

Neo-Prophetism, Gender and ‘Anointed Condoms’: Towards a *Missio Spiritus* of Just-Sex in the African Context of HIV and AIDS

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Abstract

Until recently, African pentecostalism was recognized for its militant advancement of conformist norms and corrective measures in relation to sex and sexuality of congregants. However, the continuous threat of HIV, which has claimed more lives in the context of heterosexual Sub-Saharan Africa than any part of world, is forcing some neo-prophets to become more open and often explicit on issues of sex and sexuality. One such daring voice is Pastor Paul Sanyangore of VictoryWorld International Ministries in Harare, Zimbabwe, who ‘anoints condoms’ as a response to issues of gender and sexuality in the Zimbabwean context of HIV. This article engages Sanyangore’s theology of safe sex from Pneumatological missiological perspectives. It concludes with some proposals for mission practice for engaging issues of sex and sexuality.

Keywords: Neo-Prophetism, Sexuality, Gender, Anointed Condoms, *Missio Spiritus*, HIV

Introduction

An African pentecostal¹ reconceptualization of *Missio Spiritus* (Mission of the Spirit) within pentecostal missiological studies is fundamental and urgently

¹I have used the lower case ‘pentecostal’, ‘pentecostals’ and ‘pentecostalism’ in reference to the general the pentecostal movement – first wave – classical,

needed for understanding what it means to be a ‘Spirit-filled’ and ‘Spirit-led’ Church in the African context of HIV. This means to engage pentecostal responses to African existential challenges, one has to do so within pentecostal emphasis of the ongoing missional activity of the Holy Spirit in the world. It is within this framework that African pentecostalism enables its community of faith as Adam Ashforth (2015:143) argues to ‘respond to spiritual insecurity, much of which is a response to AIDS’.

In keeping with the above argument, this article attempts to engage from Pneumatological missiology, the phenomenon of neo-prophetism in the context of HIV. My intention is to begin a discussion on new pentecostal approaches to HIV in Africa. Thus, I draw from email interviews that I conduct with over ten African pentecostal scholars from Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa with the intention to find out what their views are about the ‘anointed condoms’ phenomenon as means to promote women sexual empowerment and HIV prevention. The aim is not to find out whether anointed condoms have made a difference among the users but to problematize the phenomenon within Pentecostal Mission Studies. What became clear during this research was the extraordinary affirmation that pentecostal movements have potential to promote safe-sex and contribute to the reduction of the spread of HIV. However, respondents also felt that the movements need to develop adequate theology of safe sex within its framework of Pneumatology. Drawing on these e-mail interviews, this article seeks to engage Sanyangore’s notion of ‘anointed condom’ and draw some implications for mission praxis in the African context of HIV.

African Pentecostalism and HIV Discourse

At the turn of 21st century, African pentecostalism was recognised as one of the most central institutions in the struggle against HIV epidemic (Adogame 2007; Mantell *et al.* 2011; Togarasei *et al.* 2011; Mpofu *et al.* 2014; van Dijk *et al.* (eds.) 2014; Burchardt 2014; Gabaitse 2015). Social scientists and theologians have highlighted that the extraordinary growth of pentecostalism

second wave – Neo-Pentecostal and third wave - Charismatics (both Protestant and Catholic). I use the upper case ‘Pentecostal’ or ‘Pentecostalism’ when referring to a specific community such as Pastor Paul Sanyangore’s Victory World International Ministries.

has coincided with the astonishing spread of HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa (hereafter SSA) (Dilger 2007; Gabaitse 2015). These scholars have ascribed the increase of these two phenomena ‘to the growing socio-economic insecurities in the context of globalisation, as well as to the structural adjustment policies introduced from the 1980s onwards, and the subsequent increase in poverty and the growing sexual and economic vulnerability of women’ (Dilger 2007:64).

Indisputably, pentecostalism has become an increasingly prominent feature of Africa’s religious landscape more than any region in world (Ngong 2012:216). According to the 2010 figures from the World Christian Database (2016), pentecostals now represent 17.1%, nearly 179,046,000 million people of about 1,044,107,000 billion of Africa’s population. Scholars have also underscored that women make up the largest population of congregants in these movements (Phiri 1997).

Similarly, the 2015 report of World Health Organization and UNAIDS (2015) highlighted that the highest number of HIV-infected people remains in Africa and that women still account for more than half of the total number of people living with HIV. Almost two decades ago, Sally Baden and Heike Wach (1998: v) detected ‘women tending to be infected at younger ages on average than men ... in countries where heterosexual transmission is the dominant mode’. Since then, numerous studies across sub-Saharan Africa have confirmed that young women between 15 and 24 are particularly at high risk of HIV-infection than the young men of the same age group. The sexual relationships between young women and older men are very common and often linked with unsafe sexual practices with low condom use (Leclerc-Madlala 2008). In her book, *Risky Marriage*, Melissa Browning (2013) discovered in Tanzania that, like many other African societies, decisions about sex remain a prerogative of the man, not a woman. Women have neither power to demand their husband’s marital faithfulness nor rights to negotiate sex engagement in the home. In some contexts there are violent consequences if a woman took the initiative in sex matters. For instance, suggest use of condom or refuse sexual advances from an unfaithful husband, the woman is likely to be beaten or risk abandonment (Phiri & Nadar 2009; Ramjee & Daniels 2013; Browning 2013). Thus, scholars have argued that with its unavoidable presence, African pentecostalism is well positioned to make a significant contribution to HIV prevention (Adogame 2007; Togarasei *et al.* 2011; Mpofu *et al.* 2014).

