*ALTER*NATION

Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa Special Edition 35 (2020)
Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN 2519-5476

Religion and Gullibility in Zimbabwe

David Bishau
Nisbert Taisekwa Taringa

* *Alter*nation is an international journal which publishes interdisciplinary contributions in the fields of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa.
* Prior to publication, each publication in *Alter*nation is reviewed by at least two independent peer reviewers.
* *Alter*nation is indexed in The Index to South African Periodicals (ISAP) and hosted online on the UKZN platform, on OJS, and by EBSCO
* *Alter*nation is published every semester. Special editions may be published p.a.
* *Alter*nation was accredited in 1996.

EDITOR in CHIEF
Johannes A. Smit (UKZN)

Co-EDITOR in CHIEF
Nobuhle P. Hlongwa (UKZN)

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Denzil Chetty; **ASSISTANT EDITOR**: Sizwe Sithole

***Alter*nation Editorial Committee**

Catherine Addison (UNIZUL); Nyna Amin (UKZN); Urmilla Bob (UKZN); Denzil Chetty (UNISA); Rubby Dhunpath (UKZN); Judith Lütge Coullie (UCanterbury); Brian Fulela (UKZN); Nobuhle Hlongwa (UKZN); Rembrandt Klopper (UKZN/ UNISA); Sadhana Manik (UKZN); Jabulani Mkhize (UFH); Nhlanhla Mkhize (UKZN); Sikhumbuzo Mngadi (UJ); Shane Moran (UFH); Thabo Msibi (UKZN); Maheshvari Naidu (UKZN); Johannes A. Smit (UKZN); Graham Stewart (DUT); Sizwe Sithole (UKZN)

***Alter*nation Research Board**

Salim Akojee (Nottingham, UK); Robert Balfour (North-West University, SA); Lesiba Baloyi (Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, SA); Jaco Beyers (Pretoria, SA); Stephen Bigger (Worcester, GB); Victor M.H. Borden (Indiana, USA); Vivienne Bozalek (UWC, SA); Renato Bulcao de Moraes (Paulista, Brazil); Ezra Chitando (Zimbabwe); Hamish Coates (Melbourne, Aus); Scarlett Cornelissen (Stellenbosch, SA); Chats Devroop (UKZN, SA); Simon During (Melbourne, AUS); Farid Esack (UJ, SA); Noel Gough (La Trobe University, Aus); Rosalind I.J. Hackett (Tennessee, USA); Jeanne-Marie Jackson (Johns Hopkins, USA); Tony Jackson (Skyline College, Oakland, NZ); Russell H. Kaschula (Rhodes, SA); Langa Khumalo (UKZN; SA); Elmar Lehmann (Duisberg-Essen, Germany); Janine Lewis (Tshwane University of Technology, SA); Sam Lubbe (Milpark, SA); Sibusiso Masondo (UKZN, SA); Stephan Meyer (Basel, Switzerland); Suriamurthee Moonsamy Maistry (UKZN, SA); Pholoho Morojele (UKZN, SA); Herbert Moyo (UKZN, SA); Wade Nobles (San Francisco State, USA); Maurice Joseph Nutt (Xavier, University of Louisiana, USA); Francis B. Nyamnjoh (UCT, SA); Beatrice Okyere-Manu (UKZN, SA); Bert Olivier (Free State University, SA); Charles O'Neill (British University in Egypt); Vivian Ojong (UKZN, SA); Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan (UKZN, SA); Julia Preece (DUT, SA); Geo Quinot (Stellenbosch, SA); Lesibana J. Rafapa (UNISA, SA); Auwais Rafudeen (UNISA, SA); Mogobe Ramose (Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, SA); Erhard Reckwitz (Duisberg-Essen, Germany); Dan Remenyi (UWC/ Dublin); Cornelia Roux (Stellenbosch, SA); Hemduth Rugbeer (UNIZUL, SA); Michael Samuel (UKZN, SA); Federico Settler (UKZN, SA); Anand Singh (UKZN, SA); Lilian C. Siwila (UKZN, SA); Tholene Sodi (Limpopo, SA); Crain Soudien (HSRC, SA); Lesley Stainbank (UKZN/ DUT, SA); Kamilla Swart (American University, Dubai); Wilfred Isioma Ukpere (UJ, SA); Goolam Vahed (UKZN, SA); Gina Wisker (Brighton, UK).

COVER

https://discover.hubpages.com/money/How-does-a-person-become-gullible-and-why-How-can-it-be-corrected

CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS

The Editor: Alternation, Univ. of KwaZulu-Natal, Priv. Bag X10, Dalbridge, 4041, DURBAN, South Africa; Tel: +27-(0)31-260-7303; Fax: +27-(0)31-260-7286; Web: http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za
e-mail: smitj@ukzn.ac.za; hlongwan1@ukzn.ac.za; chettd@unisa.ac.za; maphitha69@gmail.com

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN 2519-5476
Copyright Reserved: *Alter*nation

*Alter*nation

Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa

Religion and Gullibility in Zimbabwe

Editors
David Bishau &
Nisbert Taisekwa Taringa

2020

CSSALL
Durban

Acknowledgement of Reviewers

We wish to acknowledge the participation of the following reviewers in the production of this issue of *Alter*nation.

Dr. Tabitha Bishau, Mutare Teachers College, Mutare, Zimbabwe
Prof. Ezra Chitando, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe
Caroline Dimingu, Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University, Bindura Zimbabwe
Dr. Wellington Gadzikwa, Africa University, Mutare, Zimbabwe
Dr. Joyline Gwara, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe
Dr. Nhlanhla Landa, University of Fort Hare, South Africa
Prof. Vincent Mabvurira, North-West University, South Africa
Prof. Francis Machingura, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe
Itai Offat Manyanhaire, Zimbabwe Open University, Harare, Zimbabwe
Dr. Gift Masengwe, Zimbabwe Open University, Harare, Zimbabwe
Dr. J.D. McClymont, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe
Henerieta Mgovo, Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe
Milcah Mudewairi, Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University, Bindura, Zimbabwe
Dr. Josephat Mutangadura, Cross University English Studies, Zimbabwe and South Africa
Dr. Tenson Mabhuya Muyambo, Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe
Dr. Canisius Mwandayi, Midlands State University, Gweru, Zimbabwe
Prof. Tabona Shoko, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe
Fairchild Siyawamwaya, Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University, Bindura, Zimbabwe
Dr. Beatrice Taringa, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe
Dr. Sindiso Zhou, University of Fort Hare, South Africa

***Alter*nation Special Edition 35, 2020**
Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN 2519-5476

Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa

ARTICLES

Johannes A. Smit Preface 1
David Bishau and *Nisbert Taisekwa Taringa* Editorial: Religion and Gullibility in Zimbabwe 2

Definitions, Explanations and Contestations of Religion and Gullibility
Tenson Mabhuya Muyambo Material/ Spiritual Seeding? Problematising Religion and Gullibility in Zimbabwe 18
Beatrice Taringa Wailing More than the Bereaved: Afrocentric Reflections on Gender Issues in Shona Traditional Religion and Culture 35
Tabitha Bishau Gender, Religion and/ or Culture and Academic Gullibility in Zimbabwe 49
J.D. McClymont Religion, Science and the Paranormal 69
Margaret Chinyadza Political Theology and Gullibility in Zimbabwe: The Cases of Ralph Dodge (1956 – 1964), and Pius Ncube (1997 - 2007) 85
Francis Machingura and *Nomatter Sande* 'It is the gullible ones that survive': Amrour Bearers and Bodyguards in New Pentecostal Movements in Zimbabwe 103
Gift Masengwe 'Crossing Over' from an Ideal to a Real Church: Journeying from Gullibility to Responsibility 122

Gullibility in African Traditional Religions and Health
Tabona Shoko Religion, Gullibility, Health and Well-being: The Case of Traditional Healers in Harare, Zimbabwe 146
Canisius Mwandayi The Concept of *Shiringoma* among the Manyika People of Mutasa – Navigating the Misty Horizon between Reality and Gullibility 160
Milcah Mudewairi Religion, Gullibility, Health and Well-being: The Paradox of Faith Healing in Zimbabwe with Insights from the Levitical Priestly Code 174
Peter Maiko Mageto Spiritual Gullibility in Search of Health: Tragedies of Scarcity and Sanctity in African Contexts 196
Vincent Mabvurira and *Jabulani Calvin Makhubele* Religious Gullibility, Health and Wellbeing among Epilepsy Patients in Zimbabwe 213

The Bible and Gullibility
Fairchild Siyawamwaya Sickness and Healing in the Old Testament and Pentecostalism: Then and Now 235
Henerieta Mgovo A Socio-political Analysis of Pentecostalism and Political Passivity in Zimbabwe 252
David Bishau The Bible and Gullibility among the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu in Zimbabwe 275

