic relationship between language and society where language is viewed as socially constituted and in turn socially constituting. This means that language is both a mirror that reflects the world views of its users and at the same time crafts their social outlooks and ideas. Hence, to establish this relationship, CDA focuses on the intersection of and interrelationships between language, discourse, speech and social interactions (Blommaert, 2005). In this understanding, Fairclough (1992) proposes that CDA is a three-dimensional framework. The first dimension is discourse-as-text. The analyses of text should focus on linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, wording and text structure. The second dimension of CDA is discourse-as-discursive-practice. This dimension views discourse, text or utterances as something that is produced, circulated, distributed and consumed in the society. The final dimension of CDA is discourse-as-social-practice. This means that discourse occurs in a specific social structure and can only be effectively understood within that defined context. In this study, making use of this model, the newspaper articles that report on Makandiwa and his activities are viewed as discursive texts, produced and circulated for local consumption and are understood within the social contexts where they are produced. These are influenced by the ideology of the writer which in turn manipulates the public opinion of the matter. The main focus is on the linguistic features and text structure which constitute the ideological perceptions of the authors. The argument is that the language used to discuss Prophet Makandiwa is reflective of individual or group perceptions, which might inform the public discernments of his personality and ministry. Discourse is thus understood as a social practice-informed by social events in turn influencing the social ideologies and perceptions.

Because this study focuses on media representations, it will also be guided by McCombs and Shaw's Agenda setting theory (1972). The theory postulates that the media has significant power to set agendas of any discussion and by so doing influences what people think about and how they think about certain issues. Selection and omission are key factors in agenda setting and McCombs (2002) reiterates that the media influences the way in which people and issues are evaluated by the public by drawing attention to certain issues while playing down others. McCombs and Shaw's views will benefit this study in showing how local media repre-

sentations of Makandiwa give importance to features which suit their set agendas.

This research is based on qualitative research methodology. Documentary analysis is employed on randomly selected newspaper articles on Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa. In any research, the main idea is to make sample selection as transparent, objective and as independent as possible. Krippendorff (1980) insists that a researcher has to select a sample that is large enough to contain sufficient information and small enough for analysis. Hence, making use of Krippendorff’s insights, the researchers purposefully selected ten newspaper articles on Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa written in the year 2012. Five of these articles are from *The Herald* and the other five are from *News Day*. The choice of these two newspapers is meant to provide a balanced discussion of media discourse on Emmanuel Makandiwa because *The Herald* is a state controlled newspaper whilst *News Day* is privately owned. Critical Discourse analysis was employed on the selected articles so as to assess the language used in connection with four different themes: Makandiwa, Makandiwa’s church, Makandiwa’s followers, Makandiwa’s deeds and religious activities.

Data Presentation: Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa in Selected *News Day* and *The Herald* Articles

Table 1: A table presenting the language used to discuss Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa, his prophetic deeds, church, followers and Religious activities in selected *News Day* Articles (2012).

Catchy **Lexical items** employed to refer to Makandiwa, his church, his deeds, followers and religious activities in Selected *News Day* articles.

Examples	
Makandiwa	Breaking News: Makandiwa Foretells Turmoil!! (headline, 4/4/12) Prophet Makandiwa, leader and founder of the United Family International Church... (4/4/12) ... heads one of the fastest growing churches in the country...(4/4/12) ... the prophet (4/4/12) Charismatic church leader (26/09/12) Makandiwa admits wrongdoing. _(headline, 3/5/12)

	<p>Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa... (3/5/12) Makandiwa, Angel and their Ghanaian teacher attract interdenominational crowd to ManWorld Convention. (headline, 11/09/12) Charismatic prophets –Makandiwa and Uebert Angel (11/09/12) ... Powerful words from Makandiwa. (11/9/12) ... the high-flying church leaders in action. (11/9/12) ... attracts interdenominational crowds... (11/09/12) ... prophesied political chaos (4/4/12) ... urged all Zimbabweans to start praying for the country. (4/4/12) ... prophesied the imminent death of someone... (4/4/12) ... prophesied Makandiwa. (4/4/12) He further predicted that... (4/4/12) ... the prophet has declared... (4/4/12) Makandiwa's program restores sight to 103 patients. (headline, 26/09/12) ... Makandiwa has rolled out a free eye surgery (26/09/12) Makandiwa dares men. (headline, 1/9/12) Makandiwa has challenged men (1/9/12) Makandiwa challenged men to... (1/9/12) ...he said challenging men to...(01/09/12) ... Makandiwa chided men...(01/09/12) Makandiwa warned men ... (01/09/2012) transcended denominations ... (11/09/12) ... he taunted men... (11/09/12) ... graced the Man World convention. (11/9/12) Delivered (a sermon) (01/09/12) One of the fastest growing churches in the country... (4/4/12) UFIC has admitted (guilt) to irregularly acquiring huge tracts of land from Chitungwiza... (4/4/12). ... mega church... (3/05/2012)</p>
Makandiwa's deeds and religious activities	
Makandiwa's Church (UFIC)	
Makandiwa's Followers	<p>... men from different churches stampeded to watch (Makandiwa)... in action. (11/09/12) ... men... craning forward to have a feel of the powerful words from Makandiwa (11/09/12). One of the beneficiaries /Another beneficiary... (26/09/12) An estimated 100 000 UFIC members and followers are set to converge at the National Sports Stadium... (4/4/12).</p>

Table 2: A table presenting the language used to discuss Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa, his prophetic deeds, church, followers and Religious activities in selected Herald Articles (2012).

Catchy **Lexical items** employed to refer to Makandiwa, his church, his deeds, followers and religious activities in Selected *Herald* articles.

	Examples
Makandiwa	<p>... popular preacher Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa (6/10/12)</p> <p>...United Family International Church leader...(6/10/12)</p> <p>Prophet Makandiwa is famed for preaching of the word and prophetic and healing powers (6/10/12)</p> <p>...prominent people in the country ...(such as Makandiwa) (6/10/12)</p> <p>Makandiwa will not register (headline, 8/8/12)</p> <p>Speaking through his lawyers, ... Prophet Makandiwa said... (8/8/12)</p> <p>Makandiwa, Angel face arrest (headline, 10/7/12)</p> <p>Prominent prophets such as...Makandiwa and ... face arrest for...(10/7/12)</p> <p>Spirit Medium Challenges Makandiwa (headline, 15/9/12)</p> <p>A self-proclaimed spirit medium was manhandled by eight bouncers ... after challenging ... Makandiwa to a demonstration of power.... (15/09/2012)</p> <p>... he went to the Church to confront Prophet Makandiwa to reveal the source of his power. (15/09/2012)</p> <p>UNITED Family International Church founder Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa... (14/12/12)</p> <p>Prophet Makandiwa is claiming damages to the tune of US\$2 million, plus interest. (14/12/12)</p> <p>The Daily News made a retraction, which Prophet Makandiwa felt was half-hearted (14/12/12)</p>
Makandiwa's deeds	<p>Makandiwa sues paper over Kunonga case (headline, 14/12/12)</p> <p>Makandiwa ... has filed a US\$2 million lawsuit against Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe ... (14/12/12)</p>
Makandiwa's Church (UFIC)	<p>... have sued UFIC for allegedly encroaching into their commercial stands in constructing its multi-million-dollar chapel in Chitungwiza. (14/12/12)</p>
Makandiwa's Followers	<p>The bouncers... manhandled him (the spirit medium) before burning his red, white and black traditional robe and trying to baptise him in the name of Jesus (15/09/2012)</p>

Media representing Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa

The study analyzed the language used to depict Makandiwa in four categories:

Makandiwa:

A comparative analysis of the language used to describe Makandiwa in *News Day* and *The Herald* reveals contradictory messages. *News Day's* depictions Makandiwa denote some form of hero worship with words such as “leader”, “founder” “the prophet” (4/4/12) or “charismatic” (26/9/12), “high flying” (11/9/12) being employed to define him. Makandiwa is sensationalized in *News Day* and the use of the above mentioned phrases is deliberately meant to boost his ministry and personality. These phrases are meant to dramatise the success of Makandiwa as a prophet and the progress that he is making within his ministry. To attract the reader’s attention, *News Day* employs dramatic headlines, for example, in the headline entitled “Breaking news: Makandiwa Foretells Turmoil!!” *News Day* deliberately makes use of a dramatic tone that is sure to attract the audience’s attention as one would want to know the turmoil that is being predicted. The use of exclamation marks increases the suspense underlying the headline. It is as if the writer believes in Makandiwa’s prophecy and would like the readers to believe too. The headline entitled “Makandiwa admits wrongdoing” (3/5/12), testifies to the artifice that is within media production. Although the headline confirms that Makandiwa has done something wrong, the fact that he admits to this wrongdoing puts him on a certain pedestal which views him as a true son of God that does not shy away from admitting his guilt. One can be reminded of David the Israelite leader who conceded his wrong doings in the presence of Nathan the prophet. Consequently, this construction can be problematic because it can easily disintegrate into mere idolatry that lacks objectivity. *News Day* fails to acknowledge that as a person Makandiwa also has problems and weaknesses and these need to be acknowledged in order to come up with a balanced portrayal of the prophet. In any case, the articles do not go further than celebrating the prophet and offer readers an opportunity to gain insights into the substance and content of Makandiwa’s teachings and the controversies that have been generated by his ministry

The Herald refrains from the hero worship that is characteristic of *News Day*, instead there is some skepticism that accompanies *The Her-*

ald's representation of Makandiwa. *The Herald* desists from the use of words such as "prophet" when referring to Makandiwa and instead makes use of phrases such as "popular preacher", "famed for preaching of the word and prophetic and healing powers". There is a note of scepticism regarding Makandiwa's title of prophet and instead the writer prefers to acknowledge Makandiwa's competence in preaching. The reference to Makandiwa as popular reduces Makandiwa to a status of a celebrity which is at loggerheads with religious ethics and acts of service and humility. Headlines such as "Makandiwa will not register" (8/8/12) or "Makandiwa- Angel face arrest" somehow demean Makandiwa as a stubborn and unscrupulous prophet and this has the potential to discredit him and his activities.

Makandiwa's deeds and religious activities

News Day's portrayal of Makandiwa's deeds and religious activities reiterates the newspapers's worship of Makandiwa. Makandiwa's warning of turmoil and the imminent death of someone who deprived Zimbabwean people freedom (4/4/12) depicts Makandiwa's prophecy as "...the divine art act of informing people, including warnings and promises from God..." (Preus: 2001:86). *News Day* reveals how Makandiwa fulfills his role as a prophet by taking part in healing sessions such as restoring sight to blind patients (26/9/12). *News Day's* broadcast of Makandiwa's healing sessions confirms the importance of healing in the prophet's activities (Fernandez: 1978:209), and it is also meant to validate Makandiwa's status as a "true prophet".

The Herald seems to sing a different tune as far as Makandiwa's deeds and religious activities are concerned and there is a tendency to disregard Makandiwa as a man of God. Headlines such as "Makandiwa sues paper over Kunonga case" (14/12/12) or "Makandiwa-Angel face arrest" (10/7/12) remove Makandiwa from the pedestal that *News Day* has put on him and reduce him to human proportions. The two headlines depict Makandiwa as enmeshed in court battles and breaking the law, hence the looming arrest. Noteworthy is the fact that most of the articles in *The Herald* do not entirely focus on Makandiwa, they use Makandiwa's popularity to publicize state affairs and national issues. In the article entitled "Child named after Prophet Makandiwa" (6/10/12), there are only two sentences in which Makandiwa is mentioned while the rest of the article chronicles the First Lady Amai Grace Mugabe's charity work at the Ma-

zoe Children's home and the inroads that she made in creating the home. Thus while *News Day* seems to take up the role of Makandiwa's publicist, *The Herald* uses Makandiwa's fame to publicise national issues. It is as if *The Herald* is uncomfortable with fact that Makandiwa's popularity is a threat to the popularity of the head of state and 'first family.' Such a possibility would mean that modern prophets unwittingly subvert the hegemony of political leaders in the public sphere.

Makandiwa's church

News Day's depiction of the UFIC suggests that the church is souring high and there is no turning back. *News Day* enunciates Makandiwa's church with words such as "mega church" (3/5/12) or "fastest growing" (4/4/12), and these articulate the positive progress within the church and they also reflect the popularity of the church. In the article featured "Makandiwa admits wrong doing", *News Day* posits Makandiwa and his church within a victim status. The article reveals how the UFIC was allocated three stands from which to build a chapel instead of one that they had paid for. The article ends up lashing at local government corruption while protecting the image of the UFIC. *The Herald* also writes on the issue concerning Makandiwa's acquisition of land and reveals how the UFIC was sued by three residents from Chitungwiza for encroaching on to their commercial stands so as to construct a multi-million dollar chapel. The article featured "Makandiwa sues paper over Kunonga case", eradicates the UFIC's victim status as bestowed by *News Day* and instead views the UFIC as the victimizer. The article also insinuates some capitalist tendencies of the UFIC as it encroaches on other people's land while some people are struggling to get these stands. Consequently the differing views regarding the UFIC by the two newspapers show how the media gives selective accounts in order to suit their preferred positions.

Makandiwa's followers

Makandiwa's followers are also depicted differently in *News Day* and *The Herald*, with *News Day* focusing on the eagerness that is within Makandiwa's followers. *News Day* seems to suggest that Makandiwa has a huge following because his followers have benefited from his prophecy. Thus, when congregating, Makandiwa's followers "stampede" and "crane forward" (11/9/12) because they are enthusiastic and truly

believe in his preaching and prophetic work. Makandiwa appeals to his followers because they receive the favour that accompanies his sermons. Curiously, the news article does not proceed to articulate the substance of the sermon which engendered the ‘stampede’. On the contrary, *The Herald* regards Makandiwa’s followers as forceful and intense. In the piece “Spirit medium challenges Makandiwa” (15/9/12), Makandiwa’s guards herein, regarded as “bouncers”, manhandle a spirit medium who had challenged Makandiwa to a demonstration of power. In the process of being manhandled the spirit medium’s traditional robe is burnt and Makandiwa’s bouncers try to forcibly baptize him. The feature later on diverts to national issues when it explains the role played by spirit mediums in the war of liberation. By showing the important role played by spirit mediums, the article implies that Makandiwa and his followers have no regard for their history and national issues. Again this gives credence to the possibility that *The Herald* is uncomfortable with the fact that Makandiwa’s popularity could divert the public from nationalist discourse, and thus ‘starves’ readers of the substance of Makandiwa’s ministry by offering its preferred religio-political discourse. The religious tension that is pregnant in the encounter is not pursued in the article. One can say in most cases both newspapers largely focus on the banal, thus failing to afford readers an opportunity to learn and engage the role of Pentecostal prophets in contemporary socio-political discourses.