The Phenomenon of Neo-Propheticism

The rise of ‘a new manifestation of prophetism in contemporary African Christianity’ (Omenyo 2011: 40), which Paul Gifford (2004; see also Omenyo & Atiemo 2006)² classifies as Neo-Propheticism (hereafter, NP) within pentecostalism in SSA demonstrate how most African people remain deeply entrenched in African spiritualities (Omenyo 2011; Omenyo 2013; Chitando *et al.* eds. 2013). NP epitomises a degree of hybridity and functions with neo-primal consciousness. They have integrated elements and approaches of traditional African prophetism (TAP), the African Initiated Churches (AICs), the Classical Pentecostal Churches (CPCs) and the Neo-Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches (NPCC). However, their distinctive feature is prioritisation of prophetic ministry, an aspect that attracts thousands of people in search for explanations to ‘the causes of their various mishaps and about their destiny’ (Omenyo 2013:50-51).

The neo-prophets are on cutting-edge in copious rituals with either water or oil, or both, in their ministry of prophesying, healing and deliverance. The neo-prophets are mainly young men, especially in Southern Africa (Chitando *et al.* eds. 2013), who present themselves as indispensable mediators of spiritual resources with great spiritual power to explain spiritual mysteries, perform miracles such as ‘miracle money’, ‘miracle marriages’, cure any kind of disease or sickness such cancer, HIV and claim to raise the dead, and have the power to protect their clienteles from any form of misfortune, especially witchcraft and explain future events (Chitando *et al.* eds. 2013; Omenyo 2013). Some scholars are sceptical of these claims and argue that NP poses a challenge, especially in the context of HIV due to its unproven claims to have the cure of HIV, which has not yet been established, this becomes worse when and in some cases some HIV patients are forced to stop taking Anti-Retroviral treatment (ARVs) (Gabaitse 2015). The movements also seem to function with a paradigm of commodification of spirituality. Despite the dangers associated with these prophetic ministries, there is a general demand for spirituality in many African societies which makes it a viable commodity which can be

² Omenyo and Atiemo (2006:59) rightly argue that the fact that neo-propheticism demonstrates a paradigm shift from the other pentecostal-type trends, should be understood as another type of pentecostalism with its own ethos, mission, style and emphasis distinctive from other pentecostal traditions and as such deserves to be discussed in its own right.

bought and sold and thus consumed according to basic neoliberal-market principles (Omenyo 2013; Quayesi-Amakye 2013; Asamoah-Gyadu 2016).

However, these movements seem to offer hope to many African Christians and non-Christians alike due to their ability to respond in an Africanised way to enormous existential challenges. In fact, they are more trusted by most African people than many secular organizations because most African people's imagination is still deeply rooted in religious interpretation of reality (Quayesi-Amakye 2013; Mpofu *et al.* 2014). Empirical studies are showing that these movements can be viable partners in the struggle against HIV because they attract large numbers of people from all walks of life which means they have a readily available audience to listen to their message, and hence the capacity to disseminate HIV education messages (Haddad 2011; Mpofu *et al.* 2014). Thus, scholars arguing that 'in order to maximize the effectiveness of church-based HIV prevention efforts in sub-Saharan Africa, studies are needed on the ways in which churches understand and implement HIV prevention messages with their congrega[nts]' (Mpofu *et al.* 2014).

The Pentecostal Discourses on Gender and HIV

Numerous studies have been done to analyse various ways that African pentecostalism is engaged in the fight against HIV. Some of these studies which have focused on African pentecostalism, gender and HIV have tended to highlight either the movements' obsession with sexual morality or preoccupation with HIV, witchcraft and healing (Chitando *et al.* eds. 2013). Historians have highlighted that African pentecostalism began responding with a condemnatory theology which perceived HIV as a 'scourge visited by God on a society that has turned its back on religion and morality' (Mantell *et al.* 2011:195). The belief that HIV was punishment from God as a result of sin made many Pentecostals engage HIV in the context of sin and judgment. Thus, most pentecostals were reluctant to engage in HIV prevention or even to discuss issues of sex and sexuality from the pulpit because such actions seemed to support sinners (van Dijk *et al.* eds. 2014). Recently, pentecostalism, especially neo-prophetic movements have responded with the theology of healing and deliverance. These movements placed emphasis on the healing power of God and view HIV 'as a demonic spirit and those afflicted by the illness as victims of spiritual demonic attack' (Adogame 2007:479). Thus,

most pentecostal prevention programmes are permeated with spiritual warfare discourses (Adogame 2007; Asamoah-Gyadu 2007; Attanasi 2008). This does not mean that pentecostal prevention is limited to spiritual warfare, there are a number of churches that have developed a more holistic understanding of HIV, albeit, within the moral framework of sexual purity.