Pentecostalism and Gullibility
Henerieta Mgovo, Elias G. Konyana and *Caroline Dimingu* Religious Gullibility and Female Leadership in Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe: A Feminist Inquiry 302

Media and Gullibility
Nhlanhla Landa and *Sindiso Zhou* Media Engagement with the Abuse and Deception Narrative in the Church in Zimbabwe: A Critical Discourse Analysis 315
Joyline Gwara and *Francis Machingura* 'Accepting the unacceptable': The Clash between Faith and Reason in New Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe 340
Wellington Gadzikwa Selling 'hot air': An Analysis of the Perceived Media Influence on Prosperity Gospel Related Gullibility in Zimbabwe 362
Josephat Mutangadura and *Itai Offat Manyanhaire* The Church and New Media Technology: Communicating and Sharing Faith through the Whatsapp Media Platform 386
Ezra Chitando, Advice Chimbarange and *Newturn Maidza* 'Come and receive your miracle today!' Advertising and 'Gullibility' in Selected Pentecostal Churches in Harare, Zimbabwe 409

Contributors 428

PRINT CONNECTION Tel (031) 202-7766; 202-7766

Preface

Johannes A. Smit

We wish to dedicate this issue of *Alter*nation, on Gullibility in Zimbabwe, to the late Professor Nisbert Taisekwa Taringa (11 May1964 – 10 January 2020). Nisbert first proposed the project on my visit in 2013, as one that he and colleagues have been discussing in Zimbabwe for some years. Following my 2014 visit to ZU, and his sabbatical at Howard College, UKZN, Durban, in 2016, Prof. Taringa and Dr. David Bishau took it further.

Completing his MA in Intercultural Theology (Radboud University, Netherlands, 2005), Prof. Taringa graduated with a PhD in Religious Studies from the University of Zimbabwe (UZ 2008). As Professor in Phenomenology of Religion and World Religions, he served at UZ for more than twenty-eight years. His research interests included religions and contemporary ethical issues related to religion and health and wellbeing, human rights, the natural environment, religious pluralism, and gender and sexuality. At the time of his untimely passing he was Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of Zimbabwe, and was working on two related projects, on religion and the natural environment and religion and human rights in Zimbabwe. He also served as Head of the Department of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy for just over nine years.

Nisbert has been one of the foremost academic visionaries of his generation. He tirelessly led by example in research, teaching and learning, research presentations and organising of regular research conferences, seminars, and also research output opportunities for colleagues in the field. He created a hub for research in the Arts, at UZ. This *Alter*nation issue is a small token of our appreciation for his substantial contribution to research, and for his legacy of research capacity development and mentoring of emerging scholars.

We also wish to thank Dr. David Bishau, who was co-editor from the beginning of this project, together with Prof. Taringa, and who saw it through to its completion. Thanks David.

Prof Johannes A. Smit
Humanities Institute
University of KwaZulu-Natal
smitj@ukzn.ac.za

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476

Editorial:
Religion and Gullibility in Zimbabwe

David Bishau
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2245-4911

Nisbert Taisekwa Taringa

Gullibility is not a unique phenomenon to religion. It appears in almost all social institutions including relationships, academia, finance, science, politics and war and justice especially criminal justice. Mercier (2017) reviewed evidence from a number of cultural domains ranging from religion and demagoguery to political propaganda and media, especially marketing and advertising in general. The study also showed that the medical field was not spared of gullible behaviour in the form of erroneous medical beliefs (Mercier 2017: 103). However, maybe more than other fields, religion has often proven to be a fertile ground for the expression of gullible behaviour, both in the portrayal of gullibility in religious characters and the devotees' unquestioning acceptance of any notion legitimated through an appeal to the supernatural (Greenspan 2009:29).

Zimbabwe and the rest of the Southern African countries have not been spared of religious gullibility and what baffles the mind is that where and when the law is expected to take its course in respect to religious practice, it is either silent or it is found wanting on matters involving religious gullibility. In addition, in academic circles in Zimbabwe in particular, there has not been sufficient exploration of this subject.

This special issue of *Alter*nation perhaps represents the first fruits of academic research towards such an important, yet often ignored subject. The authors explore various forms of gullibility with different motives and focus, but following a unified trajectory from the first set of articles right to the end. In the first part, we have articles that conceptualize gullibility through either defining, or explaining, or contesting, the articulation of religion and gullibi-

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a1

lity. The second set are articles that either look at African Indigenous Religion (AIR) and health matters, or that have AIR almost as the underlying religious or theological base, or both. The last three categories are articles that look at the Bible and gullibility, Pentecostalism and gullibility and finally, media and gullibility respectively.

While gullibility has not been a subject of much research in Zimbabwe, and perhaps the rest of Southern Africa, recent researchers elsewhere, especially in the West, have developed a keen interest in the subject. Greenspan (2009), chronicled stories that reveal forms of gullibility, from several spheres of life, ranging from the religious to financial and political spheres. Through an analysis of various forms of gullibility within these stories, Greenspan managed to map the theoretical and conceptual issues associated with gullibility. He managed to address three key issues that this special issue of *Alter*-nation also focuses on, namely, why so many people become gullible, the psychological factors that influence people into gullible behaviour and how best people can deal with gullibility. This special issue of *Alter*nation thus aims to not only raise the urgency to consider the issue of gullibility much more closely than before, but also attempts to provide some academic direction as to forms of conceptualisation relevant to the study of gullible behaviour.

The focus in this section of the journal issue is on Zimbabwe, because gullibility has far reaching implications for practically all spheres of life in Zimbabwe. Many of these are traced in the journal. We do need to note that, indeed, no article in this special issue investigated gullibility in the financial sphere, though. This is despite the fact that gullibility is the major cause of arguably a perennial problem influencing the economic development of Zimbabwe in terms of so-called bubbles (Odlyzko 2010: 1). A bubble may mean an unusual excitement for investment that momentarily causes a steep rise in the prices of some assets and then collapses (Odlyzko 2010: 2). The economic sector in Zimbabwe has received its share of bubbles, which introduces some bizarre shifts in the pricing of some assets even when using the US dollar.

Yet, this is a universal phenomenon.

Teunisse (2015: v), for instance, confirms the observation that despite the fact that in 2014 alone, more than 300 000 people in the United States of America (USA) fell victim to one scam or the other, the subject of gullibility remains under studied. While she addresses quite a number of relevant topics in her thesis, Teunisse (2015: 6) investigates one form of gullibility that a

number of articles in this issue, also either explicitly or implicitly address, namely superstition. While authors here do not necessarily use the term superstition, they deal with gullibility that is closely linked to paranormal or pseudo-scientific or what Teunisse (2015: 6) calls, non-conventional beliefs. Studying this kind of gullibility is critical especially in times of crises, such as the COVID-19 crisis, that the whole world has found itself in. The gullibility associated with non-conventional beliefs often leads to, or is often closely associated with fake news, conspiracy theories, and irrational behaviour. Sometimes, the latter three phenomena are difficult to handle within governance circles.

Another example comes from Australian researchers, who had to gather for a symposium to discuss the social psychology of gullibility that manifests itself in fake news, conspiracy theories and irrational behaviour. The results of the symposium are documented in Forgas and Baumeister (2019).

In Zimbabwe there are cases of journalists and political figures who have been arrested for their role in matters to do with what is deemed as either fake news (called falsehoods) or conspiracy theories. Also, during this COVID-19 era, media is awash with calls to reject COVID-19 vaccines based on the conspiracy theory that the vaccines are meant to cause harm to Africans. In this regard, a number of articles in this special issue also deal with gullibility and the media. This speaks volumes for the importance of this special issue of *Alter*nation. It is important to pay particular attention to the issues raised and to reflect on how gullibility might be stalling, if not derailing, innovation and development in both the public and private sectors in Zimbabwe.

Outside the spheres of political and economic development in Zimbabwe, gullibility in the area of religion, and the discipline of religious studies, has manifested itself in different forms and to various degrees. In the Christian faith, it has manifested itself in the way both the untrained and the trained Christian believers interpret the sacred text in Christianity, the Bible. In particular, interpretations of the Bible have either been associated with or actually caused certain gullible behaviour in the way believers approach the subjects of wealth, health and well-being and gender and sexuality.

In this issue of *Alter*nation these varying degrees of manifestation of gullibility in the stated areas show clearly in the various studies carried out. It is also noteworthy, that gullibility can also be detected in the area of religion and the natural sciences, religion, literature and folktales, and religion and religious freedom. Another very interesting area that features in this issue of

*Alter*nation is the presence of what may be called 'academic gullibility' among academics in theology and religious studies.