Possible Influences and Implications

This analysis shows that *News Day* and *The Herald* have opposing depictions of Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa and we argue that media ownership and control have a bearing on the media’s final content. The findings of discourse analysis reveal that *News Day*, a privately owned newspaper, and *The Herald*, a state owned newspaper, differ in their reportage of Makandiwa, with *News Day* venerating Makandiwa and what he stands for, while *The Herald* is skeptical of Makandiwa and instead uses his popularity to publicise state agendas. In the process there is not much critical public sphere debate because the two media houses seem to select and exclude information so as to meet their respective agendas. The study also argues that there are political influences at play that is why *News Day* seems to use Makandiwa to attack the government, while

The Herald uses Makandiwa to publicise state affairs. The study recommends that the media has to uphold its traditional role of informing, educating and entertaining, regardless of their ideological inclinations. This is the only way that ethical principles of journalistic practices may be observed. The fact that *News Day* seems to deify Makandiwa shows that it is not objective in its coverage because present day prophets are human after all and have to struggle between their own personal social needs and the spiritual needs of the public. *The Herald's* cynicism regarding Makandiwa is also overstated and has the potential to downplay the inroads that Makandiwa has made and the lives that he has changed.

However, this is not a simplistic public- private media binary, because the *Daily News*, (a privately owned media house), is much more biased against Makandiwa than *The Herald* as shown by the fact that the former is being sued by Makandiwa for character defamation – after publishing a headline that read: “Anglican Saga Sucks in Makandiwa.” In its defense, the *Daily News* claims that this headline was published ‘erroneously’ as it was meant to read as: Anglican Saga Sucks in Banks (*Daily News*, 14 April 2013). Curiously, in the context of our exploration, the *News Day* ran a scathing opinion piece by Conway Tutani exonerating Makandiwa and accusing the *Daily News* of seeking martyrdom status, after the latter ‘falsely’ claimed that Makandiwa was asking the Zimbabwe Media Commission to close the *Daily News*. This suggests other possible motivations for media bias beyond ideological orientations of both papers.

Another possible influence of media bias could be religious beliefs of individual journalists and powerful personalities in media house. If, for example, influential personalities in the media are members of mainline churches, they might influence decisions to publish hostile articles against Makandiwa. Conversely, the presence of pro Makandiwa influential figures in a media house could influence the publishing of hero worshipping articles. Of course, as we noted earlier on, bias for and against Makandiwa cannot be divorced from commercial interests. In the case of *the Herald*, sensational headlines and stories on Makandiwa could be a strategy to have human- centred stories to attract readers who do not agree with their politico-ideological orientation. At the same time, the *News Day* could be targeting followers of Makandiwa’s ministry whose numbers seem to be swelling on a daily basis in urban areas (Gunda, 2012). However, it is evident that there is need for more research to es-

establish other possible motivations for both negative and positive media constructs of Makandiwa's prophetic ministry. We now turn our attention to briefly examine possible implications of media bias on Pentecostal prophets.

Lamprooning 'powerful' religious personalities can result in serious religious partisanship or chauvinism (see Chari, 2010; Glascock et al, 2008). For instance, it has been alleged that members of Makandiwa's church burnt several copies of the *Daily News* in apparent protest against the paper's bias on Makandiwa. This shows that religion is such a powerful force which can influence members to act 'irrationally'. Interestingly, Chido Makunike, a prominent media columnist, suggests that the media has been 'asleep' by failing to provide robust critique of the activities of 'controversial' prophets like Makandiwa. For Makunike such lack of robust critiques can give rise to aggressive religious fundamentalism (Makunike, 2013). However, we have shown that such "robust" media critiques can influence or worsen religious fundamentalism if they are at least perceived to be biased.

At the same time, contrasting editorial practices on religious issues in the media have the potential to broaden discourses in the public sphere beyond the usual political discourses. The media is now awash with strong views for and against Makandiwa. Almost on a daily basis, each newspaper carries stories or opinion pieces from columnists and letters from readers. In a sense, Makandiwa has made his own contribution in redefining the media landscape in ways that can expand or complicate the role of religion in the Zimbabwean public sphere.

Conclusion

The chapter has analysed biased representations of Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa in two selected Zimbabwean daily newspapers. The study has shown that the selected newspapers, *News Day* and *The Herald*, have opposing depictions of Makandiwa and the study argues that these opposing views are best explained by the opposing agendas set by these newspapers. The two media houses employ opposing discourse in order to manufacture what people think about different aspects of Makandiwa. However biased, such media constructions usefully confirm the fact that Pentecostal prophets are asserting themselves in the public sphere and perhaps unsettling the hegemony of political leaders. The study recom-

mends media objectivity so as to observe ethical principles of journalistic practice in order to enhance the function of religion as a critical force in the public sphere debate.

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CHAPTER 17

Charity Manyeruke & Shakespear Hamauswa

Prophets and Politics in Zimbabwe

Abstract

In Zimbabwe, as is the case in almost all states, politics and religion are inextricably twined together. The role of the spirit mediums and the church throughout the pre-colonial and during the colonial era attest to this. This chapter unpacks the interface between prophets and politics in Zimbabwe. Prior to the 21st century, garment prophets were largely predominant in the country. The Johane Marange and Madzibaba Wimbo are cases in point. The current wave, which started around 2007, has seen the coming in on board of Pentecostal young male prophets such as Emmanuel Makandiwa, Uebert Angel, and Wutabwashe. International prophetic figures such as TB Joshua and Pastor Chris are also influencing Zimbabwean politics. Some of their prophecies have since sent shivers into the spines of politicians who are reacting mostly with anger. Unfortunately, such negative reactions are not in tandem with unprecedented increase in the participation of politicians at various church gatherings. In turn, prophets such as Makandiwa have participated at national gatherings such as the anti-sanctions campaign, leaving many questions regarding the relationship between politics and prophets in Zimbabwe. The study employs a longitudinal research design to examine the changing relationship between prophets and politics since 2000. However, to provide a foundation for the understanding of the current developments, the study provides a short survey of what has been happening in Zimbabwe before colonialism as well as during the colonial period. Documentary search was used to gather data from published documents such as newspapers, church documents, journal articles, books and internet sources.

Introduction

Since time immemorial, the relationship between religion and politics has always been a hotly contested issue. This research argues that in Zimbabwe, religion has been instrumental in guiding political decisions, even before the coming in of the white colonial powers to take control of the territory. This research interrogates the historical developments of prophets in Zimbabwe. The main thrust is on the emergence of Pentecostal prophets as compared to garment prophets. While the research locates the roots of prophetic development from the colonial period, it

specifically focuses on the post-colonial era – a period that marked the triumph and radical transformation of Christianity in the country. This study examines the emergence and development of Pentecostal prophets and their participation in Zimbabwean politics.

The chapter argues that although traditional religions continue to exist and to attract large followings, Christianity is increasingly becoming popular and transforming itself in the form of a self-renewal process. Not only have the prophets been important in the political affairs in the country, but they also have proved to be taking a prominent role even in the economic arena. Gunda (2010) noted instances when some political officials referred to prophets in the Bible. The first instance thus noted by Gunda was when “Dr Herbert Murerwa... and the Minister of Finance ...in his Budget speech in (2002)...referred to the prophet Jeremiah -in a plea to God, to help this country emerge from its self-inflicted economic morass” Gunda (2010) also noted the second instance when Dr Murerwa again ended the national budget presentation by quoting from 2 Corinthians “urging Zimbabweans to stay on course resolutely because their present tribulations were temporary.” The importance of prophets to the contemporary political discourse is not only evident through the actions of the present prophets but by the use of the words of the Biblical prophets in response to the current financial constraints facing the country. Even the political leaders acknowledge the importance of prophets to the challenges of the day.

Conceptual Framework

There is an assumed or real relationship between politics and religion. According to Karl Marx, “religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people,” (McLellan 1997:vi). This statement depicts a society that has become heartless while at the same time religion is trying to become that society’s heart. The transformation of prophetic activities as well as the predominance of Christianity in Zimbabwe is taking place at a time when Zimbabwe is undergoing deep economic, social and political crises. According to Marx, the purpose of religion is to create illusory fantasies for the poor. This is because economic realities prevent them from finding true happiness in this life, so religion tells them that this is fine because they will find true happiness

in the next life. McLellan (1997:vi) states that, for Karl Marx, when people are in distress and religion provides solace, just as people who are injured physically receive relief from opiate-based drugs. Despite economic stability that resulted from the inclusive government, which came into being in 2009, Zimbabwe is still characterised by economic and political crisis. Economic growth is still very low. The unemployment level is still high. Besides providing respite to distressed people, prophets and Christianity in general provides constant check to the politicians. Therefore, prophets are known for standing for highly expected and respected moral standards, even for the political leaders. Politics, which is generally viewed as the art of government, is usually exercised through immoral means. According to Stamps *et al* (2003: 1998), the word prophet indicates a special ability to see in the spiritual realm and foresee future events. The title suggests that the prophet was not deceived by the external appearance of things, but that he saw issues as they really were from the perspective of God himself.” The prophets can, therefore, foretell future events even political calamities or the downfall of political leaders. Thus, prophets and politicians are sometimes at loggerheads. On the other hand, prophets found themselves trading on similar path with political leaders on issues to do with national affairs such as distribution of resources and governance. Thus, the relationship between the prophets and politicians is in most cases an ambivalent one. This chapter , examines the role that prophetic figures, especially Pentecostal prophets, are playing in Zimbabwean politics.

Religion and Politics in Zimbabwe: A Historical Perspective

The Pre-colonial Period

Prior to colonialism African states had their own unique form of worship. Zimbabwe in particular had its own unique form of worship centred on spirit mediums and *mhondoros*. According to Pekeshe at (www.thepatriot.co.zw) “Religion must justify the times and support the economy.” Impliedly, religion from a historical perspective has been known to play a pivotal role in supporting the economy. Religion thus proved not to be an institution in isolation, but had a direct bearing on the political and socio-economic well-being of the people. Thus, prophetic developments are taking place with a country that always had a rich faith in the spiritual world. For instance, religion in southern Zim-

babwe had the form of Mwari worship. This was evident in the economic activities that the spirit mediums were guiding. According to Pekeshe, at (www.thepatriot.co.zw) “To support Great Zimbabwe’s agriculture and trade economy, religion of the time, Mwari worship was dominated by rain-making protocols and metaphors.” Pekeshe further notes that, “Traditions tell us that the priestly dynasty that led the religion was the Dziva-Hungwe dynasty.” Religion in this instance played a crucial role in sustaining the economy at Great Zimbabwe.

On the other hand, religion was vital in the political affairs in northern Zimbabwe. Pekeshe posits that, “The institution of Mhondoro Mutota was critical politically... Mhondoro Mutota was keeper of the royal chronicles.” Thus, as Pekeshe further notes, it became a test in northern Zimbabwe that any genuine Mhondoro claimant had to name all the Mutapas and significant historical events in the Mutapa state. Therefore, the Mhondoro Mutota was crucial in keeping the history of the Mutapa kingdom. “These Mhondoros were considered to be messengers with direct access to Mwari...this strengthened the divinity of the Mutapas and Mwari worship had to be done through these Mhondoros,” (Pekeshe). Religion thus has manifested itself with a crucial role in the political affairs of pre-colonial Zimbabwean states.

The Colonial Period

During the colonial period, African Independent Churches (AICs) emerged alongside the role of spirit mediums in opposing colonial rule. The African churches mainly based their political resistance on spiritual backing while the western churches had been largely influenced by principles of democracy, learnt and experienced from their mother countries. This mainly took place in South Africa. Due to apartheid in South Africa, some of the church leaders moved to the other surrounding nations. This explains the rise of these AICs in southern Rhodesia also. According to Anderson (2001:114), “Both the Ethiopian and the Zionist churches were formed by migrant labourers returning from South Africa.” One of the churches established in Southern Rhodesia was the African Apostolic Church of Johane Marange, (AACJM). Anderson (2001:116) notes that “Johane (John) Marange “received frequent dreams and visions from the time he was six years old. In 1932, an audible voice told him he was “John the Baptist, an Apostle...” thus he became the leader of the AACJM. It is important to note that during this time,

prophets or individual church leaders did not have impact only in their country of origin, but also had impact in the surrounding nations. According to Anderson (2001:117), “Marange in thirty years preached as far as Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi and Central Congo, exorcising evil spirits and baptising thousands...” It can be noted that the prophets were endowed with healing powers. The prophets also had other denominations in the other surrounding countries. Johane Marange continues to exert influence on Zimbabwean politics. The recurrent visit of Zimbabwean politicians to his church shrine in Manicaland shows an inextricable relationship between prophets and politics. In fact, religion and politics are inextricably linked together. The Johane Marange Apostolic Church members have pledged to support the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front ZANU PF during successive elections since the attainment of independence. This support reveals a clear approval of politicians by the church.