It is important to highlight that pentecostalism is not monolithic but dynamic and manifests differently even within the same context. However, abstinence, be faithful and Christ (ABC) remains the core framework of prevention strategy (van den Bosch-Heij 2012). Yet, this strategy is approached differently in different sociocultural contexts. In other words, pentecostal churches have adopted different approaches to refashion the domains of sex and sexuality and intimacy depending on various context resources available. In Botswana for example, they have integrated the counselling practices promoted by the government within their faith discourses to construct countercultural ideas of sexuality which are communicated in church circles (van Dijk 2013). In Zambia, many pentecostal churches have adopted traditional marriage teaching (Imbusa) to engage issues of female sexuality and HIV (Haynes 2015). The numerous studies across SSA on religion and risky behaviour are demonstrating pentecostal impetus in providing morally acceptable response to sex, sexuality and HIV within the framework of abstinence before marriage and fidelity within marriage and mandatory HIV testing for those intending to get married (Adogame 2007; Gusman 2009; Parsitau 2009). Critiques of pentecostal ABC strategy think that such an approach is reductionist as it limits HIV to sexual disease and obscures the complexities of socio-cultural, political, economic and gender aspects of the disease (Parsitua 2009; van den Bosch-Heij 2012).

Yet, there is recognition that pentecostal social ethics and moral theology empowers some believers to recognise the risk of immoral behaviour (Agadjanian 2005; Attanasi 2008). Studies show that in comparison with other Christian traditions about the role of religion in HIV prevention, pentecostalism has the lowest levels of pre- and extra-marital sex among congregants. It was founded that unmarried female pentecostals were least likely to have children out wedlock and married male pentecostals had lower levels of risky behaviour (Agadjanian 2005; Attanasi 2008). Adriaan van Klinken (2012:234) in his research in Zambia, discovered that 'Pentecostalism does not simply emphasize these moral norms; its born-again program is a discursive regime through which [believers] make a break with the past,

including dangerous forms of masculinity, and—empowered by God—become new male selves that no longer live lives that make them vulnerable to the dangers of HIV and AIDS.’ A similar observation was made earlier by Alessandro Gusman (2009:73) in Uganda. He noted that ‘to get saved means not only to save one’s soul: it implies being ‘safe’, and the way to obtain safeness, according to the *balokole*, is to be born again and follow the AB (Abstain, Be Faithful) precepts.’ Care must be taken not to think that this is an essentialist pentecostal theological approach. The major weakness of ABC approach is that it takes for granted that all believers would abstain until they are married and those already married would remain faithful to their partner until death do them part. This perspective is dangerous as could spark a backlash in that it can paradoxically contribute to unsafe sex practices by young believers left vulnerable without tools of empowerment such as negotiating the use condom in the case where the temptation might overpower them.

In his ‘Bourgeois Abstinence,’ Marian Burchardt (2014:126) discovered that ‘social class is central for understanding the relationships between religion and sexual ideologies, intimacies, and relationship practices. Social class status prefigures sexual choices while such influences are reinforced through an evangelical idiom of life and sexuality as gifts from God.’ Burchardt (2011, 2014) did two studies in two different social classes within South Africa. In the pentecostal middle class youth, Burchardt (2014:126) discovered that the young people valued ‘abstinence because they see their lives as valuable and successful, which is precisely what their class status allows them to see.’ On the contrary, Burchardt (2011:1) found out that sexual practices among poor township youth in Cape Town seriously challenges pentecostal moralism. The morality of premarital abstinence appears as a highly exceptional ideal among these pentecostal youths. If these findings are regarded as bearing some truth, then most these young pentecostals are likely to engage in unprotected sexual intercourse in an event of irresistible sexual temptation.

Social class paradigm is also important in understanding pentecostal masculinities. It is important to highlight that not all pentecostal churches focus on changing men’s behaviour as some studies appear to be suggesting (Agadjanian 2005; Attanasi 2008). This is especially true because it is mostly women who participate in these traditions than men. Jennifer Cole (2012:388), in her research among pentecostals in east Madagascar noted that ‘Pentecostalism helps these women less by reforming their men than by