Definitions, Explanations, and Contestations of Religion and Gullibility

In 'Material/ Spiritual Seeding? Problematizing Religion and Gullibility in Zimbabwe' **Tenson Muyambo**, explores various forms of behaviour patterns ranging from congregants eating grass, allowing some men of God to literally walk on their stomachs while lying prostrate on the ground, to accommodating being raped under the banner of receiving faith healing. Muyambo employed the phenomenological prerogative of the believer to zero in on one behaviour pattern of 'seeding to the prophet's ministry' that is prevalent in the Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. Using the phenomenology of religion lens, Muyambo alludes to the perennial 'insider and outsider' debate among phenomenologists and theologians in the disciplines of theology and religious studies. A wider implication of Muyambo's article on the conclusions made by the different authors on these issues, is when we talk about gullibility, who is better placed to describe and name a behaviour pattern, the devotee who is the insider having the lived experience, or the researcher who is an outsider to the lived experience? As insiders how do we represent objectively, something we are experiencing subjectively? Conversely, as outsiders how do we represent objectively that which we are not experiencing? Therefore, when researchers label the believer's behaviour pattern as gullible, to what extent is this a valid representation of an experience that the researchers are not living themselves? It is interesting to read how Muyambo wrestles with these questions and what conclusion(s) he arrives at, as well as how the different authors in this special issue are balancing their descriptions, naming and evaluations of the various phenomena they are classifying under the notion of 'gullibility'.

Beatrice Taringa, in 'Wailing More than the Bereaved: Afrocentric Reflections on Gender Issues in Shona Traditional Religion and Culture', grapples with similar questions as Muyambo although with a slightly different focus and motivation. Taringa queries the use of Western liberal feminist approaches to understand gender issues in African culture and religion. She argues that Western ontology and epistemology, approach gender issues with

pre-set categories that indicate that African women are oppressed. Gullible African feminists employ Western a ontology and epistemology to address gender issues in African culture and religion. Inevitably, they have tended to reproduce, if not replicate, Western research on gender that tends to present a skewed picture of the status of African women in terms of gender. Taringa's article probes two central questions. First, are Shona women oppressed? Second but strictly related to the first question, is there a framework that can be used to account for gender issues in Shona communities in their own terms? Taringa interestingly negotiates and navigates through this contested area of gender relations among the Shona.

Following on Taringa's study, **Tabitha Bishau**, in 'Gender, Religion and/ or, Culture and Academic Gullibility in Zimbabwe' uses the phenomenological prerogative of the believer to test key axioms in contemporary gender discourse among academics in Zimbabwe. The question is whether ordinary Zimbabweans indeed identify with these established axioms. She looks at ten selected studies from Zimbabwean academics in and outside Zimbabwe. The article focuses on the Shona people living in Zimunya, Mutare, Zimbabwe. To note, is Bishau's observation about how Zimbabwean academics interpret and analyse issues to do with *roora* (bride wealth) and patriarchy among the Shona, which she attributes to what she is calling 'academic gullibility'.

While being critical of the evils of Shona culture, Taringa and Bishau raise important critical points related any movement or philosophy that seeks to apply Western solutions to African problems. Both agree that gender and related issues of *roora* among the Shona, are best understood within the context of what Taringa refers to as a 'truly [Shona] relational ontology'. This represents a paradigm shift from the mainstream studies of gender and Shona cultural studies, and is likely to attract attention.

The next two authors, who still belong to this first set of articles, look at slightly different forms of gullibility.

John Douglas McClaymont in 'Religion, Science and the Paranormal' grapples with a very important question especially among the Christians – the question of miracles and what scholars like Ellis, David and Lynn (2010) referr to as irrational behaviour. Drawing on studies that flourished in 2010 on irrational behaviour, such as those by David and DiGusseppe (2010), Wilson (2010), and Szentagotai and Jones (2010), McClaymont looks at it from within the nexus of religion, science and what he calls 'paranormal' behaviour. In what he calls paranormal claims, McClaymont isolates miracles

for study. This raises an intricate philosophical discourse that probes first the distinction between cultural and critical thinking, and proceeds to look at the relationship of both, to scholarship and secularism. The article discusses how one should respond to paranormal claims, taking into account two approaches of dealing with the claims. First, the study uses Gill's approach to dealing with smokescreens that paranormal claimants use when confronted. Then second, the study of the Catholic theologian Adolphe Tanquerey's approach to claims of private revelation, is proposed. These approaches are then employed to evaluate the Humean approach to miracles. Like the earlier studies, McClaymont opts for the evidence to speak for itself without prejudice tipping the scales either way.

Margaret Chinyadza in 'Of Political Theology, and Gullibility in Zimbabwe: The Cases of Ralph Dodge (1956 – 1964), and Pius Ncube (1997 - 2007)', uses the historical analytical approach, to study two periods in the history of Zimbabwean politics, analysing these historical epochs through political theological lenses. She isolates for study, Bishop Ralph Dodge, a UMC minister of religion who ministered during the period leading to the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), and Archbishop Pius Ncube, a Roman Catholic Church cleric who ministered during the political crisis period in Zimbabwe between 2000-2008. Chinyadza argues that both clerics, in their practice of political theology, defied all odds towards gullibility to go along with the *status quo* even though it was extremely dangerous to do so. She then raises the critical question regarding the extent to which such a gullibility-free practice of political theology may contribute to better governance in Zimbabwe. Bishop Ralph Dodge and Archbishop Pius Ncube who stood out and spoke up for the oppressed, refusing to be gullible of the oppressive policies of their respective governments, are taken as role models of this gullibility-free way of doing theology. She recommends this approach to all clergy in Zimbabwe as a model that improves governance in Zimbabwe.

Francis Machingura and **Nomatter Sande** in '"It is the Gullible ones that Survive": Armour-bearers and Bodyguards in the New Pentecostal Movements in Zimbabwe', shift attention from socio-political phenomena to purely religious phenomena. The two researchers look at the New Religious Movements (NRMs) in Zimbabwe, particulary focusing on the ways the NRMs try to distinguish themselves from the other Christian movements in Zimbabwe. The NRMs are characterised by flamboyance, glamour and an executive touch, in their approaches that are often copycats or supersedes

national presidents and celebrities. The study observes that the leaders, who are usually the founders, of these churches have become filthy rich and qualify to become celebrities. What is interesting is that the Bible is against celebrity worship which is commonly regarded as evil, a form of enslavement, idolatry, false and superficial. What is noteworthy, is that the leaders, in their celebrity personality, require body guards, popularly known within the NRMs circle as armour-bearers, to keep them safe and protected. The article explores the meaning, significance and role of 'armour-bearers' in NRMs. It raises the pertinent question regarding the extent to which the concepts of armour-bearers and bodyguards are morally compatible with both the Bible and the ideals of the contemporary Christian church.

Pursuing nearly the same line of thinking, **Gift Masengwe** in 'Crossing Over from an Ideal to a Real Church: Journeying from Gullibility to Responsibility', look at the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe's (COCZ) failure to move with time and to indigenize its theology, due to the indigenous leadership that gullibly idealize missionary traditions that they cling to. Masengwe probes factors that influenced and perhaps contributed to, the awakening of the COCZ from its religious gullibility to a common heritage through conference centre construction and constitution making. The COCZ has been run like a family business where individual missionaries appointed their own successors without use of church laws, and where such successors have humiliated every member who questioned how things were done in the church. The article probes the preparedness of the COCZ to build structures to localise the church to a common heritage, after a damaging seventy-year period of stagnation.

From Masengwe's focus, we shift to the African Indigenous Religion (AIR), and matters of health.

Gullibility in African Traditional Religions/ Health

Tabona Shoko, in 'Religion, Gullibility, Health and Well-Being: The Case of Traditional Healers in Harare, Zimbabwe', focuses on how a number of people in Zimbabwe got duped by some traditional healers and prophets who took advantage of the hyperinflationary economic environment in Zimbabwe beginning from the year 2000. The hyperinflationary economic environment led to a sharp decline in bio-medical facilities and the resurgence of traditional and faith healers. The recourse to gullible means by the traditional healers and their clients was exacerbated by exorbitant fees charged by some unscrupulous

health practitioners in hospitals. Shoko's paper gathers empirical data on the practice of traditional herbal practitioners under the banner of traditional medicine in Zimbabwe. The paper observes some gullible behaviour on the part of clients who rush to herbal vendors in Harare, Zimbabwe, in search of healing. Unfortunately, the traditional healers turn out to be fake practitioners, and shrewd and cunning business entrepreneurs, who fleece innocent people of their income in a depressed economic environment in Harare.