Concurrently, Johane Masowe also found his own church. He found a church called the Apostolic Sabbath Church of God. He lived from 1913-1973. Due to colonialism, the whites subjected Zimbabweans to repressive rule. The indigenous people lived devoid of many of their rights, including the right to vote. They were driven off their fertile land and placed to drought prone areas. This annoyed prophetic figures such as Johane Masowe who preached freedom to his followers. This meant that the prophet encouraged his people to resist the oppressive policies of the whites and live independently. According to Anderson (2001:118), Johane Masowe urged his followers “not to carry identification documents, not plough their lands, or not work for the whites. Accordingly, the church being led by the prophets also longed for freedom, they wanted to live without the whites in their midst. However, their hope was anchored on divine power to see them to an independent Zimbabwe. On the other hand, the nationalist leaders used force to fight the colonial masters. Thus, what differed was the means employed in resisting the whites by the nationalist leaders and the prophet and his followers. Nevertheless, the prophets and the freedom fighters came to converge in terms of longing for an independent country without the repressive laws of the whites. As such, the convergence of prophets and politics at certain national issues is not new to the 21st century developments.

On the economic front, Anderson (2001: 118) noted that the people of Johane Masowe “engaged in various crafts and industries, including

basket making, they were known as the Korsten Basket-makers.” Researchers visited some of these people in Chitungwiza who are still engaged in such activities. According to Jieye (2009), Marx believed that religion helps to numb the pain the people feel. It was in the height of Zimbabwe’s political turmoil between 2000 and 2008 that the prophets emerged giving hope to the people to help them endure the hard times until a better political environment was realised. This is in stark contrast with the colonial prophets who like Johane Masowe who taught their followers to resist colonialism. The current Pentecostal prophets teach their followers that their lives will not be determined by changes in the political or economic environment.

The Post-colonial Period

The attainment of political independence continued to be viewed by many as a fulfilment of prophetic utterances. As a result, prophetic voices continue to occupy a significant space in African politics. However, the prophets had widened their scope to attend to the ever-flaring challenges facing the country. Zimbabwe has encountered a multitude of challenges that have emanated from the political, social and economic spheres. The period 2000 witnessed the rise of a strong opposition party in Zimbabwe which shook the hearts of the then ruling party by having a majority in the referendum that was held that year. The year 2002 also came with presidential elections. In the face of this strong opposition, the ZANU PF government made many attempts to retain its stronghold as the party in power. This meant that the party officials would use any available means to ensure that they win the elections. This scenario has also repeated itself in the subsequent elections that have occurred in the country. Political parties, (the ruling and the opposition) resorted to the apostolic sect to garner votes in every possible way. Musendekwa (2011:50) noted that, Madzibaba Godfrey Nzira who had been pardoned by the President “coerced members of the apostolic sect and other churches in Muzarabani to rally behind ZANU PF ahead of possible elections in 2011.” Musendekwa (2011:50) also noted that Madzibaba Nzira claimed that “ President Mugabe is the appointed king of Zimbabwe whose authority cannot be challenged.” This clearly indicates that prophets subordinated themselves to specific political parties. Stating that the party exhibit divine actions and should not be challenged is propaganda in its raw form used by prophets to support their favourable

political parties. This shows that prophets can play a crucial role in propping up the legitimacy of political leaders. There is a tendency among the people of Zimbabwe to respect leaders whom they believe to be anointed by God. Therefore, prophets can either approve or denounce political leaders. The prophets can therefore play an important role in propping up political legitimacy among political leaders. Joyce (2006: 10) argues that, legitimacy is a quality that confers acceptance of the actions undertaken by the government from those who are subject to them.

Since 2000, however, there was a phenomenal increase in visits made by political leaders to the apostolic gatherings. Musendekwa (2011:55) noted that, "President Mugabe visited the ZCC shrine where he officially opened an 18 000 seater conference hall at Mbungu Estate." In return, Nehemiah Mutendi the leader of ZCC "praised the president, assured support from his huge following, and declared President Mugabe a leader sent from God." Furthermore, Musendekwa (2011:53) notes, "the president and a delegation from his political party graced the Apostolic Church of Marange Passover festival putting on religious vestments." The politicians together with some prophets took the opportunity to denounce opposition political leaders. The opposition leaders such as the Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai also visited prophetic figures to consult about their political careers. According to Chibaya (2012:page) Mhondoro based, Sydney Mabhiza a bishop of the St John Apostolic Church insulted Morgan Tsvangirai by saluting him as a "tea boy." In addition, on the same platform, ZANU PF National Chairperson Simon Khaya Moyo took the platform to denounce MDC leadership by saying, "If one does not know the history of this country then it is quite impossible for that person to rule this country." Prophets appear to have forgotten their area of operation or it may be that some Zimbabwean prophets are aspiring politicians.

Pentecostal prophets are coming with all sorts of "cleansing process" to restore the original role of religion in the country. In their cleansing agenda, prophets are saying the original position of the church was to deliver the truth, to denounce corrupt leaders and to remain neutral. However, the prophets are responding differently to challenges facing the nation. Concerning, the issue of economic sanctions, Prophet Wutaunashe praised ZANU PF's land reform programme while criticising the European Union and the United States for imposing sanctions on certain political leaders. Wutaunashe represents the prophets who de-

veloped a close relationship with ZANU PF since the days of the liberation struggle. It can be noted that socio-economic and political conditions influences the position and direction of prophets.

This kind of relationship between prophets and political leaders may serve to explain the presidential pardon that was granted to Madzibaba Nzira whom Zakeyo says “had only served only a fraction of a 32 year prison sentence for a 2003 rape conviction.”

The relationship between prophets and the political leaders has not always been rosy. For one to conclude that the prophets in Zimbabwe are subordinates of political leaders would be an unjust assessment. Like the Biblical Amos who stood denouncing the malpractices done by the leaders and calling forth for justice to prevail, Zakeyo (2008: 13) notes that, “...some remarkable individual church leaders though not necessarily identical to Pentecostal prophets have risen to the occasion to stand up for democratic governance and human rights...” This has come through the fearless comments from “the former Archbishop Pius Ncube who has been an outspoken critic of the ZANU PF government, castigating it openly for suppressing democracy and presiding over economic ruin which has led to poverty.” However, the challenge that is left is how many such brave voices will be heard in the country. For real change to be effected by the prophetic voice there is need for the voices to be heard from many corners of the country. It then remains a challenge for the Pentecostal prophets who seem to have taken the button stick from the garment prophets to stand up for justice and justice only. While garment prophets are still effective, their challenge to issues of bad governance, corruption and injustice are minimal.

The rise of Pentecostal prophets and its impact on politics

There has been a noticeable transformation of the prophetic voice in Zimbabwe. It is partly inspired by the aforementioned historical developments and what is happening in other African countries where the church has played a critical role in encouraging a more just and peaceful continent.” The period 2009 has seen the sprouting of many churches in Zimbabwe being led by individual prophets. These prophets have attracted many followers. Amongst the prophets who have recently emerged in Zimbabwe are Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa, of the United Family Interdenominational Ministries (UFIM), and Prophet Uebert

Uebert Angel Mudzanire of the Spirit Embassy Ministries. These prophets have arisen at a time of deep economic crisis coupled with a fragile political environment. These prophets have also come at a time when the garment prophets have failed to proffer tangible solutions to the challenges facing the country. As such, they appear as reinvigorating the biblical position of the prophetic role, where the prophets would guide politicians not the other way round.

While the Pentecostal prophets seem to be ardent ambassadors of pure religion, some are being manipulated. The political impasse that characterises the political arena is also evident in the prophetic field. According to Moyo (2012), “Makandiwa became one of the several high-profile religious leaders to join the anti-sanctions campaign. Others include Anglican faction leader Norbert Kunonga, Pentecostal Assembly of Zimbabwe's Trevor Manhanga and African Apostolic Church leader Paul Mwazha.” The Pentecostal prophets have also taken a side, whereby they are siding with the Revolutionary party and defining the challenges faced in Zimbabwe through the mirror of neo-colonialism. One wonders whether by following the path taken by garment prophets, the Pentecostal ones will be able to meaningfully contribute to the problems being faced by the nation. It may be that religion will continue to give false hope, continue giving opium that numbs the pain and not taking away the pain. This kind of thinking in relation to the role of religion was put to test by Prophet Makandiwa the leader of UFIC when he declared one of their gathering a judgment day. Nyoni (2012: 1) noted that prior to the judgment day “Makandiwa set tongues wagging when he revealed that his followers' enemies would be destroyed on the Day of Judgment. As a result the judgement night attracted almost 100 000 delegates. Among those who attended include Minister of Media and Information and Publicity, Minister Webster Shamu, ZANU PF central committee member Nyasha Chikwinya, Tourism Minister Walter Mzembe and Shurugwi South Member of Parliament A Ndlovu. This shows that prophetic voice can no longer be ignored but it is even set to influence the minds of the politicians. The only worry is that the prophets can be used to advance the agenda of the politicians.

However, it is important to note that there is another crop of Pentecostal prophets who are refusing to be manipulated by politicians. At the eve of the New Year, researchers visited various Pentecostal churches to understand their message regarding the general direction of Zimbab-

wean lives. At Rainbow Ministries in Warren Park, the leader of the church noted that, the lives of Zimbabweans will not be determined by the economic or political developments in the country but by the will of God. Church followers were being exhorted to remain faithful to God.

To take it from another perspective, the current crop of Pentecostal prophets serves as a reflection of the deep economic crisis in Zimbabwe. Unemployment rate is ever increasing; the distributed land is yet to be fully utilised and many people have still not been allocated land. In the face of these challenges, people tend to turn to seek Messianic solutions. To confirm this, Kwaramba (2011) has noted that “people are stressed by the economic hardships of the times and their politicians are providing no answers. So at the end of the day they follow prophets who at least pretend to offer solutions to their problems.” Mutingwende in Chibaya (2012) further notes that, “The new crop of emerging prophets is capitalising on the people’s desperate situation through promising them instant riches...” It appears that while the people are seeking for Messianic solutions from the prophets, the prophets themselves are seeking for wealth from the people. The office of the prophet has recently emerged to be a vocation for wealth seeking. According to Kaulemu (2010:2), “Most of the leaders who claim to be Christians are pre-occupied by struggles for power, wealth and influence.” Lamenting on this troubling situation, President Mugabe noted that in some churches one hears that a husband and a wife are prophet and prophetess respectively. Thus, many have arisen taking advantage of the deep economic crisis in the country to further their own greed ambitions. This is just but a reflection of the ailing economy. Presumably, if this crisis is to end, most of these prophets are bound to evaporate from the prophetic scene. Mutingwende in Chibaya (2012) prophesied that, “The sprouting Pentecostal churches thriving on preaching the gospel of prosperity in times of economic hardships were set to falter in stable economies.” However, during an interview a pastor from Evangelical Church of Zimbabwe noted that people are not aware about the role Satanism is playing to offering false wealth. As such, the pastor noted that the church is also countering the dangerous developments of Satanism by offering true and pure means of acquiring wealth. At another Pentecostal Church visited in Highfield high-density suburb, during the research, the prophet noted that they do not force people to pay tithes and offerings, for God is looking for cheerful givers. The prophet even indicated that even if the people were to abandon him, God would still provide for his necessities.

Nevertheless, false and greed prophets are also emerging taking the advantages of people's predicament to acquire wealth. In short, religion in the political affairs in Zimbabwe has thus become a balm to the troubled mind, a source of hope to the desperate person, and a source of wealth to the cunning prophets.

International Prophets and their impact on Politics in Zimbabwe

The political landscape of the 21st century has seen the coming in of new actors in the political affairs of countries. Prophets have not only been confined to national politics but have had their arms stretched to the international arena. These prophets have come at a time when the world is facing vast challenges. These challenges are of a political, economic, social and environmental nature. The relative peace that has of late been enjoyed by some countries, especially African has been disturbed by the conducting of elections which have proved to be contentious. Economically, the challenges faced by the western countries have overspilled to impact on the Less Developed Countries. International prophets have thus come at a time when nations are hard -hit with the above-mentioned challenges. TB Joshua is one of the prophets who has sent the world reeling with his prophecies.

Peace and security concerns have been more prominent in this era as they were during the colonial period. This can be explained by various factors. The international community has been of late concerned about human rights violations. The violent nature of some elections that have been conducted has threatened the peace that has been prevailing in some countries. Rebels with "regime change" agenda have also been a threat to peace. Also, border issues have ignited wars and other disputes have been calmed when they were at the brink of wars. According to (www.zimeye.org) Apostolic Faith Church leader, Paul Mwazha claimed that, "The moment I set my foot on Pakistan soil there will be peace in that land." This serves to point that prophets are attempting to understand the problems faced in countries from a religious perspective. How the presence of the man of God will translate to peace in the country is not clear. Time will tell how the divine power as preached and advocated by the prophets will transform the acute challenges that are rocking and ravaging nations. Does this however, serves to showcase the difficulty

that is being faced by political leaders in diagnosing and proffering of workable solutions to these challenges?

Elections are at the heart of democracy. An acceptable electoral triumph legitimises the hand that holds power. Elections have come to be so important to the extent that the international community act as a referee to a country with elections. According to Zvomuya (2012) “T.B Joshua predicted... John Atta Mills’ electoral triumph in Ghana in 2009 and more recently Francois Hollande's ascension to the French throne.” These predictions have made this prophet popular in the political arena especially politics in Africa. Many politicians are said to have visited the man of God seeking blessings on their political career. Amongst the African leaders who are said to have visited the man of God include Botswana's leader of the opposition in parliament Botsalo Ntuane. Mr Ntuane is quoted to have said, “I have been following T B Joshua stories for a while now, but after he predicted the death of Bingu wa Mutharika's death, I am convinced the man is worth a visit.” Politicians, especially in Africa, now have made pilgrimages to Nigeria to consult the man of God. It can be seen that politics is never going to be a complete game without prophets. According to www.malawidemocrat.com other political leaders that have visited the popular prophet Temitope Babatunde Joshua include, “Ghana's Atta Mills, President Omar Bongo of the Republic of Gabon, Goodwill Zwelitini, king of the Zulu from South Africa, ex-President Fredelick Chiluba of Zambia, Andre Kolimba, former President of the Central African Republic...” The list can be endless. It is interesting to note that Marx had argued that religion is meant to create illusory fantasies for the poor. Marx's understanding of religion serves to give a better understanding when religion is being used to pacify the people to endure the hardships they may be encountering. However, the challenge comes when one tries to use Marx's understanding to explain this increased reliance of political leaders on prophets.