offering women alternative source of authority, as well as an alternative set of practices, from which to forge social personhood and subjective sense of self.’ This research also must be understood within the context of class-based perspective. Cole’s research was among poor pentecostals, whereas Gusman (2009) and van Klinken (2012) researched among the middleclass pentecostal congregations. However, even in an equivalent economic class, pentecostals are prone to have divergences due to different variables such as the pastor’s level of education and the member’s level of commitment to their faith. In fact, van Klinken (2013:250) found that pentecostalism ‘presents a real gender paradox’ as it promotes gender equality while simultaneously reinforcing male headship. It is important to highlight that van Klinken is studying sermons on masculinities that were presented by a former chairperson of National HIV/AIDS/STI/TB Council of Zambia (NAC) and classical Pentecostal pastor, Joshua Banda with a Doctoral of Philosophy (PhD) from Oxford Centre for Mission Studies. His theological and HIV exposure must be seen to have a level of influence in his understanding of gender and his desire to seek reform headship within the servant leader paradigm. Yet, the tension between wifely submission and male headship is still there as Banda promotes gender justice in public spheres but maintains male headship in the home, as ‘divine order’. Scholars have argued that in the context of HIV, it is the marriage context that is the most dangerous space for a woman than the public spaces. Baden and Wach (1998:7) for example argue that ‘the major mode of transmission in SSA is through heterosexual intercourse, with marriage as the major risk factor for any African woman to contract the HIV-virus.’ Indeed scholars have consistently pointed out that dominant patriarchal culture in many African societies exacerbates the spread of HIV on the continent (Browning 2011; Ramjee 2013; Azetsop ed. 2016).

Unfortunately, pentecostal tradition is not immune to patriarchal attitudes. As already demonstrated most pentecostals have mis-interpreted and mis-used theologies of wifely submission and male headship to reinforce gender inequality and subordination of women to men. This means that the movements’ responses to HIV could be also analysed from gender justice perspectives. In fact, within this perspective, pentecostal roles become more ambiguous than some scholars would acknowledge. On the one hand, pentecostalism has been applauded by some feminist scholars for arguing that the movements empowering women to reject socio-cultural status quo of marginalization in patriarchal societies and legitimizes ambitious women to

achieve economic, social, and political independence (Spinks 2003). On the other hand, other feminist scholars such as Jane Soothill (2010:84) have a different opinion. Soothill (2010:84) in her empirical study in Ghana argued that ‘It should not be assumed, however, that the spiritual and material equality of believers undermines inherent biological and psychological differences between women and men, or that it fundamentally disrupts the rules governing social relations between them. In marriage a woman is still to ‘submit’ to her³ husband (Ephesians 5: 22–4).’ Soothill makes observation that most scholars who have dealt with the question of gender in pentecostalism have not acknowledged. She argues that pentecostal gender ethic promotes gender equality in the public social domains but reinforces wifely submission in marital context. African feminist scholars have argued that African pentecostalism is an inherently conservative force, which reinforces gender inequalities in the home that turn detrimental in the context of HIV (Phiri *et al.* eds. 2003; Nadar 2009). Soothill (2007: 26-27) discovered that ‘the gender discourses of Charismatic Christianity are used in multiple ways to challenge old cultural forms, to create new ones, and to generate renewed forms of legitimacy for ‘traditional’ gender norms.’ She (2007:63) concluded that these discourses do not ‘challenge the structures that reinforce and perpetuate gender inequalities’ especially in the home. In other words, women’s power to negotiate sex is limited in their homes as male headship has failed to promote gender equality between the husband and wife. It is within this context that Pastor Paul Sanyangore’s anointed condom as a response to HIV and women empowerment is located.

Sanyangore’s ‘Anointed Condoms’ and Women’s Sexual Agency

Sanyangore is young man in his early 30s who has founded VictoryWorld

³ The aim of this paper is not to interrogate the notion of submission and male headship. For detailed discussion of these notions within African theological perspectives see Elijah Baloyi (2008) who engages the notion from a traditional Protestant perspective and more recently Priscille Djomhoue (2016) from feminist biblical interpretation. They argued that the misinterpretation of male headship in many African churches has contributed to the imbalance of power within sex relations.

International Ministries in Harare, Zimbabwe. He has a membership of about 5000. Sanyangore believes that God has sent him to deliver his people out of spiritual slavery. He claims to perform numerous miracles including the claim to raising the dead. However, one distinguishing factor about him is the explicit engagement with issues of sex and sexuality and promotion of 'anointed condoms' for HIV prevention. Sanyangore has tried to overcome the problem of public talk on sex and sexuality as taboo within most African cultures. In some African cultures the talk about sex was treated as taboo and confined to private talk among adults only, mostly married adults, meanwhile the consequences of its misunderstandings affects more than adults and married people. Elijah M. Baloyi (2010) writes that open sex talk in some traditional African societies was taboo 'because this was regarded as bedroom talk.' Scholars confirm that 'In African traditional society, it was taboo for a parent and a child to talk about sex and other related issues, but times are changing and this attitude should also change accordingly' (Mugambi & Magesa 1990:78). Sanyangore seems to understand that times have changed by his very missional action of bringing sex-talk within the sacred spaces. He prayed for condoms during the church service and anointed them in order to give them a spiritual interpretation beyond ordinary condoms. An empirical research is yet to be done among the congregants who used these condoms to confirm divine protection. What is clear is that Sanyangore's ministry functions within the paradigm of neo-prophetic spirituality. This spirituality functions in an Africanised spiritual universe which is utilized to articulate Christian theological commitment in response to neo-primal consciousness pervasive among African people.