Canisius Mwandayi in 'The Concept of *Shiringoma* among the Manyika People of Mutasa – Navigating the Misty Horizon between Reality and Gullibility' probes a religious phenomenon, *Shiringoma*, within the AIR. The study is a phenomenological navigation of the indeterminate but much talked about concept of Shiringoma among the Manyika people. The article begins by defining who the Manyika are, and then moves on to look at the practice of *kuromba* 'acquisition of special powers' at Shiringoma done by some of the Manyika people. Mwandayi invokes the 'insider - outsider' debate to explore the complex phenomenon of *kuromba*, which makes it difficult, if not almost impossible, to tell realistic appearances from those which are not unless one is given to the art. Like the earlier authors, Mwandayi concludes that although *kuromba* appears unrealistic and gullible to the ordinary Zimbabwean, there is evidence that there are some Manyika people who have embraced the practice and indeed, have been initiated into the cult. Therefore, as stated earlier, care is needed when describing stories about the practice as products of people who fall gullibly into superstition. It is not clear though whether the Manyika people who practice this do so seeking good health. The material benefits of the practice are non-existent.

Milcah Mudewairi's 'Religion, Gullibility, Health and Well Being: The Paradox of Faith Healing in Zimbabwe with Insights from the Levitical Priestly Code', provides a contrast both in analysis and prescribed solutions to health matters in studies from Shoko and Mwandayi. She shifts attention to the Bible and its role in resolving issues of gullibility in matters of health. The health sector has proved to be one of the breeding grounds for religious gullibility. The purpose of this study germinated from the problems associated with faith healing in Zimbabwe in which the faith healers proclaim that they can treat any type of sickness. Yet, their clients are seldom healed, unless they are treated by certified medical practitioners. This is against the backdrop of the very disturbing evidence of some people who die upon termination of bio-medical treatment in favour of faith healing. Mudewairi conducts a herme-

neutical exposition of healing in the Old Testament, to offer a compa-rative model to contemporary faith healing in Zimbabwe. The study concludes that although the Levitical priests were active in terms of faith healing within religious circles, they had some bio-medical means to 'certify' patients who claimed to have been healed through faith healing. Based on a careful exegesis of selected texts from the Old Testament, Mudewairi recommends a model of faith healing where claims of healing through faith need to be referred to bio-medical tests for a clean bill of health.

In 'Spiritual Gullibility in Search of Health: Tragedies of Scarcity and Sanctity in African Contexts', **Peter Maiko Mageto**, still focused on the Bible but look at the ethics of faith healing and the crisis that faith healing produces from the point of view of biblical ethics. The article is premised on the axiom that health faces tragedies, nowadays, that are more economic and social rather than medical, as well as sanctity, which provides an understanding that all human beings, no matter the condition of their bodies, are created in the image of God. Therefore, the value of each life makes all humans equal. Approaching the matter of faith healing from perspectives in ethics, Mageto argues that when sanctity and scarcity collaborate, what is at stake, is the issue of identity, character, and virtue, in searching for health; and that the notion of sanctity ensures the holistic health of human bodies, which may be undermined by gullibility related to economic and social scarcity – two central matters that concern the search for health and healing. Gullibility then sways human beings who seek health in regard to sanctity of their being, and the scarcity of their resources.

Vincent Mabvurira and **Jabulani Makhubele** in 'Religious Gullibility, Health and Wellbeing among Epilepsy Patients in Zimbabwe', probe almost the same questions that Mageto raised focusing on the ever mush-rooming 'church industry' in Zimbabwe. Indications are that congregants blindly and sheepishly follow their leaders, despite questionable ethical issues associated with them and dubious relationships with the God they purport to serve. Mabvurira and Makhubele observe that these leaders exploit religion and spirituality because of their worthlessness, as sources of strength and resilience during tough times in human life. Against this background, the two scholars explore the religious and, or, spiritual factors influencing the health and wellbeing of epileptic members of Christian churches in Zimbabwe. They discuss, in a very critical manner, the role of the participants, who had a high commitment to their churches in their equally high expectations of miraculous healing from their epileptic condition by the leaders of the church. The article

is informative, in so far as it critically examines the various healing methods used by the healers, and the meaning that the generality of the church membership attach to the faith healing activities propagated by their leaders.

The Bible and Gullibility

Unlike Mabvurira and Makhubele, **Fairchild Siyawamwaya** in 'Sickness and Healing in the Old Testament and Pentecostalism: Then and Now', focuses on the Old Testament as a canon and as a mirror through which healings in Pentecostalism can be interrogated. Siyawamwaya explores selected cases of sickness and cure in the Old Testament and juxtaposes them on similar phenomena in Pentecostalism today. It is interesting to read how for him the Old Testament seems to speak for posterity as the healings within Pentecostalism follow after the Old Testament healings in asserting the undisputed role of the divine. However, the shenanigan behaviour of Pentecostal healing practitioners today has left researchers with mixed feelings – whether the divine is really the source of the healing power, which nonetheless, most believers in fact do not experience. The article raises serious questions about religious fundamentalism within Pentecostalism, which is probably the source of the gullibility that embraces faith healing at face value.

Henerieta Mgovo in 'A New Testament socio-political analysis of Pentecostalism and political passivity in Zimbabwe' follows in Siyawamwaya's footsteps and explores Pentecostalism as a fertile ground for the expression of gullible behaviour, owing to political passivity in Zimbabwe. She traces political passivity among Zimbabweans from Pentecostal interpretations of such New Testament texts like Romans 13: 1 - 7. Mgovo assesses the extent to which political passivity among Zimbabweans has become a hindrance to political contestations. How do uninterested raw calls for unquestionable reverence to political leaders, resonate with the members' unquestionable submission to their Charismatic Pentecostal Church leaders? Mgovo raises critical questions regarding the role of the teaching to obey sheepishly the Charismatic Pentecostal leaders in the political life of many Pentecostal Church members' reluctance to protest against any political maladministration in Zimbabwe. This is an interesting study that contributes a different mix of perspectives into the conversation about the gullibility discourse, that deserves attention.

David Bishau demonstrates this point in 'The Bible and Gullibility among the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu in Zimbabwe'. Since 'gullibility

takes diverse forms and dimensions religion as religious gullibility, it is difficult to definitively to describe and characterize it. Since religious gullibility, without doubt, has a psychological disposition, which religious rituals and language often mystify, the possibility of the prevalence of gullibility, its exact nature as to where and when it occurs, and its depth and spread, are often difficult to ascertain. Studying gullibility, therefore, requires a careful multidisciplinary approach that analyses its salient features, to make a case for its existence, and to map its nature, depth and breadth, among the devotees of a given religion. This is the rationale for this study – the possibility of the occurrence, nature and depth and breadth of religious gullibility among the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu using the theoretical framework of transactional psychology. To demonstrate the presence of gullibility in the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu's attitude and overall reception of the Bible, the article makes use of ethnographic field notes, taken from the study of the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu in Chitungwiza, during the period, 1998 to 2008. This is an interdisciplinary study of religious phenomena that may raise some interest in broadening and enriching our methodological approaches to the research of religious phenomena.

Pentecostalism and Gullibility

Using a different window, that of feminism, **Henerieta Mgovo, Enias Konyana,** and **Caroline Dimingu**, in 'Religious Gullibility and Female Leadership in Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe: A Feminist Inquiry', pursue almost the same argument as Mgovo above. They look at the role of Pentecostal Churches' understanding of female leadership in the creation of gullible views on female leadership among Pentecostal church members, which have roots in patriarchy. The trio explore the extent to which women who assume leadership roles in most Pentecostal Churches ride on their husbands' backs, to position themselves as wives to influential male leaders and how that impacts their ability to question patriarchal leadership, and decisions. The study makes several interesting observations and raises critical points that make it a must read.

The Media and Gullibility

Nhlanhla Landa and **Sindiso Zhou** in 'Media engagement with the abuse and

deception narrative in the church in Zimbabwe: a critical discourse analysis', introduce a shift to gullibility issues related to religion, faith matters and the media. The duo explore the relationship between religion, abuse and deception, which is a relationship that is complicated by the notion that 'things religious are things pure'. The study focuses on the role of media engagement in generating the abuse and deception narratives of women and girls by church leaders. Using the Critical Discourse Analysis and Agenda Setting theories, the study analyses media reportage of abuse and deception of women and girls in the church in Zimbabwe. What makes the study not only interestingly complex, but also exciting to read, is the inclusion of a critical discourse on how the justice system restricts newsmakers in the reportage of court cases involving the abuse and deception of women and girls in the church in Zimbabwe. The authors' reflections on how the restrictions on the media reduces the role of the media to focusing only on scandals, naming and shaming; falling short of critically engaging with the underlying issues, are helpful.

Joyline Gwara and **Francis Machingura** in 'Accepting the Unacceptable: The Clash between Faith and Reason in New Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe' do shed some light on the question raised above. They see in religion an ironical ideology that tends to evoke emotions that are protected from criticism both from within and without. Within the Pentecostal structures that Gwara and Machingura analyse, there are embedded systems that target reason, which is condemned and portrayed as a demonic antithesis to faith. It is interesting to read how the duo manoeuvre the reason - faith debate to come up with possible pathways, to counter gullibility within the religiously plural environment in Zimbabwe.