Contemporary prophets have also been messengers of death. The prophet Isaiah in the Bible once carried the death message to King Hezekiah. In the contemporary scene, Prophet T.B Joshua has shocked the life of many political leaders by his death predictions. The Nigerian prophet took away the sleep of many presidents when he “predicted on February 8 this year the death of a southern African president within 60 days,” (www.zimeye.org). Subsequently, Malawian President Bingu wa Mutharika died within the stated period. According to Zvomuya (2012)

Joshua mentioned that “this leader would die on Thursday Mutharika died on Thursday.” However, this did not go well with some political leaders. Zvomuya further noted that on Mutharika's death, Jonathan Moyo argued that, “T B Joshua's involvement in this tragedy smacks more of a plot than a prophecy.” T.B Joshua also predicted the death of Levy Mwanawasa. According to Mwanza, Joshua “predicted the death of president Levy Mwanawasa a month before it happened.” In addition to the above mentioned prophecies, www.zimeye.org, highlighted that, on the 26th of April 2009, the Nigerian prophet prophesied that he saw “somebody being rushed from the hospital but from the hospital, he did not come back.” In fulfilment of the prophecy, on 23 May 2009, “former South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun was rushed to the hospital where he was declared dead after tragically throwing himself off a mountain.” One way of testing whether a prophet is a false prophet or not is to assess whether his prophecies will happen or not. As for this test, not only the writers of this paper can confirm that the prophet indeed passed the test but everyone else observing these events will do so. The increased reliance of politicians on prophets can thus be explained from this background. Whilst others question the authenticity of the powers of the prophet in terms of the sources of his powers, others have made numerable pilgrimages to Nigeria. A prophet is indeed amidst the political leaders.

Time may fail one when outlining the prophecies that have been made by Temitopo Balogun (TB) Joshua. The other prophecies as highlighted by www.zimeye.org include the Berlusconi attack. According to www.zimeye.org, in December 2009, Joshua said, “I see an attempt on one of the presidents of one of the great nations...pray for protection. I see a very narrow escape...very narrow...too narrow.” Subsequently, on the same evening, “an attempt was made on Italian president Silvio Berlusconi's life when he was assaulted with a metallic object at a campaign rally at Milan. He narrowly escaped with minor injuries.” Other politicians have responded by arguing that the accuracy of such prophecies or predictions are as a result of conspiracy. One may argue that the time factor within which the prophecy was fulfilled clearly shows that this prophet had the information of what was transpiring in Milan. If one can argue thus, how then can the prophecy on the elections in Nigeria be explained? Again, according to www.zimeye.org, T B Joshua prophesied concerning the Nigerian elections that, “I am hearing the word extension. It has to do with this country. I'm hearing, extension for ac-

countability.” According to the same source, many who heard about the prophecy even “scoffed” at the prophecy stating that constitutionally it was not possible for the elections to be extended. Notwithstanding that scepticism, “the much anticipated 2011 Nigerian parliamentary elections were pushed forward not once but three times due to circumstances beyond their control.” Again, if one was to take the time factor for the fulfilment of the prophecies it will be difficult to give reasons for doubting the prophecy on the Nigerian elections. There might be room for doubting the Berlusconi attack, but then what other factors can be used in discrediting the election prophecy. Indeed the 21st century has had the coming in of prophets as another actor in the political affairs, whether as conspirators or genuine men of God.

Prophets have not only been confined to death predictions but have also extended their scope to proffering solutions on how some of the challenges facing nations can be transformed into opportunities. According to Zvomunya (2012) T B Joshua emphasised on the importance of “past leaders” on the political-social and economic well-being of nations. The prophet is said to have said, “some of these leaders have remained of noble imprints and saliently progressive orientations.” More so, Zvomunya (2012) noted that the prophet posited that, “They have performed well in the past...are political visionaries, planners, strategists, foremost thinkers and activists, whose potentials should not remain wasted forever, but who should as they live, continue to influence the tempo and direction of change in Africa.” These words of wisdom are of paramount importance if development is to be realised in Africa. In as much as there is sense in what the man of God posited, there are shortcomings that also come with his suggestions. The first one would be that some of these leaders might have not served well their countries. The other one will be that it is difficult for most leaders when they will be out of office to go against their party's ideology. There are some instances when these ex party leaders will be aware that their party is wrong on certain issues, in the face of those differences, these leaders may be prompted to remain loyal to their party. The writers of this paper seek to argue that these are some of the challenges with politics in Africa. One may choose to be loyal to the party till death takes him or her away.

Conclusion

This research indicates that religion has been instrumental in both socio-economic and political lives of Zimbabweans. The pre-colonial states have exercised their religion through the spirit mediums and the *mhondoros*. The colonial period witnessed the emergence of the African Independent Churches. The prophets or church leaders who came on the scene were Samuel Mutendi of the ZCC, Johane Marange of the AACJM and Johane Masowe of the ASCG. Among other things, these prophets opposed colonial rule by refusing to work for the whites and engaged in their own income generating projects such as basket making and making iron materials. It is from this backdrop that the apostolic church has established links with the nationalist leaders. Their shared longing for independence has been a tie that has tied these two together even to the present state. The attainment of independence came as a fulfilment of prophetic utterances thereby sustaining the office of the prophets. The church continues to attract huge followings thereby becoming a rich ground for political campaigns. In turn, the church leaders have openly assured the support of their members to the political leaders.

The rise of Pentecostal prophets in Zimbabwe is being attributed partly to the economy that is not performing well as well as to the failure of other religious groups and tradition in offering real solutions to the challenges afflicting the nation. Historically, people have been known to seek Messianic solutions amidst the challenges they may be encountering. The spirit mediums have been prominent in the early resistance to colonial rule. Later the garment prophets joined them. The Pentecostal prophets are also coming at the height of the unsolved challenges by the garment prophets. Thus, another way of determining how a country is faring can be an assessment of the emergence of prophets. On the other hand, this office of the prophets has appeared to be a vocation of seeking wealth especially by the false prophets.

As a way of recommendation, if Pentecostal prophets are to be effective in providing workable solutions to the challenges facing the country, they should not be aligned or subject themselves to any political party but to the national cause without being manipulated. This comes from an understanding that the garment prophets are compromised because of their inability to transform their relationship with the nationalist leaders in the face of the changing political environment. The unity govern-

ment calls for objectivity on the part of the prophets, not biased responses. Historically, when there were no opposition parties in the country, it was not problematic for them to openly support the revolutionary party. However, in as much as this paper advocates for neutrality in the way the prophets operates, it also acknowledges that history indeed binds the *Vapositori* sector to the freedom fighters.

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CHAPTER 18

Tapiwa Praise Mapuranga, Ezra Chitando & Masiwa Ragies Gunda

Studying the United Family International Church in Zimbabwe

The Case for applying multiple approaches to the study of religion and religious phenomena

Introduction

From 2010, Zimbabwe was reeling under a prophetic wave which led to the popularity of such figures as Emmanuel Makandiwa and his United Family International Church (UFIC). UFIC has emerged as one of the most significant religious movements in Zimbabwe in the past three years. The upsurge in prophets and prophetic activity in Zimbabwean Christianity requires careful analysis. Prophetic activities have been present in Zimbabwe from the rise of the African Initiated Churches (AICs) in 1930s and were adopted and adapted by mainstream Pentecostal churches such as the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa, Forward in Faith (ZAOGA FIF) and the Family of God (FOG) Church. However, prophetic activity scaled new heights owing to the great charismatic renewal around 2007 and 2008 which saw the birth of indigenous mega-churches (Gunda 2012:342) led by individuals christening themselves “man of God,” “prophet,” and “the anointed one of God.”¹

¹ These titles are widely used by members of Pentecostal churches to refer to the central authority in the respective churches. Individuals such as Ezekiel Guti, Andrew Wutawunashe are among the pioneers of this labelling. In the contemporary situation, the “gospel of prosperity” preachers have become the major recipients of these titles. Their followers call them as such and they frequently (explicitly and implicitly) hint at their holiness, chosenness and anointedness. Figures like Makandiwa, Angel, Wutabwashe, Chipunza, Passion and many others belong to this latter group of mega-church superstars who label themselves and are labelled by their followers with these titles and many others including “papa” for father.

According to Phiri (2012:6), “within a relatively short period of time Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa has established one of the biggest Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe.” The UFIC continues to receive a lot of attention, uproar and intense media coverage. For example, almost every day in the months of March and April (2013), there were articles on Makandiwa in most of the daily newspapers (see also the chapter by Mateveke, Mukenge and Chivandikwa in this volume) . The movement has attracted considerable media attention because of its capacity to attract large crowds, sometimes alleged to be large gatherings of over a hundred thousand for a single event. For example, the “Judgement Night” event at the National Sports Stadium in Harare during Easter of 2012 was supposedly over-subscribed, with people sitting in the terraces and on the pitch, giving rise to claim that there were one hundred thousand people. While the figures cannot be independently verified, it is not disputed that multitudes of people have flocked to these events. Since the UFIC has become such a significant part of the religious, social, economic and political landscape of Zimbabwe, it is necessary for scholars to investigate its history and character. One of the major challenges, however, lies in selecting the most appropriate approach that would do justice to such a complex phenomenon. We are, therefore, under no illusion as to what is possible, we are aware that the methods and approaches we propose here may not exhaust these complex organisms. We, therefore, take this as a step in addressing the question of method.

This study contends that employing multiple approaches to the study of the UFIC is likely to yield more effective results than applying one exclusive approach. It explores how biblical studies approaches, religious studies approaches as well as theological and feminist approaches would facilitate a deeper understanding of this church. It argues that these approaches to the study of religion and sacred texts must be understood as complementary. The chapter maintains that the separation between “biblical studies” and “theology” on the one hand and “religious studies” on the other is artificial. The separation between these can be traced back to developments in modern Germany where biblical studies or *Biblische Theologie* now widely understood to be *Bibelwissenschaft* was and continues to be a discipline under Faculties of theology (Catholic or Protestant) while religious studies or *Religionswissenschaft* was and remains a discipline under social sciences or humanities faculties. The fundamental difference between *Biblische Theologie* and *Bibelwissenschaft* lay in their emphases; the former appreciated the religious and theologi-

cal nuances of the text, while the latter paid attention to the history of the text like any other text. This German tradition has been central to the development and understanding of religious studies and biblical studies in Zimbabwe, especially *Bibelwissenschaft*.² We argue in this chapter that it is profitable to find the common ground among the three approaches. This is particularly true where the Bible is studied not simply as literature but as sacred (religious) literature seen as giving Christianity (a religion) its grounding. It argues that both biblical studies and religious studies must be utilized to clarify religious phenomena such as prophecy. The phenomenon of prophecy itself demands this kind of approach because it is a contemporary religious phenomenon, yet the believers, including the leading figures like Makandiwa, understand themselves as following in the footsteps of biblical prophets such as Elijah and Elisha (Mabhunu 2010:70, Gunda 2012:343).

The United Family International Church: Background and insights into methodological complications

Founded by Emmanuel Makandiwa, the United Family International Church (UFIC) started off as a lunch hour Interdenominational Ministry in late August 2008 in Harare, Zimbabwe's capital city. The fellowship began by using the Anglican Cathedral Hall, along Nelson Mandela Avenue. Due to a huge response, the fellowship moved to the bigger State Lottery Hall at the corner of Rezende Street and Robert G. Mugabe Way in Harare. Even the larger Hall was soon small such that people were forming an overflow and following proceedings from under the foot bridge which crosses over Julius Nyerere Way linking L. Takawira and Innez Terez streets. This forced the Ministry to be moved to the City Sports Center, which continued to be the main place of worship for the UFIC at the time of writing (Phiri 2012). The founder was himself a Pastor in the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe (AFM) until he launched his UFIC. He was/is regarded as a highly charismatic young pastor.

What attracts the followers to this church among other things is the gospel of prosperity, sometimes called the "health and wealth" gospel or the

² In order to appreciate this understanding, it is interesting to read the "Biblical Studies responses to Canaan Banana's call for a New Bible in Mukonyora, I et al (eds), "Re-Writing" the Bible: The Real Issues, Gweru: Mambo Pr., 1993.

“faith gospel.” While the gospel itself has origins in the United States of America, where it may have developed as an apology for wealth already acquired, especially under questionable moral environments (Koch 2009:3), its context in Zimbabwe has changed. Togarasei (2011:336-7) argues that widespread poverty across the African continent may explain why charismatic Pentecostalism is the fastest growing brand of Christianity in Africa, especially because it is seen as promising wealth and health to those who do not already have it. This explains why two of the defining characteristics of the ministry of Makandiwa are: his supposed ability to perform ‘miracles’ and his proclamation of ‘prophecies,’ especially as they effect physical and spiritual healing to the afflicted. His supposed ability to perform miracles that can lead to believers becoming materially rich has resulted in significant controversies between believers and skeptics (Ngwenya 2011, Mawarire 2011).

Amongst the controversial miracles, the prophet is alleged to have raised the dead, enabled a barren woman to conceive and deliver within three days, and most recently (early 2013), gold and diamonds are alleged to have miraculously appeared in congregants’ pockets and handbags, while miracle money was allegedly deposited in bank accounts as well as in pockets of followers attending service (ZBC News 5/02/2013, Mthombeni 2013, Majuru 23/05/2013). While the ‘miracles’ and ‘prophecies’ remain controversial among Zimbabweans regarding their authenticity, it is apparent that prophets like Makandiwa “see their functions and mandate as biblical, that their prophecies and what they do are authenticated by the Bible, the Word of God” (Gunda 2012:344). Not only do these prophets use the Bible, they encourage and instill a reading culture among their followers who must read the Bible as well as other pieces of literature, especially those written by the prophet or other approved “men of God” who share the same perspective as the Prophet.