It is also important to recognise that the concept of anointing is a phenomenon through which neo-prophetic figures mediate their extraordinary events (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005). Sanyangore sees himself as anointed of God. The anointing is understood as consecration and spiritual empowerment for God's service. In this perspective, the neo-prophets see themselves as mediators of divine anointing – the power of God. This means that the anointed person is someone who is with the Holy Spirit in a powerful way to accomplish extraordinary things (Oyedepo 1992). Many neo-prophets believe that whatever they come into contact with or touch become anointed, hence, mediate the power of God. Anointing is believed to vary from person to person. Hence, different prophets manifest different anointing. There are those with 'anointing for protection', or 'anointing for marriage', or 'anointing for finances', or

‘anointing for healing’ and so on. People who function with highly spiritualised consciousness are more vulnerable to the manipulation these prophets.

In 2015, My Zimbabwe News made the heading: ‘Women scramble for anointed condoms during prominent Harare pastor’s church service.’ The Mark Woods Christian Today contributing editor (2015) reported that ‘Pastor’s ‘miracle’ condoms lead to church stampede.’ On Nehanda Radio (2015), it was reported that ‘Church proceedings came to a halt when controversial Pastor Paul Sanyangore prayed for condoms during a service. Several women stampeded to have a box of the ‘anointed’ condoms for use in their homes. This left tongues wagging in the church with some questioning the moral element of having condoms in church. Some argued that what happened at this church made it clear that people are urgently seeking ways to have safe sex and also improve their sex life (Ndlovu 2015). However, this controversial introduction of ‘anointed condoms’ has attracted resistance from experts involved in the fight against HIV. In response the delegates at the International Conference on AIDs and STIs in Africa (ICASA), saw Sanyangore’s approach as retrogressing the ground gain in the fight against HIV (cited in Mbanje 2015). The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) senior HIV technical advisor Bidia Deperthes (cited in Mbanje 2015) urged, ‘Please stop praying for the condoms, it misinforms the public and is totally against science.’ The UNFPA chief of procurement services Eric Dupont (cited in Mbanje 2015) added his voice that ‘condoms underwent rigorous tests and were safe to use without being prayed for.’ He cautions, ‘Condoms should not be anointed. It sends a skewered message.’

Sanyangore’s response to these criticisms was based on the spiritual dimensions of sex which added some dynamics which most secular experts on HIV in Africa have constantly ignored. For example, the belief that was spreading that having sexual intercourse with a virgin could cure a man of HIV and AIDS emerged within the understanding that there is a link between sex and spirituality. The traditional healers who were the main proponents of this HIV virgin cleansing rituals, associated virginity with spiritual purity. In some African societies sex is seen ‘mixing blood’ (Maxwell 1983). To have sex with a sexually active person, especially outside marriage is believed to have polluting effects that could cause sickness or disease. In contrast, the blood of the virgin is believed to be pure and to have intercourse with her, links the man to spiritual powers that could cleanse him of the disease and since she is having sex for the first time, cannot be infected in the process (Leclerc-Madlala

2002)⁴. Akintunde Olu and Jacob Ayantayo (2005:2) rightly argue, ‘It is a pity that people who talk about sex even in relation to the spread of HIV/AIDS, protection of women’s dignity against rape, amongst others, tend to overlook the place of religion in understanding human sexuality.’ Olu and Ayantayo (2005:3) add that ‘In traditional society, sex has a spiritual dimension because it involves the fusion of a man and a woman.’ In an email interview with Molly Manyonganise (1 August 2016), pentecostal believer and lecturer at Zimbabwe Open University, in Zimbabwe, she affirmed that:

Africa has always understood the connections between sexuality and spirituality. For example, the very act of creation from the African cosmological worldview is viewed from a sexual perspective ... The ability of humanity to ‘create’ through sex replicates the Supreme Being’s aptitude. Therefore it’s undeniable the sexuality and spirituality are closely linked.

In another email interview with Kennedy Owino (3 August 2016), a Charismatic Christian and lecturer at Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary, in South Africa, he argues that sexuality is embedded with African spirituality, which functions as *locus* for pentecostal spirituality. For instance, African pentecostals believe ‘*that sexual intercourse makes the individuals involved ‘spiritually tied’ to each other.*’ Sexual intercourse is believed to establish soul-tie – a mystical union between parties involved whether in marriage or outside. In actual fact, illicit sex is believed to very dangerous because it establishes a permanent a demonic-bond (ungodly soul-tie) between parties involved which can be broken through deliverance (Brown 2011).

Apparently, Sanyangore is aware of critical role spirituality plays in most African people’s conception of sexuality. He argues:

I prophesied to a certain woman that her husband would return two years after his mysterious disappearance. I am not sure but during the week, the husband called her telling her he would come back home. She came to church and during prayer time, she took them (condoms) out

⁴ In her article, ‘On the Virgin Cleansing Myth’, Suzanne Leclerc-Madlala gives a detailed discussion on the belief in HIV virgin cleansing ritual and its contributions to raping of children and persons with disabilities.

and handed them to my assistant asking if they were okay to use when her husband returns... I saw nothing wrong in her using them with her husband after two years of absence. Who knows what he was doing there so it is better to be safe. When I prayed for the condoms, some women came out and wanted to have them (Nehanda Radio 2015; My Zimbabwe News 2015).