Wellington Gadzikwa in 'Selling "hot air": An Analysis of the Perceived Media Influence on Prosperity Gospel Related Gullibility in Zimbabwe' zeros in on gullibility associated with the Prosperity Gospel and probes a baffling question about the manner in which the populace has imbibed the Prosperity Gospel and its promises in the land of Zimbabwe, that, to the contrary, resembles a desert. Gadzikwa, through an analysis of selected print media articles on Prosperity Gospel in mainstream newspapers in Zimbabwe, analyses the extent to which the media, through mass manipulation, has aided and entrenched religious gullibility in unprecedented ways, even among the elite.

One may raise the question as to if Gadzikwa would come to different conclusions had he widened his population to other media platforms. Even so,

in this special issue of *Alter*nation we enjoy the benefit of reaping complementary results through articles that complement each other. In this regard, it would be prudent to read Gadzikwa's article alongside the last two articles from Mutangadura and Manyanhaire and Chitando, Chimbarange and Maidza.

Josephat Mutangadura and **Itai Offat Manyanhaire** in 'The Church and New Media Technology: Communicating and Sharing Faith through the WhatsApp Media Platform' add onto the number and types of media platforms that can be studied. The duo look at the possibility of believers to both exist in the digital era, and at the same time effectively proclaim the gospel today exploiting all the technology that the new age has to offer. The study particularly focuses on the generation that is keener to adapt to the digital era, and the content and target audiences of Christian WhatsApp 'chat' messages. The study debates the positive impact that the WhatsApp platform has had, especially reaching out to the wider consumers, against the backlash of side effects like the issues do, with security and privacy, as enshrined in the use (or abuse) of WhatsApp on mobile and other computer technologies and devices. It appears though that evidence of new media utilization in evangelism and Christian community building speak more to the undisputed value and relevance of such platforms for the church's missions of evangelization, spiritual formation, and community-building and their use should continue in future generations. What this study does is to raise enough curiosity for further research that would elaborate more on the negativity, especially how the WhatsApp platform may either promote or counter, gullibility among the younger generations, so as not to accept anything digital as progress. Apart from issues of security and privacy, there would be a need for further research, that would explore how, while using such media, there would be structures in place to compensate for loss of, say, happenstance conversations, congregant - congregant interaction, and the duty of care, for each other, as congregants, that come to face-to-face congregational services. For further study, there is also a need to explore the general unease among politicians regarding the promotion of social media in religious formations, along the lines suggested by Nichols, McKinnon and Geary (2016).

Finally, **Ezra Chitando, Advice Chimbarange** and **Newturn Maidza** in '"Come and Receive Your Miracle Today!" Advertising and "Gullibility" in Selected Pentecostal Churches in Harare, Zimbabwe', provide more light on how the media may be exploited to the extent of abuse, with those receiving

the advertisement not even noticing that they are being gullible. The article looks at how, pushed by intense competition, rivalry and jostling for members, within the spiritual market, newer Pentecostal 'mega churches' have adeptly and aggressively taken to the various media platforms to advertise themselves. This is unlike the historic mainline churches who do not advertise themselves in the media. Through an analysis of the content of the messages the prophets of the 'mega churches' use to attract new members and the role of television stations owned by particular prophets/ ministries in the expansion of the same ministries, the article looks at ways in which the advertising often feeds on the 'gullibility' and desperation of clients who would be facing pressing existential issues. In this respect, the article provides a balanced approach, in its reflection on gullibility, pointing out that the concept of gullibility is problematic, as it downplays the combined power of advertising and serious existential challenges that push the hordes of clients who patronise Pentecostal churches, to continue attending services at these mega churches.

Overall, what the articles in this special issue of *Alter*nation point to, is the long tradition of scholarship spanning across, at least, the religious divide, on the fact that humans are highly gullible (Mercier 2017: 102). But, as the authors in this special edition recommend, there is nothing that should stop us as fellow human researchers of religion, from being more critical and vigilant towards the arguments that various exploiters of the religious phenomenon, at any level within the religious community, are offering to the people. We owe it to them – our people.

References

Admin 2019. African Art: The Symbolism of Color. *Pangea Sculptures* https://pangeasculptures.com/african-art-the-symbolism-of-colour/ (Accessed on 02 February 2020.)

Ellis, A.D. & S.J. Lynn 2010. Rational and Irrational Beliefs: A Historical and Conceptual Perspective. In David, D., S.J. Lynn & A. Ellis (eds.): *Rational and Irrational Beliefs: Research Theory and Clinical Practice.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195182231.003.0001

David, D. & R. DiGussepe 2010. Social and Cultural Aspects of Rational and

Irrational Beliefs: A Brief Reconceptualization. In David, D., S.J. Lynn & A. Ellis (eds.): *Rational and Irrational Beliefs: Research Theory and Clinical Practice.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195182231.003.0003

Forgas, P.J. & R.F. Baumeister (eds.). 2019. *The Social Psychology of Gullibility: Fake News, Conspiracy Theories and Irrational Beliefs.* Milton Park: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429203787

Greenspan, S. 2009. *Annals of Gullibility: How We Get Duped and How to Avoid It.* London: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Mercier, H. 2017. How Gullible are We? A Review of Evidence from Psychology and Social Science. *Review of General Psychology* 21, 2: 103 - 122. https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000111

Nichols, C., L.M. McKinnon & A. Geary 2016. Rumour has It: Examining the Effects of Facebook Addiction on Political Knowledge Gullibility. *Journal of Social Media in Society* 5,1: 229 - 264.

Odlyzko, A. 2010. Bubbles and Other Challenges for Economics, Psychology, Sociology and Information Science. *First Monday* 15, 9: 1 - 48. https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v15i9.3142

Szentagotai, A. & K. Jones 2010. The Behavioral Consequences of Irrational Beliefs. In David, D., S.J. Lynn & A. Ellis (eds.): *Rational and Irrational Beliefs: Research Theory and Clinical Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195182231.003.0005

Teunisse, A. 2015. *Gullibility: A Review of Literature and Devising a Self-Report Measure.* A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment for the Degree of Master in Research, Macquarie University. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195182231.003.0004

Wilson, D.S. 2010. Rational and Irrational Beliefs from an Evolutionary Perspective. In David, D., S.J. Lynn & A. Ellis (eds.): *Rational and Irrational Beliefs: Research Theory and Clinical Practice.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wilson, I.G. & A.A. Coly 2007. Black is the Color of the Cosmos; or, *Callaloo* and the Cultures of the Diaspora Now. *Callaloo and the Cultures and Letters of the Diaspora: A Special Thirteenth Anniversary Issue* 30, 2: 415 – 419. https://doi.org/10.1353/cal.2007.0210

Editorial

Dr. David Bishau
Director: Institute of Theology and Religious Studies
Africa University
Mutare
Zimbabwe
bishaud@africau.edu

Definitions, Explanations, and Contestations of Religion and Gullibility

Material/ Spiritual Seeding? Problematising Religion and Gullibility in Zimbabwe

Tenson Mabhuya Muyambo
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6765-5034

Abstract
The media in Southern Africa is inundated by 'strange' events that happen in the church. The events range from congregants who are asked to eat grass; who allow a 'Man of God' to literally walk on their stomachs while lying prostrate on the ground; those who 'generously' donate in church when they do not have enough to eat at home, to those who are raped under the banner of healing. The actions are ordinarily understood by onlookers as either unacceptable levels of tolerance or signs of hopelessness by the congregants. The tendency by onlookers is to quickly pass judgement without an attempt to understand what is going on from the believer's perspective. This chapter utilises in-depth interviews with congregants hoping to understand why some of them behave the way they do. This is done in order to understand them before passing uninformed comments. The chapter found out that the believers see nothing absurd in their behaviour. Whose judgement then matters? The onlookers' or the congregants'? The chapter argues that if we use the phenomenology of religion lens, seeding in the church is not religious gullibility for believers but for scholars/researchers it is religious gullibility that violates certain fundamental human rights.

Keywords: seeding, religious gullibility, opium, prosperity gospel, Zimbabwe

Introduction
The media in Southern Africa, both print and electronic, is inundated by 'strange' happenings in the church. Newspapers report of church followers

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a2

who are said to eat grass by a 'Man of God' and they unquestioningly do so (Chimuka 2017). Some are asked to lie down on their backs and the 'Man of God' literally walk on their stomachs (including pregnant women). Others exceedingly 'donate' in the name of giving unto God when they have no food at home. In some instances, snakes are fed to congregants and we often hear of women having been raped in a bid to get healed or exorcised of evil spirits. These actions are ordinarily understood by onlookers as either unacceptable levels of tolerance or signs of hopelessness by the congregants. The tendency by onlookers is to quickly pass judgement without an attempt to understand what is going on from the believer's perspective. This chapter is an attempt to understand the congregants from their point of view. The chapter answers the following questions: Is it sheer gullibility (naivety) for church believers to behave the way they do? What significance do these believers attach to the so-called 'Man/Woman of God'? Are they justified in doing what they do? In order to find answers to these questions, the chapter discusses the congregants' opinions and views regarding their behaviour towards seeding and the 'Man/Woman of God'. The chapter does this by stating the statement of the problem, conceptualising key terms/phrases, describing the methodology and methods in collecting data, presenting the data and analysing it, and lastly concluding by way of stating the main argument of the chapter.