African Christianity prides itself as being essentially biblical Christianity because of the emphasis it places on the Word of God. At a time when the white messenger (the missionary) was being rejected across Africa, the Bible was being embraced as the authentic Word of God! Africans, according to Mbiti (1986:26), were hearing their stories being retold in the Bible. The importance of the prophet (such as Makandiwa) today is that he interprets the biblical text and makes it accessible to his followers both in word and deed. Prophetic narratives among other biblical narratives are given a new lease of life by these prophets. The

prophets proclaim the Word of God to their followers, highlighting not what God did for ancient Israelites, but what God is doing and will continue to do for those who believe today. These prophets actualize the Bible. Similarly, the prophets also act out the Bible such that they themselves become a continuation of the biblical narrative while legitimizing the biblical text. As Gunda (2012:347-48) observes, prophetic narratives and other biblical texts are widely used by these prophets in Zimbabwe such that:

[T]he narratives serve to legitimize what contemporary prophets are doing, the show of power through predictions, miracles and healings. The texts are also legitimized by the prophets who do things to show that the unbelievable is actually believable. These texts show that Israelite prophets were understood as representatives of Yahweh, the God of Israel, they were set apart to act as a privileged channel of communication between man and the supernatural. They were mouthpieces of Yahweh. To this, contemporary Christian prophets in AICs and Pentecostal-Charismatic movements place themselves as being in the line of these great Israelite prophets.

This 'power' in terms of biblical interpretation and biblical actualization gives the prophet ultimate authority over his followers.

In terms of the quest for approaches to investigate these new movements, these observations raise two fundamental questions from a biblical studies perspective: how do these prophets and their followers interpret the Bible? In other words, what exegetical and hermeneutical techniques and principles are being used in these movements? The second level of inquiry has to focus on the intersection of the understanding of the Bible and the obtaining social and historical environment within which the movement has developed. In other words, can a socio-historical approach assist us in further understanding their understanding of biblical narratives? It is also apparent that these approaches from a biblical studies perspective cannot exhaust all there is to these movements, which are not simply biblical but religious. There are historical (history of religions) questions that require attention and these relate to the emergence and growth of specific Pentecostal movements such as the UFIC. In addition, there are also sociological, psychological, phenomenological and gender dimensions that must be explored in order for one to get a fuller and more rounded picture of the UFIC. In noting these approaches, we are simply reiterating our earlier position that we

think no one approach will be enough to understand a complex movement such as UFIC.

Multidisciplinary Approaches to studying a New Religious Movement: The case for UFIC

As intimated above, we are advocating a multidisciplinary approach to the study of new religious movements such as the UFIC. By multidisciplinary approach, we mean a deliberate collaboration by specialists from different disciplines. While we are all products of specialized studies, even within departments of religious studies, we are convinced that bridges must be built between and among different disciplines such as biblical studies, theological studies and mainstream religious studies. This call is an acknowledgment of the complexity of these new movements, with their vibrant deployment of sacred texts, both ancient and contemporary. The same movements are equally engaged in multiple rituals and rites of passage, acting on the psyche of the multitude of the followers and have become, over a short space of time, living social organisms. Gender relations in these churches must be investigated; for example, is the submissive wife being extolled or does the wife of the prophet assert herself as a companion and partner or a prophetess in her own right? There is so much that surrounds these movements that a single hole to peep through will only show a tiny fraction of what lies inside. Our response, therefore, is to propose a raft of approaches that should be used in a complementary manner in order to expose a bigger part of that which makes these movements tick. We turn on to the possible methods and approaches applicable to the study of the UFIC. We start by examining the role of biblical studies perspectives.

Biblical Studies Perspectives: Some Suggestions

We have already highlighted the rationale for considering the study of UFIC and other related movements under the banner of biblical studies, alongside mainstream religious studies approaches. While we recognize the presence of biblical studies in religious studies departments, we acknowledge that “biblical studies” has nonetheless enjoyed some autonomy because of its specialized focus on the Bible. In this section, therefore, we concentrate on how biblical studies assist in clarifying new

religious movements such as UFIC. This is necessary because the Bible is the foundational text upon which the UFIC has been grounded. To begin with, the self-understanding of the movement is such that the Bible and the prophet become the two determinative pillars in the lives of the members. The existence of such movements is dependent on the understanding that God has chosen the founder to lead a group of believers into the abundance of God's wealth and health. This choice of the 'man of God or woman of God' is authenticated by the ability of the 'chosen one' to act out biblical narratives through the performance of miracles and the prediction of hidden things, to show their followers and others that they are not mere mortals (Gunda 2012:348).

The effect of specialization in academic studies is that scholars tend to focus on specific aspects of the whole; in this case, biblical scholars will direct their focus especially on the Bible and its relationship to the founder and the movement at large. Also, focus could be directed on how the Bible is used to attack this new breed of prophet and their movements (Roberts 2011:1). On a lot of controversial subjects within the church and in society at large, there is contestation of interpretation of the Word of God (Gunda 2009:76-94). The same could be said about the authenticity of figures like Makandiwa as well as their gospel of prosperity. In other words, scholars attempt to clarify how contestation around the authenticity of prophetic movements such as the UFIC is expressed within the realm of biblical interpretation.

The quest to understand these new movements is, therefore, not entirely a quest to understand the history of the Bible, but the history of the usage of the Bible in the inception, expansion and sustenance of the movement. The focus is on the canonical text of the Bible, particularly those versions and translations that find favour among these movements, such as the King James Version or the New International Version. Biblical scholars should therefore consider the benefits of employing the "reception history approach to the Bible." This is an approach that focuses on "the documentation of the 'effects' and 'impact' of the Bible in particular communities" (Gunda 2013). Reception history is a scholarly enterprise consisting of collating shards of wealth of the various words and acts of interpretation of a particular text over its entire period of existence. This naturally implies that the reception historian must select and discriminate against the multiple shards of wealth depending on his/her interests (Roberts 2011:1). Whereas traditional ap-

proaches, according to Klint (2000:87), were “preoccupied with questions about how the Bible came to be, or even more typically with the intended meaning (by God or the author) of its different texts,” reception history interests itself in the actual history of how the Bible has been used by actual communities. By noting the importance of the contextual situations of different readers, reception history appreciates that “different readers, different situations, different reasons for reading the text, all yield different readings” (Carroll 2000:19). This helps to explain why Christians in Zimbabwe tend to evaluate these new movements in a contradictory manner, even though all may be citing the same Bible.

It is not for the reception historian to judge whether the usage is right or wrong, rather the focus at this stage is the ability to describe how the Bible has been and is being used by different movements such as the UFIC. Similarly, through the same approach, one can also describe how the Bible has been used and how it has impacted those who are skeptical about the authenticity of individuals like Makandiwa. In studying these new movements, greater emphasis will be placed on reception history of the Bible. However, the reception of the Bible is not limited to the text of the Bible only, but also to cultural phenomena that show the effects or impact of the Bible in specific communities. Are there practices within these movements that advertise themselves as biblical effects on the community? Here we can study titles such as ‘man of God,’ prophet, the ‘anointed one’ and other titles that are used to denote the leaders and those that denote the believers, as well as healing practices.

The second profitable approach to new movements like UFIC from a biblical studies perspective is by adopting a socio-historical approach to the transactions between the movement and the Bible. This approach allows the biblical scholar to investigate the social-history behind the text of the Bible as well as the social-history behind the formation, growth and relevance of the contemporary movement that is using the Bible. This allows a biblical scholar to interrogate how the social environment of the community compares with the ancient social environment that is credited with the ideas now forming the text of the Bible. Further, it will also help in interrogating the relationship between the social environment of the contemporary movement and the interpretations that are developed within the movement. This is particularly important because “those who have read the Bible throughout the centuries have usually read it in light of their own historical, social, and cultural backgrounds.

People use these backgrounds, or contexts, as tools to aid them in understanding and applying the Bible” (Langston 2010:1). In other words, the interpretations that are emanating from Makandiwa’s ministry and many others are socially and historically conditioned. It should be possible to highlight these dynamics through a socio-historical approach.

A socio-historical approach argues that religious phenomena, such as movements and institutions, are socially and historically conditioned, without undermining the religious claims made by believers and the founders. It therefore implies that any attempts at understanding these movements must necessarily attempt to understand the context within which they are thriving (Gunda 2012:337). Instead of looking at the UFIC as a proactive movement, a socio-historical approach will look at UFIC as a reactionary movement responding to the situation in Zimbabwe in the years leading to its formation. Not only the larger situation of the nation should be investigated, but equally important is the situation obtaining within the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) from where Makandiwa withdrew. These are dynamics that can best be investigated through a socio-historical approach.

To sum up this section, it is important to observe that the rise of new movements such as UFIC coincided with the years of economic meltdown, years of political challenges and social upheavals. The period from 2007 was particularly difficult for ordinary Zimbabweans and their desperation knew no boundaries. In that context, a new breed of prophets arose, who in the words of Burgess (2008:36):

[Sought] to understand local contexts and culture in the light of Scripture, but they do so by retaining a literalist approach to biblical hermeneutics. They look for correspondences between their own life situations and the Bible, and expect Biblical texts to have practical relevance and problem-solving potential. Thus they could be said to follow more contemporary reading strategies, which stress the role of receiving communities.

What these new evangelists, prophets or men of God have done is to inject life into a stagnating religious tradition by re-inventing the Bible as a contemporary text addressing the real distressing situation of the majority of ordinary Zimbabweans. They do so by not only diagnosing the problems but, most importantly, providing the remedial prescription for them. This is what Burgess means when he observes that biblical texts are seen as having “a practical relevance and problem-solving potential” for the followers of the ‘man of God.’ While mainline churches

have done well in confronting the social evils in Zimbabwe, they sometimes do so at the expense of their religious and spiritual mission (Gifford 2009:50). This was the gap that was exploited by the new breed of evangelist, and it affected both traditional mainline churches, as well as established Pentecostal churches such as the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA), AFM and the Family of God (FOG).

The new evangelist gave the Bible a new lease of life by making it the alpha and omega of the new movement and promised distraught Zimbabweans a return to the good old days of biblical times. This promised return gave hope! Then the 'man of God' acted out the biblical claims: healing the sick, giving blessings of children to the barren, giving wealth to those who gave with reckless abandon to the cause of the ministry and many other claims that accompanied these leaders. These exploits inspired faith! In short, hearing inspired hope, but seeing led to believing! The Bible legitimized the Prophet. The Prophet legitimized the Bible. The Prophet lives in the Bible. The Bible and the Prophet are one! They are both the Word of God! From the foregoing, it is clear that biblical studies scholars have a role to play in studying the UFIC, yet even with these approaches it is impossible to exhaust a complex organism like UFIC. Other approaches are needed to complement the above suggested approaches from Biblical Studies.

History of Religions

Having examined the role of biblical studies in clarifying new religious movements such as the UFIC, this section proceeds to analyse the contribution of the history of religions to understanding the same phenomenon. Generally, scholarship does not agree on the nature, task and goal of the history of religions. This has been attributed to the fact that the terms 'history', and 'religion' do not each have a universal and all-encompassing definition. Bringing the terms together creates a potentially academically explosive situation. Referring to the history of religions, F. J. Streng (1985:220) says, "this method is an examination of religious people, their ideas, beliefs and practices within concrete historical epochs." This refers to making an analysis on any given aspect of religion basing on its past or history. Streng (1985:220) says, "[I]t is to systematically organise and classify the material." This notion had earlier been presented by R. J. Shafer (1969:3) who defines the historical

method as “a systematic process of investigation and interpretation aimed at securing the most accurate account possible of any event or series of events providing a coherent and meaningful discussion.” As such, this method helps the researcher in unveiling the origins and historical background to the UFIC. It answers such questions as relation to the date, purpose and pattern of its emergence. Using this method, one can be able to systematically organize the historical background of the UFIC, examining its religious people, their ideas, beliefs and practices within concrete historical epochs.

According to Ranger and Kimambo (1972), most historical studies in Africa have often focused on politics or administrative bureaucracies. This would suggest that in pre-colonial Africa, it was only the political institutions which had a history, or were worth studying historically, unlike other dimensions of society. This has been proved to be false, as every aspect of life seems dynamic and thus has a past. As a result, a historical perspective is very appropriate when studying the origins of a denomination or church that has managed to pull thousands of followers within a reasonably short period, at the same time being at the centre of controversy in religious circles in Zimbabwe. This is why Ranger and Kimambo (1972:2) say: “Yet from a historical view some work on African religion which has emerged from the context of African religious studies has been alarming.” Although Ranger and Kimambo were writing in relation to the study of African Traditional Religion, the same picture has largely applied to the study of African Christianity, although the situation is improving. The history of religions has a significant role to play in the study of the UFIC. The method does not reduce religion to sociology, psychology or any other discipline (Streng 1985: 220). It provides insights into the historical development of religion and would help to clarify historical questions relating to the UFIC.

While the historical method is very helpful in terms of gathering vital information from the past, it, however, may be compromised by challenges emanating from the loss of information, for example through the death of an elder in the community. This is so since oral tradition is the main means of transmission of information in contexts such as Zimbabwe. Some leaders within the AFM who were close to Mukandiwa, such as Evangelist Phaniel Dzungare Chiweshe, have since died. He died on 30 August 2011. This is a major loss as he would have contributed immensely towards the writing of the history of the UFIC as he was

one of Makandiwa's mentors. However, where such challenges occur, written records will become handy and the relevance of other methods becomes a necessity. Written records would relate to minutes of meetings where AFM leaders discussed Makandiwa's interdenominational ministry and newspaper reports on the activities of other members of the UFIC. This dimension is particularly important as there is a tendency to concentrate on the leading figure. Who were the other members who collaborated with Makandiwa in the interdenominational ministry? Did they leave/were they expelled from the AFM with him? Where are they? The phenomenology of religion complements the historical method by focusing on the point of view of the believer. We thus explain how the phenomenology of religion is relevant to the study of the UFIC below.

Phenomenology of Religion

Phenomenology of religion plays a key role in researches into new and contentious religious phenomena such as the UFIC. In Zimbabwe, the phenomenology of religion enjoys pride of place, especially in relation to the study of African Traditional/Indigenous Religions (Cox 2012: 25). However, there have been various attempts to define what this method is. One can argue that there are as many phenomenologies as there are phenomenologists. R. Jackson (1997:7) mentions this when he says, "Phenomenology of religion has been presented in different ways by different authors. Phenomenology of religion is a family of approaches rather than a tightly definable single approach."