He believes that there are two sides to HIV – ‘the physical side and the spiritual side.’ His prayers address ‘the demon; the condom addresses the physical side. We are just working together’ (Ndlovu 2015). He further argued that ‘when he prayed for the condoms, he was addressing the *spiritual side* and, therefore, could not comment on their safety or efficiency’ (*News Day Zimbabwe* 2013, italics added for emphasis). As also already observed above, many neo-prophets classify HIV as a demonic issue rather than a social issue. This appears to help advancement the deliverance discourse. Besides Sanyangore is also concern about apathy in the church’s response to HIV. He underlines, the church is the best social place to discuss issues of sexuality. In actual fact, Sanyangore has also established a prayer house, called spiritual clinic designed to help men with sexual challenges. He noted that most churches in Zimbabwe are not willing to discussion issues of sex and HIV in the pulpit. He feels it’s high time these issues became integrated into the gospel ministration in the church. He laments, ‘I am tired of burying people who are dying of AIDS. I have buried 10 so far, imagine by the time I get to 50.’ He has observed that it is mostly women who attend the church, not husbands and ‘some of them [husbands] *vanoita chipfambi zvekuti mukadzi ndiye anokwara* [lit. are philanderers but its women who suffer]. HIV is a reality which we should all be aware of.’ However, Professor Kudzai Biri (August 8, 2016), a Pentecostal and scholar at the University of Zimbabwe, in an email interview argues that:

This pastor is drawing attention of people from real issues. He wants money, these guys are clever, they know where to reap people’s money and attention. They know people will be attracted by claims of anointed condoms for good sex, our people need to be educated - it’s not about condoms but love. These guys are negatively impacting the institution of marriage and sexuality. The promotion of public sexuality is good but not through wrong means. Pastors should know where and when to talk about sexuality.

Sanyangore's promotion of 'anointed condoms' is fundamental because some church denominations still see discussing issues of sexuality, sex and HIV in the church as taboo (Owino 2016). For Owino (2016), it is important to take note of Sanyangore's argument that the church is the safe place to address issues of sex, sexuality and HIV. For a long time as Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele) (2003:102) observed the churches in Africa have used some sections of the bible to support sexual subjugation of women. She (2003:102) further laments that 'Women's sexuality is often defined and controlled by men both in the churches and in the households.' Thus the church cannot afford to keep silent and continue to perceive sex-talk as bedroom talk. The main concern is not whether safe-sex must be promoted in the church but why is Sanyangore spiritualising the condoms? Is he really concerned about helping people or is a strategy to attract naïve people to his ministry? Manyonganise (2016), *Sanyangore is a desperate prophet seeking relevance in a context with noticeable 'plethora of anointed products such anointing oil, handkerchiefs, towels, wristbands, posters and many other merchandises.'* Thus, the introduction of 'anointed condoms' must be understood as a bid to bring something new on the market. Manyonganise (2016) underlines, *'basically, in any market place, a new product is bound to receive more attention than the old ones.'*

Thus, fundamental missiological questions can be raised. In what ways has his church served as a safe space for discussions on condoms and safe-sex? How has he used the Bible to promote safe sex? Yet an acknowledgment from a pastoral practitioner cannot be taken lightly, however his motive. Not sidelining the fact that there are possibilities that Sanyangore is using 'anointed condoms' to exploiting poor people's vulnerability to HIV. The anointing aspect of it could serve as a marketing ploy to promote the product in his church. Sanyangore added:

We preach but some do not repent Communication is what we preach in our church, husbands and wives should communicate about these things because people are dying. Let us *empower the women* and not beat them because she has suggested using protection. *To those who are not married abstinence is the key.* Most people think condoms are a ticket for sleeping around but that is not it (My Zimbabwe News 2015, italics added for emphasis). I did not say *condoms are not safe*, neither did I say they are from the devil. Married people can sit down and

decide to use them. Condoms should be used, but if people ask me to pray for them, I will (Mbaje 2015, italics added for emphasis). It is actually wisdom from God for one to invent the condom (My Zimbabwe News 2015).

I have cited Sanyangore at length because, he appears to be aware of the ostensible tension between promotion of his ‘anointed condoms’, pentecostal morality of abstinence before marriage and the fact that most African women have no power to negotiate sex in their homes. To begin with the notion of ‘anointing’ has potential to appeal to pentecostal believers and there are possibilities that they might use them for protection. This might contribute to reducing the number of new infections. However, it has also potential for backlash because it gives some immature believers a sense of false security in terms of their vulnerability to HIV and STIs infections. Scientists have emphasized that condoms are not 100 percent safe. Thus, classifying them as anointed is ‘dangerous’ as it can promote promiscuity among young people who might perceive them as full proof from infection (Owino 2016; Manyonganise 2016). In addition, Sanyangore’s approach is limited in that it does not demonstrate how ‘anointed condoms’ can address gender relations in which subjugation and empowerment are deeply entrenched. The very fact that Pentecostal theology of submission and headship remain foundational to pentecostalism, limits the agency of women to negotiate their sex and sexuality. Manyonganise (2016) argues:

Such public promotion of sexuality needs to be accompanied with challenging other structures such as patriarchy and masculinity which have proved to be harmful to women in church and outside.