Statement of the Problem

Are church members' behaviour in the church a question of religious gullibility/naivety? The media, both print and electronic are inundated by stories that congregants blindly 'seed' in church, eat grass or snakes, and others get raped under the pretext of healing. While onlookers perceive this as sheer religious naivety/ gullibility, the congregants' reasons for doing so need unpacking. What do believers say about their behaviour? Is this behaviour acceptable in other circles? What is the scholars/ researchers' stance on religious gullibility? These are the questions that preoccupy this study.

Conceptual Framework

Gullibility

Chimuka (2017: 49) argues that the term 'gullibility is understood variously as ranging from outright stupidity to indecision raised by epistemic indeterminacy

of the testimony of others'. He further argues that gullibility is 'unwarranted belief in something … with no substantiating facts to support it' (Chimuka 2017: 50). In other words, it is 'failure of social intelligence' (Chimuka 2017: 50). Put differently, gullibility is sheer naivety, sheepish acceptance of things without interrogating them. In religious terms, this is a blind belief that often results in one being taken advantage of or manipulated. The definitions imply that gullibility is a fact of life. It is found everywhere, be it in the social, economic, political and religious aspects of humanity. We have all been a victim of gullibility in one way or the other.

Seeding

To start with, the conceptualisation of 'seeding' itself is contested. Scholars and religious practitioners do not agree on the notion of giving, popularly known as 'seeding' or 'sowing' (Biri 2012). The church in general and Pentecostals in particular believe in giving. This giving is popularly known in church circles as 'seeding/sowing in the church [*kudyara mukereke*]. For Biri (2012: 8), seeding/sowing comes in various forms such as funding church activities and giving to the 'Man/Woman of God' who, in most cases, is the founder of the church. Believers 'seed' in anticipation of rewards in return.

'Man/ Woman of God'

The title 'Man of God' denotes a larger-than-life human being. Gunda and Machingura (2013) expend quite some energy and effort in delineating what the phrase 'Man/Woman of God' entails. They argue that 'Man of God' is an outstanding individual. For Glover (2006:452), 'Man of God' is an individual who is literally 'above men'. This brings a sense of a 'mortal above other mortals' (Gunda & Machingura 2013:19). The 'Man/Woman of God' is therefore a superhuman being with extraordinary qualities that set him/her apart from the rest of the congregation. He/she has certain characteristics that the ordinary man/woman of the congregation does not have.

Methodology

The study is a qualitative one that seeks to understand why believers of certain congregations behave the way they do. It seeks to gather their views, expe-

riences and opinions, as well as feelings towards certain behaviours. This study collected data through in-depth interviews from thirty participants who were purposively sampled from Pentecostal movements, since it is Pente-costals who are closely associated with seeding, unlike mainline churches. Ten members (five males and five females) from the Apostolic Faith Mission (A.F.M.), ten members (five males and five females) from Prophecy, Healing and Deliverance Ministries (P.H.D. Ministries) and ten members (five males and five females) from Goodness and Mercy Ministries (G.M.M.) participated in the study. Gender dynamics were considered in the study. In this research, participation was voluntary. De Vaus (2002) advocates that informed consent needs to provide the participants with knowledge of the research purpose and processes; any potential risks or harm; the benefits of the research; how the participants were chosen; and the freedom to withdraw from the research process was granted. Data were analysed using the thematic approach.

The phenomenological approach where the researcher respects the believers' faith was adopted for this study. This perspective argues that there is a need for 'researchers to refrain from imposing their views on religious phenomena' (Chitando, Manyonganise & Mlambo 2013: 155). The researcher is encouraged to describe religious phenomena accurately and to be sensitive to the point view of the believer. Cognisant of the inherent weaknesses of the phenomenological approach, I applied what Smit and Osborn (2007) terms the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore in detail how believers make sense of their personal and social world of seeding. The main currency for an IPA study is the meanings that particular experiences, events, states hold for participants. This involved a detailed examination of the participants' lifeworld of seeding. At the same time, IPA also emphasises that the research exercise is a dynamic process with an active role for the researcher in that process (Smith & Osborn 2007). One tries to get close to the participant's personal world, to take, in Conrad's (1987) words, an 'insider's perspective'. This obviously involves a process of interpretative activity. For this study, IPA complements the phenomenology of religion approach.

Research Findings

Congregants' Perceptions on 'Seeding'

The concept of 'seeding' is a biblical notion (though it may have equivalents in other religions) where Christians 'generously' plough into the church by

giving money, assets like cars and houses, or even voluntary working for the church like cleaning in the church, doing house chores for the 'Man/Woman of God' and many others. The hope is that all these 'donations' are not in vain. They do this, as the Bible implores them to 'give and it shall come back to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over ...' (Lk 6:38), meaning that there are returns when one sows a seed into the work of God.

Many respondents (A.F.M., P.H.D. and G.M.M.) unanimously agreed that it was incumbent upon every Christian to 'seed' and they cited biblical verses that make it a requirement to 'seed'. The verses cited the most are Proverbs 11: 24–25, 2 Corinthians 9: 6, and Lk8: 2ff. The underlying theme in these quoted verses is that it is Christian to 'seed' and 'whosoever seedth shall reap bountifully'.

A female respondent from P.H.D. categorically made it clear that 'seeding' in the church was personal and benefited the giver. She shared her experiences where she used to do house chores for the 'Man of God'. She narrated that she had the right qualifications for a profession but could not get one. She decided to spend her time at the pastor's house assisting in things like doing laundry and other household chores. As she was doing this she also prayed for a job, being assisted by the 'Man of God'. After three months of this 'seeding' to the 'Man of God' she was finally rewarded by a job where she took charge of a big company as the chief executive officer. During the interview, she made it clear that her getting the job had nothing to do with her qualification but that it was because she had sown into God and God rewarded her. She was convinced that it was because of what she had done at the pastor's house that granted her the job.

Seeding, therefore, according to many respondents, happens where an individual 'sows seeds' into the work of the church, anticipating something bigger to come out of the seeding. An agricultural metaphor was used to explain how big the proceeds are after seeding in the church. One male respondent stated that seeding in the church is like one who plants a seed in the soil. The seed germinates and produces many seeds, yet it was sown as one seed.

Reasons for Members to 'Seed'

Interviewees indicated that they 'planted' in the church for various reasons. The reasons ranged from social, religious/spiritual to economic ones. The respondents were insistent that one who 'sows' into the church reaps what she/

he has sown. The following subsections are a presentation of the reasons that respondents cited as to why they 'seed' into the church.

Social Factors

The church as a society keeps cohering when members engage in socially binding activities. Seeding is one such activity. Respondents (A.F.Ml, P.H.Dl and G.M.Ml) were unanimous on the social role of seeding in the church. Seeding was said to bring members of the same denomination together. This resonates with what Dhliwayo (cited in Bulla 2015) says when she admits that seeding helps with the upkeep of the church. It involves giving in cash or kind. Once some members give, it becomes imperative for all members to follow suit if the sense of society is to be maintained. Members of a society do common things. They may not think and feel alike, but there is *viva force* that compels members who identify with a society to behave in a uniform way. One respondent from G.M.M. clearly stated that because everyone at their church seeded, he could not be left out. He stated that because he was a member of that church, failing to seed as others did could be viewed as discord. For him to feel a sense of membership, a sense of belonging, he had no option but to seed like others. Seeding for him socially bound him to the church.

This theme kept on recurring with other respondents. A female respondent from A.F.M. poignantly pointed out that it was quite embarrassing for one to fail to seed when others did so at the church. She argued that in order to keep in touch with others, which is cohering with others, she was obliged to seed as well. Asked whether seeding for her had any benefits, she confirmed that it had, in that she found herself among others. Her seeding was meant to keep community with others. Her preoccupation with seeding was to ensure she belonged to the community of A.FM. So, the need to belong entices people to seed in church. Émile Durkheim (1912) argues that religion is adhesive; it brings people together socially. For him religion is eminently social.

Religious Factors

Spirituality is at the centre of religious people's activities. Everything a religious person does has a spiritual explanation. Seeding has religious repercussions. One respondent animated that he was seeding for spiritual edification. He stated that seeding was biblical. The argument is that the more

one sows the closer one becomes to the numinous, object of belief. The less one sows the more distant one becomes. He stated thus,

> *Kupa kumphatso yaMwari kusima kukwededza munthu padhuze naMwari. Ukasapa ukama hwako naMwari hwakaita zinyekenyeke* [Sowing in the house of the Lord brings one closer to the Lord. When one does not sow in the house of the Lord, one's relationship with the Lord is loose].