This difficulty in finding an all-encompassing definition of what phenomenology of religion is has also been pointed out by C. J. Arthur (1992: 147) when he writes:

...anyone who wants to find out what phenomenology of religion is and how it is applied will find the search a frustrating one. To illustrate the cause of such a frustration would not be difficult, for rather than any embarrassing silence it is the sheer number of conflicting replies to the question 'what is phenomenology of religion?' which makes it so difficult to reach a satisfactory answer.

Generally, J. H. Lambert, a Swiss-German mathematician and philosopher, first coined the method of phenomenology in 1764. He used this term to refer to a study of that which shows itself. E. Husserl (1859-1938)

(Cox 1992:15) then propounded it as a philosophical discipline. Later on it was borrowed as an attempt to investigate the essence and meaning of religion. This means it seeks to explain and find the meaning of religious phenomena such as rituals, sacrifices and myths, among others. Phenomenology of religion was introduced as a reaction against reductionistic approaches such as anthropology, sociology and psychology. It uses two main principles derived from Husserl, namely, *epoche* and eidetic intuition. *Epoche* comes from a Greek term *epecho*, which means, “I hold back.” This requires the scholar or researcher to remove or suspend any preconceived ideas or previous judgment or knowledge one has on the specific subject of research. In this particular case, one has to bracket any preconceived ideas they have about the UFIC. This results in a research with limited bias. Eidetic intuition is also called eidetic “vision,” which is a search for or a seeing into the essentials of religious phenomena. This involves the description of the relationships and processes of phenomena found in religion. Such relationships and processes in the UFIC may include (but are not limited to) the concept of Makandiwa being known as ‘Papa’ by his multitude of followers, the concept of him having a spiritual father, his alleged prophecies and miracles. The overall aim is to establish the meaning of religion from the perspective of UFIC members.

The phenomenological method seeks to have a balanced and unbiased research. It avoids reducing religion as other approaches have done, for example, sociologists who have argued that religion is “the opium of the people,” or that it is “a creation of society,” and theologians have reduced religion to a mere “belief in God” (see Ferguson 1978:13-17). Some psychologists such as Sigmund Freud have argued that it is “an obsessive infantile neurosis” (Cox 1992). Such definitions have come as a result of preconceived and biased ideas with which researchers have studied religion. Thus, phenomenology of religion seeks to correct this and study religion as it presents itself, in its true picture. In the case of the UFIC, this entails concentrating on the point of view of the believers, rather than on the socio-economic factors. This is due to the conviction that religion is a discipline in its own right.

Phenomenology of religion calls for reflexivity. By using phenomenology of religion’ one can be developed into a ‘reflective practitioner’. M. Earley (2009:105) says,

Researchers are also practitioners engaged in (among other activities) the process of discovery and knowledge production, bringing to their research settings specific skills and knowledge about the topic of study and the research process...Reflective practices assure researchers play a role of more than just a technician and truly begin to understand research settings they investigate and how their own investigations affect the field in general.

As such, phenomenology of religion challenges every researcher to think about factors that promote or limit his or her effectiveness. Reflective researching gives room to the researcher to critically assess their surroundings, thus becoming more personal and understanding to what they are working on. As mentioned by Early (2009:110), “a reflective researcher connects more personally with their research, and they also understand how their research connects and applies to the larger field in which they work.”

Despite the strengths of phenomenology, it has its own limitations. According to R. Segal, phenomenologists do not prescribe how to perform *epoche*. He says unless they explain how it should be done, “it will remain a forlorn ideal.” Segal (1989:19) says:

Phenomenologists invariably neglect to explain how to practice it. To prescribe the suspension of bias is one thing, to achieve it is another. Until the actual means of ridding oneself of all biases gets explained, the *epoche* must remain only a forlorn ideal.

This means it will never be practical, but only idealistic. In addition, “the method is solipsistic” (Bettis 1969:26). It does not explain how one can grasp intuitively the essence of religious phenomena. Thus, Eric Sharpe mentions that it has been questioned whether there is a yardstick to measure “if one has grasped the essence religion or not” (Sharpe 1986:42). The question stands as, how does one know s/he has practiced *epoche* and eidetic intuition? These weaknesses have therefore caused Raimundo Pannikar (1999:76), in the context of religious dialogue, to conclude, “*Epoche* is psychologically impracticable, phenomenologically inappropriate, philosophically defective, theologically weak and religiously barren.” Because of such limitations, the phenomenology of religion cannot single handedly be used to research on the UFIC. Insights from the sociology of religion are required in order to clarify some dimensions relating to the movement. We focus on the sociology of religion below.

Sociology of Religion

Sociology of Religion has to play its role in a research focusing on an emerging and popular movement such the UFIC. This method has the society as its basic unit of study. It is defined as a study of human relationships and interaction. From the early days of Emile Durkheim, it deals with religion and class, gender, economics, change and various aspects of society. This suggests that religion and society co-exist. One can therefore interact with the society at large to find out what they know about the UFIC. This includes what they believe, what they have heard and what they have seen. As part of the sociological method, one has to carry out interviews with members of the society. This includes employing methods of sampling selected interviewees. This is referred to as “purposeful sampling” (Patton 1990:106). One can use snowball or chain sampling to select their informants as explained in this section.

Snowball or Chain Sampling (Patton 1990:110) is a method of selecting interviews by looking for those who can give information on what one is looking for. This is regarded as looking for information-rich cases. One can look for particular informants who are regarded as sources of information on the UFIC. These may include the leadership, such as Makandiwa (the founding leader), his wife and co-founder, Ruth Makandiwa, or anyone one else in the leadership hierarchies. If they are not easily accessible, one can also get information from an “insider” of the UFIC.

In this case, the popularized debate on who an insider or an outsider is, is once again brought to the fore. The “insider/outsider” problem as popularised by Russell T. McCutcheon (1999) rages on. In essence, the “insider/outsider” problem relates to who is better placed to represent a religion: the practitioner or the researcher? It raises the question on who can reliably understand and represent a religion (Knott 2005:244). The contention is that the adherent has the lived experience of a religion, unlike the scholar. Consequently, he or she must be accorded priority when studying the religion. Other versions of the “insider/outsider” problem pit the adherent-scholar against the non-adherent-scholar. They maintain that the adherent-scholar has greater insights relating to his or her religion, unlike the scholar who is not an adherent of the particular religion. In the case of studying the UFIC, the question of the insider/outsider remains as to who is better placed to give the researcher some information about the church, the common member of society at

large who does not attend church at the UFIC or a member of the church. Even among the church members, who is better placed to give valuable information, close associates to Makandiwa, Makandiwa or any other ordinary member who attends church there?

These methods of sampling interviewees are a crucial aspect of the sociological inquiry. They will guide such a research on the UFIC. This is because it endeavours to be empirical and therefore, can be regarded as a scientific method, which is based on the observation of social practices. One can use pseudonyms for most of the respondents in this study, especially those who feel that they do not wish to disclose their identity. However, where consent is granted, the researcher can use real names.

However, sociology as a method has got its own limitations. One of these is that it emphasises society, thereby undermining the individual. This is argued by Morean (2000: 890), when suggesting that “religion is a creation of society.” It considers the perceptions of the society at the expense of the views of selected individuals; in this case perhaps the vision of Makandiwa in this church can be overridden by the assumptions of the society in general. As such, some sociologists are accused of ending up “explaining away” religion. In addition, one has to note that interviews carried out in sociology will have some limitations. This is because some interviews may not always be relied on as primary data and hence one can rely on them up to a certain extent. People may withhold valuable information that they may feel is too esoteric, sensitive or confidential. Some interviewees may become too reluctant to cooperate right from the onset. As a result of these weaknesses, sociology cannot do justice to a research of this nature alone. The psychology of religion is one other methodology that can be utilised to study the UFIC.

Psychology of Religion

One of the most prominent approaches to religion that society has unknowingly used to analyse emerging Pentecostal churches has been the psychological approach. As mentioned by Cox (2010:6), this involves an emphasis on the central criterion of religion as feelings or emotions within people which cause them to appeal to forces greater than themselves to satisfy those feelings. In this case, one may take the UFIC as a place which appeals to society emotionally. Where people are faced with challenges that are beyond human comprehension such as death and

incurable diseases and poverty, they appeal to forces that are greater than them. As such, one may take the UFIC as a religion that gives its believers “a feeling of absolute dependence” (Hall, Pilgrim and Cavanagh 1985:5). The trend here would be to examine the prevailing socio-economic context in Zimbabwe and regard the UFIC as providing emotional solace to its members.

However, just like the sociological approaches, psychological approaches to the study of religion have been accused of social scientific reductionism. According to Cox (2010:34), this refers to the “interpretation of religious behaviour using theories employed within one specific discipline.” Social scientists (who include sociologists and psychologists), have been accused of “tending to reduce religion to their own discipline because their ‘primary field...is not the religions themselves” (Platvoet, 1990:20). Consequently, it becomes very difficult to come up with a balanced study of the UFIC. Using such methods alone would not do justice to the church. It is on the basis of these weaknesses that the historical\phenomenological approaches and feminist theology of religion become viable. We examine the later approach in the next section.

African Feminist Theology of Religion

All the methods discussed above have been accused of focusing only on men, overshadowing the significance of women in religious circles. Methodology in religious studies has for a long time now not taken women’s religious experiences seriously. Chitando (2012:72) argues that “the study of religion in Africa has generally been gender blind.” It has often presented the religious experiences of men as normative. This phenomenon justifies the argument that “the study of religion in Africa has therefore been (and continues to be) a male-dominated discipline” (Chitando and Chirongoma 2008). By utilising perspectives from feminism and African feminist theology of religion, a researcher can be able to give priority to UFIC women’s religious experiences too. This seeks to correct the history of religions that has focused on men’s experiences. We agree with D. Kinsley (2002:3) who says:

Despite its claim to include all religious phenomena within its scope, the history of religions, like all other humanistic disciplines, in fact had a quite limited focus. What it claimed to be the religions or religious expressions of humankind were often (indeed, usually) the religions and

religious expressions of males. Prior to the advent of women's studies, the history of religions was primarily the study of men's religion.

This is reiterated by Chitando (2012:73) who suggests that

“whereas previously the departments of religious studies had given the impression that religion meant the same to men and women, women scholars have sought to highlight the significance of religion to women (as opposed to what it means to men).”

In this section further we explain how the use of feminist theology can help to recover the experiences of women in the UFIC.

According to Musimbi R. A Kanyoro and Mercy A. Oduyoye women's issues have always been silenced in religion and culture. However, feminist theologians have since woken up to the idea that something has got to be said about the presence of women in religion. They argue that,

African women theologians have come to realise that as long as men and foreign researchers remain the authorities on culture, rituals and religion, African women will continue to be spoken of as if they were dead...Until women's views are listened to and their participation allowed and ensured, the truth will remain hidden, and the call to live the values of the reign of God will be unheeded (Kanyoro and Oduyoye 2006: 1).

Chitando (2012:73) thus argues that “African women scholars have challenged the dominant approaches to the discipline by paying attention to the status of women in the various religions of Africa.” An interesting method within African feminism that can be used as an interpretive tool to the UFIC is “cultural hermeneutics” (Kanyoro 2002:9). This is “...an analysis and interpretation of how culture conditions people's understanding of reality at a particular time and location” (Kanyoro 2002:9). With this method, one is able to analyse and interpret beliefs in this particular church and their impact on the status of women. Kanyoro says that cultural hermeneutics “is the choice of combining an affirmation of culture and a critique of it that will have the potential to sustain the modern Africa” (Kanyoro 2002: 26). One can be able to study the status and contribution of women within the UFIC. This gives room for answers to questions such as: what has Ruth Makandiwa (wife to Emmanuel Makandiwa and co-founder of the ministry) done for the church, for the needy, for other women and for herself within the ministry? How does the church support women's ministries? How do indigenous cultural constructions of womanhood affect the UFIC reading of the Bible and its statements regarding the status of women?

Such a method, unlike all other methods in the study of religions, appreciates the presence of women in the church unlike most methodologies which present “men in the pulpit and women in the pew” (Hendriks et al 2012). Despite the gap that this method intends to fill, the method does have its own weakness. It has been noted that most male scholars of religion have not been willing to embrace the tools of gender to analyse their work. They have “condescendingly dismissed gendered approaches to the study of religion in Africa” (Chitando 2012:74), despite rich dimension it has brought in bringing women’s experiences to the fore. The challenge facing the African feminist cultural hermeneutics approach is that it has been associated with women in an almost exclusive way and most male researchers would struggle to embrace it. In addition, women do not constitute one composite group: there are differences relating to race, ethnicity, class and age. These differences are handled better by sociological approaches that we summarised above. Furthermore, isolating women’s specific religious experiences would prevent the researcher from achieving the complete picture of a church such as the UFIC.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, we feel justified to conclude that no one method can do justice to the study of the UFIC. Each approach seeks to correct the limitations of the other, hence, the interplay of the various methods we have given above. We, therefore, agree with R. Pummer (1975:175) when he says, “No one method or discipline can lead to an exhaustive and all encompassing understanding of [humanity’s] religious aspects.” Ninian Smart (1996) shares the same sentiments when he makes it clear that the study of religion requires a poly- methodic approach because religion is multi-dimensional. A diversity of approaches will have to be employed in order to do justice to such a complex phenomenon as UFIC. Each one of these approaches plays a major role in clarifying specific aspects of the UFIC. They serve to complement each other. This serves to overcome methodological imperialism or methodological absolutism whereby one method seeks to dominate the rest in the study of religion. Such an open-minded approach allows the researcher to “secure a means to see into the meaning of religious experiences by ac-

knowledging the existence of an open universe with multi-dimensional ways of apprehending its reality” (Cox 1992:170).