Owino (2016) is of the same view that anointed condoms promotes an elusive sense of safety in that these women are married and in the homes it is their husbands who make key decisions on issues of sex. He thinks that this sense of false security might also heighten infidelity and promiscuity now that their husbands have ‘anointed condoms’ which promises them divine protection from HIV infection. This means that women cannot be empowered without equally engaging their husbands.

However, there is a sense in which women are challenging status quo about social perception and definition of women’s needs for sex and their

sexual agency. It was the woman who initiated the conversation about the condoms in Sanyangore's church. This is significant because as Zola Ndlovu (2015) on her blog observes, this woman defied the assumptions that sexuality, sex and HIV conversations belong outside the church walls and the long held suppositions that African women have not power over their sexuality. Manyonganise (2016) also agrees that it *'shows the women's desires to be in control of their sexuality i.e. to be able to choose how they practice sex.'* But she also feels *'It's absurd that the condoms were male condoms, meaning that it was going to be difficult for the women to take charge because instead of receiving female condoms they got the male ones.'* However, Owino (2016) thinks that the issue is not so much about the condoms as much as creating a safe space for empowering women to take 'control of their sexuality.' He further argues the empathic response of Sanyangore to the request of the woman affirms *'that women are sexual beings who equally have sexual needs that require satisfaction as in African context where it is always assumed that women's sexuality is for the satisfaction of men.'* Owino (2016) questions, it seems that the church has not done enough to empower women to negotiate not only for safe sex but sexual satisfaction has a matter of urgency. The only troubling question is what difference would it make if the Sanyangore promoted the use of condoms to prevent HIV without claiming anointing on them? Was it only married women who received anointed condoms or singles were allowed too? If married, how did they use the condoms if they are not in control of their own sex and sexuality? How would the anointment pacify their husbands or partners at home? The length of this article will not allow engaging such critical questions.

Foundations for African Pentecostal Missiology of Sexuality in the Context of HIV: The *Missio Spiritus* of Just-Sex

The key people interviewed in this research argue for starting with understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in human sex and sexuality. Manyonganise (2016) for example argues:

An understanding of who the Holy Spirit is may help in promoting a Pentecostal theology of sex and sexuality. For example taking the functions of Holy Spirit and incorporating them in the theology may

create an in-depth understanding of sex and sexuality issues in Pentecostal churches.

But Biri (2016) also cautions that '*the freedom in the Holy Spirit needs to be managed.*' This caution must be yield, especially in the African context that jam-packed with abuse of the Holy Spirit. However Manyonganise's argument is foundational as pentecostals believe that every aspect of human being experiences the infilling of the Holy Spirit. This means that for the believer, every experience is mediated by the Holy Spirit (Yong 2005). The human experience of the Holy Spirit is not qualitatively different from their sexual intimacy with one another in the context of just-love⁵ (I return to this below). In another interview with a Zambian pentecostal Pastor, Mukuka Kabwe (01 August 2016), points out that:

The Pentecostals in Africa have always perceived sex as a form of worship. They have always affirmed spirituality as critical dimension of human sex.' Yet such spiritual conception of sex and sexuality is not void of concrete experiences of sex between the husband and the wife, it is rather a sexual experience that include reconciliation and healing. In our case, we believe that the Holy Spirit helps the couple that prays and studies the Word together to enjoyment intimate relationship and romantic love.

The pentecostals have emphasised the human body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, designed to reflect God's plan for human sexuality. This argument is based on an understanding that sex is prone to abuse; it is a site of injustice and struggle for power. In heterosexual SSA societies, sex is at the base for unequal power relations that have contributed to the spread of HIV and death of millions of people with AIDS. However, sex is neither evil nor a human invention. It is created by God as a medium for expressing human

⁵ Margaret A. Farley's (2006) *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* is an excellent work on a framework for Christian sexual ethics. She introduces the notion of just sex offers for sexual ethical discourses and discernment. She also proposes seven norms for Christian sexual ethics in chapter 6 as no unjust harm, free consent, mutuality, equality, commitment, fruitfulness, and social justice.

essence. It is divine glue that binds romantic intimate relationships. Therefore, it is linked to the mission of God in the world. Many ecclesiastic communities have become increasingly aware that sex and sexuality are also other dimensions in which God is engaged in the struggle for justice. The need to respect the dignity of each human being as autonomous, self-determined sexual being created in the image of God inspires the growing ecclesiastical consciousness for promotion of holistic human rights.