This implies that one solidifies one's relationship with the numinous by seeding. This understanding was prevalent among many respondents. They argued that seeding made them spiritually grow in the Lord. They indicated that seeding was a sign of a mature Christianity, a practical Christianity. They gave examples of senior members of their respective churches who gave abundantly to the church as a sign of maturity. In comparison, young members of the church give less than elderly ones, the reason being that the youth is more critical of seeding than the elders. For the respondents, sowing in the house of God spiritually gratifies and edifies one.

Economic Factors

These factors have made seeding in the church quite controversial. While people associate seeding with the gospel of prosperity, it has become a contentious issue within the church itself. It has become debatable, especially with the new wave of Pentecostal movements in Zimbabwe. While advocates of seeding perceive it as economically empowering for the church, Man of God and the church membership, there are condescending voices that question the sincerity of the church and Man of God asking people to sow in the church. Voices of suspicion are premised on what Togarasei sums up in this:

> 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 (Togarasei 2010:31).

The suspicion emanates from the question: To what use are the huge sums of money put? Speculation is rife that the money ends up in a few hands, yet it has been 'donated' in the spirit of the church. Some sceptics have even asked: Who is the church? Is it the Man of God? These are some of the questions that have made sowing/giving in the church a hotly debated phenomenon.

Notwithstanding, those who sow in the church have economic reasons. The respondents (A.F.M., P.H.D. and G.M.M.) indicated that when a member gave to the church and as the church got edified both spiritually and materially, the giver was not left from this edification. One metaphor that was repeatedly used by most of them was of the traditional gourd [*mukombe*] which remains oily after it has been used to collect oil from a pot. *Mukombe ukachera mugate rine mafuta unosara wakanunirawo* [loosely translated as a traditional gourd that collects from an oily pot remains oily as well]. This implies that as the church gets material accumulation, the members who seed get rich too. A female respondent from G.M.M. said,

> When we seed, we know for sure that God will bless us with prosperity. Examples in this church are plenty of people we have seen seeding with meagre resources but now they have been blessed with cars and houses. We are often told by the Man of God in this church to seed and it is working for us.

They do not care whether the church syphons from them, since the belief is that they also get rich. It was very clear from the respondents that social, religious and economic factors of seeding were the driving force for seeding. However, the economic factors were more prevalent than others as they came out prominently under the notion of prosperity gospel.

'Man/ Woman of God'

From the interviews conducted, it was found that many of the respondents held 'Man/Woman of God' in awe and he/she was generally perceived as a larger-than- life human being. A.P.H.D. respondent stated that a 'Man/Woman of God' was God's anointed one [*muzodziwa waMwari*]. For another from G.M.M., 'Man/Woman of God' was *mutumwa waMwari* [messenger of God]. More titles came out such as *muporofita* [prophet], *baba* [father], *munhu waMwari* [Man/Woman of God]. The titles point to one common denominator;

that is, all respondents revered and held the 'Man of God' in high esteem. He was, in their view, not ordinary, but a being who was called to perform God's will to the congregants. This resonates with Gunda and Machingura's (2013) views when they argue that the 'Man of God' is an outstanding individual, and Glover (2006: 452) states that a 'Man of God' is an individual who is literally 'above men'. This brings a sense of a 'mortal above other mortals' (Gunda & Machingura 2013: 19). In a 'Man of God', is an embodiment of the mortal man and the immortal nature of God. This explains why respondents held 'Man/Woman of God' in awe, for in him/her God is personified. The theological ramifications of such a portrayal of 'Man/Woman of God' is that whatever he says is accepted without question. Questioning him/her is tantamount to questioning the object of worship, the numinous.

Analysis of Findings

Seeding is Biblical

The motif that seeding or sowing in the church is biblical is without doubt. All the interviewees from A.FM., P.H.D. and G.M.M. indicated that it was biblical by referring to verses in the bible. The argument then is: if seeding is biblical, it implies that it is Godly. If it is Godly, then believers in God are exhorted to follow God's commandment. The question is: Is seeding in the church religious gullibility? This question poses serious challenges in that it is double-barrelled. On the one hand, believers seed because it is Godly to do so. On the other hand, their seeding has failed the test of accountability in several churches. This culminates in another question: If the church fails the test of accountability in the church's financial affairs, who then is to blame? Should the believers continue to seed when what they seed is not accounted for? These questions can be addressed when we look at the position of believers insofar as their seeding is concerned. To look at these questions from positions other than the believers defies the phenomenology of religion perspective adopted for this study, yet scholarship, as this study is, is about posing critical questions.

Admittedly, believers' seeding in some churches have come to nothing. Most church leaders have been in the firing line for encouraging seeding for their personal gain. Most scholars critical about the gospel of prosperity in Zimbabwe are Biri (2012), Tograrasei (2010), Gunda and Machingura (2013). These scholars' understanding of the gospel of prosperity is that it is meant to enrich few individuals in the church. Their argument is

that those who seed continue to plummet in poverty while a handful, especially church leaders are getting richer and richer. While their arguments are valid, we may want to ask again this question once posed by Chitando, Mapuranga and Taringa (2014): *On top of which mountain does one stand to judge religion?* Are seeding sceptics doing so as insiders or outsiders? The sceptics seem to have gone beyond the dictates of the phenomenology of religion perspective. They have gone 'beyond describing the phenomena of religion. They have moved into the realm of evaluation' (Chitando *et al*. 2014). Analysing those who seed as gullible belongs to advocacy and activism, not scholarship, phenomenologists of religion would argue. The believers stated why they seed, which among others, are the benefits that accrue with seeding. Who these sceptics are, who want to speak on behalf of the believers themselves, remains a big challenge. Should scholarship, especially scholars of religion whose persuasions are phenomenology of religion inclined to stop at thick descriptions at the expense of judging some of the religious beliefs and practices such as seeding in the church? These questions point to the fluidity of the concept under discussion. While believers may see it as Godly and noble, onlookers perceive seeding as a sign of religious gullibility where believers are syphoned off their hard-earned cash in the name of sowing in the church. Without wanting to sound judgmental, some events in the church leave onlookers surprised at the level of meekness displayed by the believers. The way they respect the 'Man of God' leaves onlookers with no option but to label them as being gullible.

'Man of God' is Superhuman

The tag 'Man/Woman of God' creates an aura of not only authority but unquestionable power. Because of this unquestionable authority and power, the 'Man of God' is a 'divine-human being' (Gunda & Machingura 2013:22). The belief is that all things that God can do can also be done by the 'Man of God'; hence the idea that God is not far away from the 'Man of God' (Glover 2006). This understanding of 'Man of God' makes him attract large crowds of people. Examples of such 'Men of God' in Zimbabwe include Emmanuel Makandiwa, Walter Magaya and many others.

Since followers of the 'Man of God' look up to him for all things, including healing, deliverance and prophecy, they believe and trust in everything the 'Man of God' does and says. What he does and says are not his

but of Him who sends him. This explains why some followers of the 'Man of God' engage in what onlookers perceive as bizarre happenings such as congregants who are asked to eat grass and then unquestioningly do that. One incident that provoked onlookers happened in South Africa when Pastor Lesego Daniel of Rabboni Centre Ministries ordered dozens of followers to drop to the floor and eat the grass at his ministry in Garankuwa, north of Pretoria after being told it will 'bring them closer to God' (Reilly 2014).

A South African preacher made his congregation eat grass to 'be closer to God'.

A participant is quoted to have said, 'Yes, we eat grass and we're proud of it because it demonstrates that, with God's power, we can do anything'. The incident invited a lot of criticisms from onlookers who felt that this was a violation of human rights. Is the incident a case of gullibility? If the participants boldly confess that they did that, not out of their senses, but knowingly, who are then these onlookers who simply pass judgment on events whose essence

they are not privy to? The questions above bring us to the point that matters of spirituality are not easy ones in the public domain; hence outsiders cannot comprehend these happenings.

While from the believers' point of view there is nothing amiss in followers who take orders from their 'Man of God', it boggles the mind for onlookers to keep quiet about such happenings. The moment they pass judgment, phenomenologists accuse them of going beyond descriptions of religious phenomena. Scholars of religion and researchers alike are left in a quandary whether they should evaluate or not what believers tell them. When they evaluate such religious phenomena such as eating grass or feeding on snakes they are asked: On top of which mountain are they standing to judge a congregation that is simply following an instruction from the 'Man of God' who does not resemble himself but the power beyond him; that is, God. Who are these followers then to refuse God's orders? In any case the actions are meant to serve and save the followers, to 'bring them closer to God'.

Are Congregants' Actions Gullible?