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CHAPTER 19

Joachim Kügler

People with a Future

Jesus' Teaching on Poverty and the Role of Poor People in Christian Churches today

Abstract

The article focuses on the *beatitude of the poor* in the social and religious context of historical Jesus. The original version of this makarism has to be seen as a religious statement which is not meant as a program of social reform. Yet it has political and socio-ethical implications as it connects the poor with God and his kingdom. Those who are searching God have to go to the poor. A possible function of the *beatitude of the poor* in the struggle against poverty can be seen in the spiritual empowerment it gives to the poor themselves: Poverty is against God's will; it is no divine punishment and does not separate from God. The poor are people with a future; they will be liberated from suffering. Poverty has no place in God's Kingdom but will be eradicated.

Introduction

Without any doubt poverty is one of the most urgent problems in our time. It is an old problem and it is a quickly increasing one. While the ongoing process of economic globalization helps many people to improve their situation, it simultaneously increases the needs of many others. The gap between those who are well off and those who suffer is getting wider and wider, and additional threats like HIV/AIDS contribute to the "shadow of death" which many people are living in. This process can be seen in the Western countries, but is much more dramatic in the global South, i.e. in the countries of Africa, Asia und Latin America. Zimbabwean Christians, as well as those in other countries, cannot ignore this severe problem, but have to understand it as a challenge of peace and justice. All of us should understand that the struggle against poverty is part of our Christian mission. It is nothing that we choose to do (or not to do), but it is an essential of Christian life. As a Catholic scholar I may point to the texts of the Second Vatican Council, which

defines the Christian Church as a kind of sacrament who was formed by God to preach and realize God's love to mankind. Being Church in itself means to serve those in need. And not serving those who suffer is equivalent to not being Church. Our faith in God's love and justice urges us to ask what we can do to share in solving the problem of poverty. As a biblical scholar I have to ask, what the tradition of the Bible can contribute to this struggle and how it might help in overcoming need and suffering. It is well known that the Old Testament has a lot to say on poverty and on the God's relation of the poor and oppressed. I will, however, focus here on the New Testament, especially on the oldest Jesus tradition, which leads us undoubtedly close to the core of our belief, to the Divine Word in person. The text to be analysed is the *Beatitude of the Poor* which forms a unity with two other beatitudes, namely those of the suffering and the mourning. Being part of the *Sermon on the Mountain* the beatitudes had great influence on the understanding of Christian life and can be seen as a key part of the teaching of Jesus.

In Search of the Original Wording

When we ask what Jesus really did and really said, there is always the same problem. The four gospels differ in rendering the words and deeds of our Lord. The main difference is between the Gospel of John and the three synoptic Gospels. This difference has led to sorting out the Johannine Jesus story from the quest for the historical Jesus. Although many scholars see the chronology of Jesus' last days in Jerusalem more exactly given in the Johannine passion narrative, the rest of the Fourth Gospel mostly is seen as a theological narrative with high theological value, but without major relevance for historical questions. When it comes to the message of the historical Jesus usually only the synoptic gospels are seen as important sources. The *Zwei-Quellen-Theorie*, developed by German scholars in the 19th century is still the standard theory for the relation between the Synoptics. This theory tells us that Mark is the oldest of the Synoptics and was used as a source by Luke and Matthew. The second source usually is detected where the text of Matthew and Luke goes together but differs from Mark. Since the times the *Zwei-Quellen-Theorie* originated, this second source, which helped Matthew and Luke to write their larger gospels, simply is called *Q* or Sayings Source, in German: *Logienquelle*. Since some years we have the critical

edition of the *Logienquelle*, which is the result of the analytical work of the *International Q Project* (cf. Robinson/Hoffmann/Kloppenborg 2000) When we now ask for the pre-synoptic wording of the Beatitudes we can easily follow their critical edition of *Q*, and I do so with the Greek text. The English translation, however, is my own.

Luke 6:20-21	Sayings Source Q 6:20 f	Matthew 5:3,4,6
<p>Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοί, ὅτι ὑμετέρα ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. Blessed/Happy are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.</p>	<p>Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοί, ὅτι [[ὑμετέρα]] ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. Blessed/Happy are the poor, for [[yours]] is the kingdom of God.</p>	<p>Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. Blessed/Happy are the poor in spirit/mind, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.</p>
<p>μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες νῦν, ὅτι χορτασθήσεσθε. Blessed/Happy are (you) who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.</p>	<p>μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες, ὅτι χορτασθήσ[[εσθε]]. Blessed/Happy are [[you]] who hunger, for [[you]] shall be satisfied.</p>	<p>μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἀρακληθήσονται Blessed/Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.</p>
<p>μακάριοι οἱ κλαίοντες νῦν, ὅτι γελάσετε. Blessed/Happy are you weeping now, for you shall laugh.</p>	<p>μακάριοι οἱ [[πενθ]]ο[[ῦ]]ντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ [[παρακληθῆ]σ<εσθε>]] Blessed/Happy are [[you]] who [[mourn]], for [[you]] shall be comforted</p>	<p>/ 5 / μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται. Blessed/Happy are those hungering and thirsting for justice, for they shall be satisfied.</p>

As can easily be seen from the synoptic reading and comparing the main points of difference between Luke and Matthew are:

While Luke's version addresses simply those who are poor, Matthew is talking about those who are "poor in spirit", which usually is seen as an amendment.

The sequence of the beatitudes differs. While Luke has "poor – hungry – weeping" Matthew reads "poor – mourning – merciful – hungry". Usually priority is given to Luke's order and the beatitude of the merciful is seen as a redactional amendment by Matthew.

Matthew defines the hungry ones as "hungering *and thirsting for justice*" which usually also is seen as his redactional amendment.

While in Luke the three beatitudes are addressing directly those who are meant, Matthew doesn't have the second person plural, but his beatitudes stand in the third person plural. It is very difficult to decide which form is more original. The text of the *International Q Project* leaves things open by using double brackets but perhaps one should prefer the third person plural for the reconstruction of a text prior to Q. My first argument is that this is the common form of a makarism in the OT and Early Judaism, although one has to admit that there are exceptions.¹ Furthermore I would like to point out that the fourth beatitude, which usually is seen as an amendment of those who collected and redacted Q, stands in the second person plural. The fact that the Q redactors chose this form of addressing directly to those who were suffering in the name of Christ makes it quite probable that the older beatitudes didn't have this direct addressing. Otherwise Matthew would have broken up a stylistic unity, which seems rather improbable to me. For him the four beatitudes already were a unit of Jesus tradition and there is no reason in sight why he should have changed just the last part of this unit.

In total, I would therefore propose that the three oldest beatitudes which can be traced back to the time prior to the *Logienquelle* should have read like that:

Happy are the poor, for theirs is the Kingdom of God.

Happy are the hungering, for they shall be satisfied.

Happy are the weeping/mourning, for they shall be comforted²

We have to be rather careful not to mix up this (probable) version of the pre-Q text with the original words of the historical Jesus. We may come close to Jesus with this text, but what I render here in English translation originally stands in *Koinē*-Greek. As Jesus most probably used Aramaic for his teaching it is clear that we already are dealing with Jesus tradition jumping to the linguistic world of Hellenism. It may be a very early state of tradition, but it is *tradition*. When in the rest of this text I will talk about what *Jesus* did, said and meant, I do not really claim to render Je-

¹ Collins states: "Of the 45 beatitudes in the Hebrew Bible, all but 4 (Deut 33:29; Ps 128:2; Qoh 10:17, in the 2d person singular; and Isa 32:20, in the 2d person plural) are in the 3d person" (1992:629).

² Cf. Meier 1992:323, who comes to a very similar reconstruction, with only changing the place of the 2nd and the 3rd makarism.

sus' *ipsissima vox*, as Joachim Jeremias once called it.³ Instead, when I say simply *Jesus*, I always refer quite modestly to an early state of Jesus tradition merely, which may however come rather close to the historical Jesus. Together with Meier one can see quite good arguments “for ascribing the core beatitudes of the Q Sermon to Jesus himself rather than to early Christians” (1992:330).

Semantics: The Meaning of what Jesus said

In my interpretation of Jesus' beatitude of the poor I will make a difference between sense and meaning of a text.⁴ In the perspective of linguistics the difference would meet up with the difference between the semantic and the pragmatic dimension of a text. While semantics has to do with what a text says philologically, pragmatics deals with the intended effect on the reader. This intended effect can be located in the realm of cognition, in the emotional sphere, in shaping attitudes and ethics or in stimulating direct action. Therefore pragmatics also has to do with the socio-religious context of a text and with its political relevance.

For a semantic understanding of the beatitude of the poor it is important to understand that the three makarisms (“poor – hungry – weeping/mourning”) form a unit. The first explains the second and the third beatitude. And the last two makarisms help understanding the first one. Based on this insight one can outline some important points:

The three beatitudes contain no program of social revolution. Nobody is told to do something. The only “command” that can be detected is the impulse to be happy. Not only a socio-revolutionary interpretation is without semantic basis in the text, there is not even an outspoken incentive for social reform towards a more just society.

³ Read for example: “Zurück zur *ipsissima vox* Jesu, heißt die Aufgabe! Welch großes Geschenk, wenn es gelingt, hier und da hinter dem Schleier das Antlitz des Menschensohnes wiederzufinden! Erst die Begegnung mit Ihm gibt unserer Verkündigung Vollmacht!” (Jeremias 1962:114).

⁴ The differentiation between sense and meaning is based on the difference between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, which was developed by the German philosopher Frege (1980). On the relevance of this difference for biblical theology cf. Sander 2005:61.

The three beatitudes utter no ethical instruction for help. Jesus does not say that those who are well off should help those in need. On a semantic level his makarisms do not deal with charity.

On the other side there is no affirmation of poverty as a religious ideal. If we leave away Matthew's amendment "in the spirit/mind" and make clear the beatitude simply goes to the poor, it can easily be seen that the first makarism deals with poverty in a quite comprehensive way: absolute material poverty, mental and emotional deprivation as well as social marginalisation. And those suffering are not praised happy because their state of poverty, hunger and sadness would have any value in itself. They are praised as their suffering will be ended.

The first beatitude makes perfectly clear that we have to do with a religious statement. The reason why the poor should be happy is given with the "Kingdom of God" belonging to them. In the history of interpretation this expression was often understood as referring to a metaphysical, spiritual realm where the soul *post mortem* can meet God. This understanding was fostered by Matthew's wording "kingdom of the heavens" as well as by Luke's contrast between "now" and "then". That is why the common interpretation focussed on the contrast between being poor now, in this earthly life and being given the divine joy in the other, heavenly life. When we, however, look on the oldest wording, this interpretation has no basis anymore.

As can be seen from the second and third makarism the first one clearly may be called a religious statement, but it definitely is no *metaphysical* statement. The reason why those suffering from hunger and sadness should be happy is given with "they shall be satisfied", respectively "be comforted". With these quite "earthly" expressions Jesus makes clear that his idea of Kingdom of God is not merely a spiritual or metaphysical one. His conception of the Kingdom of God derives from the OT and Early Jewish tradition and clearly means a certain state of the world where the salvific will of God is so absolutely realised that God really can be called *King* in the fullest sense. One even can say that the in the core of Jesus' *basileia*-teaching stands the process of God's taking power on earth. While "in heaven" God already is King – and always was, the life on earth is still to be subjected to God's royal command. Jesus sees this process as something that already has begun. The presence of God's Kingdom is realised already in certain situations and experiences, for example when people are delivered from evil powers: "But if I cast out

demons by the finger of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you” (Luke 11:20). Through exorcism and healing, forgiving sin and reintegrating marginalized persons the *basileia* can be experienced. The Kingdom of God happens in these actions. So exorcism, healing, forgiving sin and eating with outcasts can be called happenings or sacramental realisations of God’s Kingdom.

The Significance (*pragmatic dimension*) of the Beatitude in the Social and Political Context of Jesus’ Time

Often the pragmatic intention of a text is most important. If someone cries “Fire!!” when the house is burning, we shall not only understand that there is fire, but we are called to help and rescue this person. If we only understand the semantic information of this short text, we do not understand anything at all. In a certain way for Biblical texts also the pragmatic dimension is the most important one. Even those who do not give a direct instruction for acting try to do something with its readers. That is why it is so important to ask for the context of Biblical texts. It helps us not only to get an idea of what these texts wanted to do with their readers in the past, but also gives us some hints for their meaning nowadays.

When we look at ancient societies we usually see cultural systems which use religion as a power to legitimize the political and social order. God or the gods are seen as a power which stabilizes the political status quo. The powerful ruler is seen as the earthly representative of divine powers. That is why we have a lot of religious titles to express the theology of power surrounding Hellenistic kings as well as Roman emperors. The ruler is called “visible god”, “son of god”, “saviour”, “god from god” and more (cf. Kügler 1997:133-173; and Kügler 2006:5-10).

In the Jewish context some modifications of this basic religious structure were necessary due to the fact that one did not have an own Jewish king since being occupied by the Romans. The official state theology surrounding the temple in Jerusalem propagated God as residing in the temple as his palace. The theology of “realized Kingdom of God” which was taught by Jerusalem’s priestly nobility traces back to Old Testament times. It can already be found in Isaiah’s calling vision (Isa 6) and in many other texts also. It is rather sure that in pre-exilic times the religious status of the kings in Israel was the same as in pagan societies. In

the time of Jesus, however, God was seen as a king residing in the temple without having an earthly king as counterpart and representative. *De facto* this role was played by the Roman emperor and his regional agents (like Herod and his successors), but this political reality could not be fully integrated into the state theology. The Jewish historian Josephus (Jewish War 6,312 f., and Antiquities 3,440-402) interpreted Vespasian (on his way to being emperor) as God's elected tool, but this remains strictly exceptional in ancient Judaism (cf. Kügler 1997:248-249).