The pentecostal have long recognised that they are pentecostals because they are filled with the Holy Spirit and because they are filled with the Holy Spirit, therefore, they have the power to reclaim what it means to be sexual beings who practices sex, express their sexuality as people filled with the Holy Spirit. In my view, the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of creation is the Spirit that created sex and said it was good and is the Spirit that empowers Christians as agents of their sexuality. The breath of God in human being in Genesis narrative suggests that the Spirit as *creator Spiritus* infused the divine breath into humans and creation. This suggests that human beings are pneumatically interrelated in an essential way. However, with the fall of creation, sex and sexuality have become forces of human destruction. But through redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of now, potentially, gives sacramental dimensions to human sex. This has a bearing on African understanding of sex as sacred which brings aspects of protection from profane or abuse.

Sex in the traditional African thought and life is sometimes connected with spiritual power (Wuaku 2013). Hence, sex has always being part of African ritual spaces. Individuals are allowed to engage in sexual intercourse only after they have gone through initiation rites. It is divinely entrusted to human beings as an expression of *Ubuntu* - a person is a person because of another person. In other words, a person is a sexual being because all human beings are sexual beings. According to this thought system, to misuse any person for self-gratification as a sexual object⁶ is destruction of life because that act does not promote *Ubuntu* (Uzukwu ed. 2015: 212). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of *Ubuntu*. This means that the Spirit gives the believer power to humanise their sex and sexuality. In a sense, a human being with humanised sex view upholds justice in matters of sex and sexuality.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Justice. Just-sex is a sexual experience

⁶ For detailed discussion of the notion of women as sexual object in Africa, see Baloyi (2010).

through Spirit who brings justice and healing into the relationship. Just-sex and sexuality takes into account all aspects of the person as a free moral being with capacity to make rational choices, ability to think and feel. The person must be respected as end in themselves (Farley 2006:210). Thus, the mission of the Spirit in the church creates entrance to just participation of women and men in just-sex by enabling them to move from estrangement, wounded, broken, predatory sexual fantasies and destructive sexual relationships into empowering, satisfying, healing, saving sex life. It is also important to note that human experience of the Holy Spirit is also aesthetic in nature, meaning the Holy Spirit moves human beings into the realm of Christ-like-love ethic. The church is the sphere of God's agency in which the Holy Spirit recreates human agency and subjectivity to mirror divine ethic of love. Justice, love and sex are inextricably intertwined.

Implications for Mission Praxis

The African ideal of *Ubuntu*, 'I am because you are' invites the church to reflect on what it means for human beings to be sexual beings in a community of faith. The recognition that 'I am' is based on the radical just-love and acceptance that every human being is sexual being like the 'I am'. Issues of sex and sexual can no longer be perceived as an appendix of God's mission. These issues challenge the spirituality of the church on the meaning of justice and respect for human sexuality. I conclude by suggesting three implications for mission praxis:

First, the Spirit of God is also the Spirit that created sex and sexuality - is the Spirit of sexuality. This means that sex and sexuality are divine gifts and the church is called to participate in the Spirit's mission of redemption and sacralisation of sex and sexuality. The church as the medium of the Spirit's mission must be intentional about engaging with issues of sex and sexuality.

Second, the church must articulate its response through Spirit-empowered sex and sexual as basis for humanisation of romantic relationships. This means that the church's engagement with issues of sex and sexuality will seek to humanise human romantic love through the frame of *Ubuntu*. This means the mission of the Spirit in the context of sex and sexuality will take into account every aspect of the person such as social, political, economic and cultural as factors that too often function as locus

for promoting gender power dynamics.

Last but not the least, the church is called to participate in the Mission of the Spirit to promote just-sex in the world. Just-sex is about empowering the believers especially women (young and old; married or not) to be able to negotiate sex in any context whether home or any other place. In order to humanise sex, it has to be understood in the frame of justice. Justice and sex must be seen as two sides of the same coin, meaning sex and justice should be ontologically integrated. Whenever there is life-giving sex, there is justice. This suggests that sex without justice is void and inhuman at waste. Within South Africa, any sex without consent is rendered rape. Perhaps this is a more viable approach to promote just-sex. Sex must be driven by justice from which, it also must get its content. Sex can no longer precede justice. It must be permeated by justice for humanisation. The church is the missional locus from which God empowers the believers for just-sex.

Conclusion

The discussion above demonstrates that church must make a paradigm shift from being a place where negative views, including the quietness that some African traditions hold relating to sex and of sexuality are presented, to become a safe space for promoting positive views of sexuality and sex that can empower both women to take control over their sexualities as agents and subjects in the context of HIV. This also means that the NP must look to the fruit of the Spirit in order to participate in the holistic mission of the Spirit to heal sex and sexualities in Africa. I have argued that the human experience of sex and expressions of sexuality is mediated by the presence of the divine Spirit. Yet, it is important to acknowledge that this article is only opening up a debate on the possibility of constructing conceptual maps and horizons for African Pentecostal missiology of safe sex.

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