Another conception of God's realized kingdom can be seen in the sapiential theology. Philo, philosophical theologian in Alexandria and member of Jewish upper class, conceives God as creator and supreme king of the universe, governing his creation through his eldest son, the divine word (*logos*). Although Philo never denies the value of the Jerusalem temple and its cult, the centre of his theology is wisdom and knowledge. The best way of getting united with God is to open one's soul for the divine *logos*. Not very surprising for an ancient philosopher, Philo sees knowledge and insight as the privileged way to God. The wise man gets in touch with God by opening mind and soul for the divine word and thus becomes – by mediation of the *logos* – “king” and “son of God” (cf. Tobin 1992:350-351). Hailing the pagan Roman emperor as “son of God” is far away from Philo's thinking, but connecting the poor with the kingdom of God also is far away from him. The poor simply are no topic in the writings of this upperclass author.

Exactly that is what Jesus did; he connected God with the poor and suffering. The Kingdom of God is promised to them, and it is promised to them without any condition. If we see Jesus' beatitude in the context of common political theology of his time it is quite clear that his connecting of God's kingdom and the poor is quite astonishing, kind of revolutionary even. The poor are powerless so why should they be connected with God, the supreme *power*? The normal representative of divine power is the ruler, rich and powerful. His reign is the realisation of the divine order. Jesus however ignores the common establishment theology of his time. He neither sees God and his kingdom much connected with the reign of a king or emperor nor does he connect the *basileia* with the wealthy upper class. The kingdom of God does not belong to those who dedicate to the temple and its cult, but to the poor. God's kingdom does not belong to those who can afford doing philosophy instead of working, but to the poor. By explicitly connecting God and the poor in an uncon-

ditioned makarism Jesus implicitly disconnects God and the upper class (emperor, high priests, rich and powerful families). The political, economical, and religious establishment seems out of sight when it comes to the Kingdom of God and to whom it belongs.

This act of clearly disconnecting God and the upper class seemed too harsh to many people in Jesus' time and it may seem too harsh to many Christians today, but it certainly is no over-interpretation of Jesus' beatitude of the poor. On the contrary there is no reason to doubt that separating God from the establishment is part of the Jesus tradition as can be seen with Mark 10:25 and many other text. There is no reason to speculate that the critical view of richness might be construed only by post-Easter Christianity. It is much more probable that stories like Luke 6:24 or 16:19-31 although written later are following an original impulse given by the historical Jesus and his critical view of the precarious relation between rich people and the kingdom of God. This most probably is true even for late New Testament texts like 1.Tim 2:9-10; 6:9 or James 5:1-6.

Jesus obviously has no intention at all to legitimize and stabilize the *status quo* of ancient society. Just the opposite his preaching derives from apocalyptic roots and can only be seen as a religious disenfranchisement of the political, social and religious conditions predominant in his world.

This theology of disenfranchisement has two key messages. One goes to the poor and is a message of spiritual empowerment. The poor are encouraged to understand themselves in a new way. They are not the worthless and powerless, ignored by God, scum of the earth, but they are those the kingdom of God belongs to. They are no *quantité négligeable* but are in the centre of God's attention in taking over control of his world. This spiritual empowerment of the poor is paralleled by a second message which goes to those who are seeking God. All those honestly seeking God and his kingdom are directed to the poor. They are told not to look for God in power or richness, not in the temple and not in the palace of the emperor. God is not with the powerful, noble and wealthy, but is to be found where the poor, the hungry and mourning are.

What Jesus does with his beatitude can be summed up as "switching the myth". Of course I use the word "myth" in a modern sense as it was developed in the last years by scholars like Jan Assmann and others (cf. e.g. Assmann 1992:75-78; Theissen 2000:21-23; Kügler 2003:311). While in antiquity "myth" was used to refer to something that is not true, mere

fiction or even lie, the use of the word in cultural studies today refers to ideological frameworks predominant in cultural systems. In this perspective there is no culture without myth. Every culture develops its own mythical framework to make reality understandable, to order things, to give a meaning to life, and to tell us how we should behave, what we should do and think. In one of my previous articles I tried to explain the Kingdom of God as the mythical framework (*Rahmenmythos*) of Jesus' mission, of his thinking and acting (cf. Kügler 2007). This myth is a counter-myth to the predominant religious and political order of his time. That is why Jesus calls his addressees to a new way of thinking. His call to *μετάνοια* is nothing less than adopting a new, salvific myth. In accordance to apocalyptic tradition people are invited to believe in a new myth. They shall no longer believe that the world is "okay" as it is. They have to switch the myth and understand that the status quo of the world is a state of sin, i.e. it is not according to God's will. God's *basileia* is something different, it is a new creation. In Jesus' eyes this new world already has begun and can be seen in experiences like healing, exorcism and reintegrating the marginalized. Although this new world still is not more than a tiny little (*μικρότερον*, Mark 4:31) seed it is the new irresistible power which will overcome the old, sinful world order and create a new one dominating all (*μείζον πάντων*, Mark 4:32). Those who believe in Jesus' *basileia*-preaching are people with a future. They already understand reality in the light of God's powerful change. They already feel, think and act according to his project of renewing all and everything. Switching the myth for the poor and suffering means they should no longer understand themselves as powerless victims and helpless losers. They are members of the new world which will completely change their position and put an end to their suffering. As this new world is beginning already now, the poor already now gain a new status and new value: they are no longer lost and forgotten; they are important as they have on their side the supreme power of God and His world.

The Potential Significance today

As the message of Jesus' beatitudes is a religious one, it is clear that it doesn't mean anything to those who deny the importance of religion at all. Those who don't believe that the word "god" refers to any reality beyond language will of course not understand that it makes any sense to

tell the poor that God is on their side. The problem of “new atheism” (cf. e.g. Dawkins 2006) however seems to be very much a problem in Western Europe only. It is almost no problem in the Americas and it definitely is no major problem in Zimbabwe and other African countries. Instead African reality can be seen as soaked by religion and the role of religion for the further development of African society can hardly be overestimated (cf. Gunda 2011).

When we ask for the significance of Jesus’ beatitudes in the mission of Christian church today, the preaching of *μετάνοια* comes at first place. Church has to share in Jesus’ switching the myth. While the present world order tends to define the poor as the powerless victims of irresistible globalization, church has to tell another story. The poor are not cursed, they are not those who deserve their status as they quite simply are too weak, not fit enough for the new deregulated capitalism. Christians have to connect God and the poor by their preaching – just as Jesus did. At the same time they have to promote the difference between God’s will and the will of those who are rich and powerful. Disconnecting of God and the upper class is undoubtedly part of our mission, at least if we define this mission in the perspective of Jesus.

“Perspective” is a very important word in this context as it makes clear that our mission has nothing to do with simply imitating Jesus or imitating biblical texts (cf. Hoffmann/Eid 1976:15-25; Eid 2011). Instead of simply playing Jesus’ role and repeating his words we have to analyze quite properly the situation. This means to ask not only who the poor are today but also to describe our own place in the setting. We as academic theologians usually are not poor. Many of us have a decent salary and can afford to live quite a comfortable life. The beatitudes do not mean us; that is obvious. If we share in preaching the close connection between God and the poor we share also in stating that we – members of middle or upper class – are disconnected from God. As far as we are rich and powerful we are part of the old world which the power of God’s *basileia* will overcome. If however we understand that our richness is part of a global system of sin, we are on the best way to solidarity with the suffering and to encounter God’s salvation. This implies *μετάνοια*, new thinking. If God and the poor are connected then we have to understand that our status as rich people is that of sinners called to repentance.

Richness is not simply a blessing; it is a challenge. It has to be shared and it urges to struggle for justice in economic and social structure. The ultimate aim of our acting must be the eradication of poverty. Although the Kingdom of God, i.e. a *perfect* world without any suffering and even without death, remains exclusively *God's* work, we have to strive for a fair society in the global village with a kind of wealth which respects environmental necessities. If we do not share in this struggle we are not really part of God's chosen people. The call to *μετάνοια* is a call to decide, if we want to be *basileia*-people or if we want to belong to the obstacles which God has to overcome in taking control of his creation.

In a time where empowerment of the poor is a key concept for a new thinking in so many fields, especially in developing a human kind of economy (cf. Yunus/Weber 2007) and more gender justice, Christians should not underestimate the value of spiritual empowerment of the poor. The United Nations' International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) states:

"Poverty is a multi-faceted phenomenon, defined (and explained) as a situation in which a person lacks the necessary capabilities and entitlements to satisfy his or her basic needs and aspirations. From this point of view, the fight against poverty must consist in establishing entitlements that will allow the poor access to the material, social, and spiritual means to develop their capabilities. Thus, it becomes necessary to focus on empowerment of the poor as the crucial requirement for a sustainable solution to poverty and hunger. Empowerment is defined here as the ability of people, in particular the least privileged, to: (a) have access to productive resources that enable them to increase their earnings and obtain the goods and services they need; and (b) participate in the development process and the decisions that affect them. These two aspects are related; one without the other is not empowerment."

(<http://www.ifad.org/events/past/hunger/empower.html>)

It must be clear from this programmatic statement that the beatitudes can be understood as a specifically Christian facet of empowerment, namely a spiritual empowerment which contributes to self-confidence and self-esteem as central factors in striving for change. Especially in African societies which are known as dominated by religion, the religious message of Jesus' beatitudes could be a most effective factor in empowering the poor. Jesus may not have been a revolutionary and not even a politician and his beatitudes not even are ethical commandments, but his myth switching message can have tremendous effects if thoroughly preached. The religious disenfranchisement of the global social

and religious *status quo* marks the state of the global village as a state as sin, as something that must be changed and can be changed. And it invites all those honestly seeking God to look at the poor and their situation. Solidarity with the poor is coming closer to God as he bound himself to them. God promised to change their situation. Therefore those who are with the poor helping them to master their life and get things changed are close to God – partners in his work of recreating his world.

Farewell to the “Gospel of Welfare”?

Maybe my interpretation of Jesus’ beatitudes will not have much chance to be accepted. It simply seems too far away from the “Gospel of Welfare” (also: “Prosperity Gospel” of “Gospel of Health and Wealth”), the most popular kind of preaching in many African and American churches. As the chapters in this volume clearly show, it is most influential in Zimbabwean Christianity also. As an option for the poor doesn’t help if it is not accepted by the poor themselves, it is highly necessary to make the relation between the makarisms of Jesus and the most popular version of Christian preaching worldwide clear.

The perspective of Jesus’ message for the poor relates to the Prosperity Gospel in different ways. As I am neither an expert in African pastoral or in the Prosperity Gospel movement, I will not try to deliver a detailed analysis or critique of the Prosperity Gospel⁵ and its effect on African Christianity. I will instead concentrate just on some points that seem important to me. In my eyes they are so central that they can and must be used to evaluate any type of Christian pastoral be it the multi-faceted phenomenon of Prosperity Gospel or the agenda of traditional churches like Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists or Lutherans.

1. The poor have a right to get *out* of their precarious situation.
2. Poverty has nothing to do with “*lack of faith*”.
3. Richness is *sin* as long as it is not shared with the poor.
4. *Individual* change is not enough.

Ad 1: The Prosperity Gospel rightly stresses that poverty is something that has to be overcome. God is against poverty and his love towards humanity should show in a life without poverty. Jesus calls the poor

⁵ For a critical review of the Prosperity Gospel cf. for example Jones/ Woodbridge 2010; and of course now the chapters in this volume.

happy not because they are poor but because God will put an end to their precarious situation. The dynamic drive from poverty to welfare is clearly something that Jesus and the Prosperity Gospel are sharing.

Ad 2: Preaching of Prosperity Gospel seems to turn away from Jesus when the poor are blamed for their own poverty by telling them that lack of faith is the reason for staying poor. Acknowledging the brutal dynamics of global capitalism producing more and more poverty every day it seems quite cynical to blame individuals for their poverty and define them as persons who just should have more faith. This kind of preaching is even more cynical if it is combined with the pressure to realize this faith in being member of a specific church or in paying to the church leaders who already are well off. If the Prosperity Gospel is transformed into a new way of exploiting the poor it certainly has not much to do with Jesus. His beatitude is not: Happy are the poor if they share my belief and pay my ministers. His makarism addresses the poor without any condition. It also goes to those of the poor who are with little faith or even with none at all.

Ad 3: In the perspective of Jesus and in the light of the further Christian tradition as documented in the canonical texts of the New Testament richness is nothing innocent. As long as poverty exists, wealth implies the duty of sharing. If the Prosperity Gospel is preached in a way which might foster an egoistic fight for bettering up the situation of an individuals only, it may be labelled as Christian. In reality, however, such a “serving Mammon” (Luke/Q 16:13) has nothing to do with Jesus and his message. Those who simply want to be rich without seeing the obligation to share with those in need are serving Mammon, the god of global capitalism, but they definitely are not serving the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Jesus. If the Prosperity Gospel is interpreted in this direction it is only a variation of capitalist money religion disguised as Christian faith.

Ad 4: Looking for the perspective of Jesus means also to realise that Christianity is no longer a tiny little minority as it was in the times of Roman Empire. While Jesus had no economic or political power at all, Christians nowadays have access to all institutional tools of economy governance and developmental politics – on national levels as well as on the global level. If we do not use this influence to reduce the “production” of poverty, our individual sharing and helping becomes rather cynical. Charity always is a Christian duty, but it is not enough. It has to be

be accompanied by the struggle for justice in economic and political structures. The Prosperity Gospel – as well as traditional ways of preaching Jesus' gospel – has to open for the political dimension of eradication of poverty also. Poverty is not only an individual fate; it is also a product of economic structure which must be changed.

To sum up, I would say that the Prosperity Gospel should not be criticised in general as degeneration of Christian preaching. Those preaching the Prosperity Gospel, however, are obliged to check their preaching for its accordance to the perspective of Jesus – at least if this name means more to them than a license to make money. This kind of permanent self-critique and self-evangelisation (μετάνοια!) is, however, necessary for *all* kind of Christian preaching in *all* denominations. It is not confined to the Evangelicals or Pentecostals only. The temptation to use religion as business is something that threatens us all, as a Catholic I know what I am talking about. My own Church is charged with a sinful history full of power, glory and wealth, gained by suppression and exploiting the weak. I hope we slowly come to understand our lesson and I hope other churches do also.

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