It must be stated that religious matters have been heavily contested from time immemorial. Karl Marx is quoted in Chitakure (2016) as having been sceptical about religious behaviour by religious people. The reason for Marx's scepticism emanates from his experiences with religious people. His major argument is that 'religion is the opium of the masses', implying that religion enslaves and imprisons its followers. Religion, in Marx's view, makes religious people docile. They no longer question things. Arguing from a working-class perspective, Marx equates religion to a drug (opium) that blinds people from seeing that they are exploited by capitalists. In Marx's view the believers who are duped or made to eat grass or buy bricks in the hope of having their own houses are being gullible. Using IPA, I submit that such 'sheepish' behaviour cannot be condoned.

Given such truisms, what then must the scholar of religion do? Should he/she stop at descriptions of religious phenomena or go beyond that and evaluate religious events? Chitando *et al*.'s (2014) submissions that 'the search for uncontested mountains upon which one may stand to judge religion continues unabated' is insightful in a bid to answer the above questions. Phenomenologically, the understanding that what the believers do during seeding (which could be giving money, doing voluntary work in the church or eating grass as

is the case above) should be described as such, without evaluation needs further analysis. The phenomenology of religion approach adopted for the study emphasises the 'sole right of the believer' but that does not mean the researcher should be a *tabula rasa* for the believers to pour in their opinions/ views/ experiences. Scholars/researchers are not uncritical consumers of information. I argue here and concur with Chitando (1998), who submits that there is need, even in the use pf phenomenology of religion, to engage in a questioning spirit. Education, after all, is meant to empower. The congregants' behaviour cannot be spared this questioning spirit, especially by scholars like me.

While being mindful of the demands of phenomenology of religion, it will be folly for any scholar or researcher to stop at an accurate description. With this in mind, it is undeniable that some of the activities that followers of the 'Man of God' do leave a lot to be desired. At times, their actions and behaviour defy logic. It is at this point that onlookers' criticisms of religious people's actions and behaviour call for a closer analysis (a skill that scholars cannot desist from).

The believer's point of view is commendable, but reality and experience have shown that believers suffer at the hands of 'Man of God'; but fail to complain due to the awe associated with the 'Man of God'. Many cases are reported where people are duped of large sums of money by 'Men/Women of God', only to realise afterwards that they have been duped. About two years ago, a case was heard in the courts where congregants were suing prophet Makandiwa for 'fake prophecies' (*The Sunday Mail, Religion*, 06 August 2017). Chitando (2013: 248) criticises church leaders who manipulate 'religious beliefs to confuse their followers while they accumulated resources at their expense'. The overuse of verses on seeding as well as those that portray the 'Man of God' as a 'touch not the anointed' cower believers into naivety. Once cowered the believers can no longer ask for accountability in the financial matters of the church. They are duped in the name of doing the work of God. Asking for financial reports in the church is construed as a lack of trust, an unaccepted position in some church denominations.

Eating of grass cited above cannot escape the critical eye of a scholar of religion or researcher. Although the believers themselves testified that they were happy to do it in order to get closer to God, such naivety defies natural laws of logic/reason. How can people believe in eating grass as a way to get closer to God? In what ways are the two related?

To further illustrate how religious people are gullible, a story of a

young woman going to church at night who met an 'angel' from God went viral on social media. In the story a boy waylaid a young woman on her way to church. The boy had a torch and he used it to confuse the young woman. The light from the torch appeared as if it was a light from the angel, which ordered the young woman to undress since the 'angel' wanted to be intimate with her. The young woman, thinking it was a true angel, undressed as was commanded by the 'angel'. She was raped in that incident only to realise later that she was raped by a local boy. Although she reported the matter to the police and the boy was arrested, her religious naivety is beyond comprehension.

Many stories of this nature are often reported in the media. Most women are duped especially by purported prophets from the Apostolic movements. The story, 'Johane Masowe Prophet rapes woman' (*Harare 24*, 31 December 2012) says it all. Desperate women are raped in the guise of being healed or exorcised of evil spirits that make them barren. The desperate women are told to meet the 'Man of God' in the forest where there is no-one. As if that is not enough, they are asked to remove their clothing as the 'prophet' wants to perform his exorcism activities on her body while naked. The woman falls prey to the unscrupulous 'prophet' or *madzibaba.* One may ask: Is this not naivety that is explained religiously? One wonders where one's senses would have gone to undress before a man in the middle of a forest.

The Argument

The issues of material/spiritual seeding and 'Man of God' remain contested even in the above discussion. Advocates and practitioners of seeding maintain that seeding is beneficial in their day-to-day lives. Their argument is summarised by an interviewee who questioned why it was right when members of political parties pledge (synonymous to seeding), but wrong when Christians seed in the church This resonates with Bulla's (2015) views. Using a phenomenology of religion perspective, scholars of religion and researchers have no right to judge religious phenomena like seeding and the 'Man of God' title. Theirs are accurate descriptions of religious phenomena. They must be guided by the dictum, 'The believer is always right'. If believers see no evil in their seeding and it works for them, no one should judge. 'On top of which mountain does one stand to judge seeding in the church and the role of the 'Man of God''? What this implies is that if believers find sense in their seeding or eating grass, so be it.

On the contrary, scholars of religion and researchers are critical by nature. Even though phenomenology of religion encourages them to desist from judging, their profession has trained them to be inquisitive as they seek to explain why phenomena behave the way they do. The bid to answer the *what*, *how* and *why* questions that often confront scholars and researchers compels them to be critical. They cannot stop at accurate descriptions of phenomena, but go beyond to evaluate. This is the essence of scholarship. So, questioning material/spiritual seeding as religious gullibility depends on the 'mountain one stands' on. My argument is that while believers feel that what they are doing is normal, scholars and researchers alike have an obligation to inform society correctly and thus cannot afford the luxury of being uncritical.

Conclusion

Labelling seeding in the church as religious gullibility is heavily contested. It depends on the mountain one stands on. In this chapter, I have examined how congregants of several denominations (A.F.M., P.H.D. and G.M.M.) perceive seeding as well as the 'Man of God'. The chapter argues that it is the believers' perceptions that determine how they behave towards the notion of seeding and the idea of the 'Man of God'. I have highlighted that if the approach adopted for the study is the phenomenology of religion it is prudent to listen to the believers, for the believers are always right. If the believers justify seeding, a phenomenologist cannot dispute that. Scholars of religion and researchers alike need to tread cautiously when dealing with religious phenomena. Their mandate is to describe accurately and not to evaluate. But as evident in the study, evaluation is inevitable. The need to strike a balance between desisting from judging and the penchant to evaluate poses challenges for phenomenologists. Using IPA strikes a balance, where believers remain steadfast in their beliefs, while scholars/researchers call a spade a spade. Gullibility in all its forms is bad practice, for it violates certain fundamental human rights whose recourse is often sought in courts.

References

Biri, K. 2012. The Silent Echoing Voice: Aspects of Zimbabwean Pentecostalism and the Quest for Power, Healing and Miracles. Available at:

http://uir.unisa. ac.za/handle/10500/6609
(Accessed on 24 November 2018.)

Bulla, F. 2015. Seeding: Manipulation or the Truth? *The Sunday Mail. Religion.* 15 March. Available at: https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/seeding-manipulation-or-the-truth (Accessed on 30 November 2018.)

Chimuka, T.A. 2017. The Threat of Gullibility: Faith and Christian Behaviour in Southern Africa. *Oral History Journal of South Africa* 5,1: 49 – 63. https://upjournals.co.za/index.php/OHJSA

Chitakure, J. 2016. *The Pursuit of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religious Studies*. London: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Chitando, A. 2013. Reading Zimbabwean Writers on Churches and Prophets: Insights from Maredza, Mungoshi and Chinodya. In Chitando, E., R.M. Gunda & J. Kügler (eds.): *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.

Chitando, E. 1998. The Phenomenological Method in a Zimbabwean Context: To Liberate or Oppress? *Zambezia* XXV,i: 99 – 114.

Chitando, E., M. Manyonganise & O.B. Mlambo 2013. Young, Male and Polished: Masculinities, Generational Shifts and Pentecostal Prophets in Zimbabwe. In Chitando, E., R.M. Gunda & J. Kügler. (eds.): *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.

Chitando E., T.P. Mapuranga & N.T. Taringa 2014. On Top of which Mountain does One Stand to Judge Religion? Debates from a Zimbabwean Context. *Journal for the Study of Religion* 27,2: 115 – 136. Available at: http://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/jsr/v27n2/07.pdf; and, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317449804_On_top_of_which_mountain_does_one_stand_to_judge_religion_Debates_from_a_Zimbabwean_context (Accessed on 28 November 2018).

Conrad, P. 1987. The Experience of Illness: Recent and New Directions. *Research in the Sociology of Health Care* 6: 1 – 31.

De Vaus, D. 2002. *Surveys in Social Research.* 5th Edition. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446263495

Durkheim, E. 1912. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.* New York: Dover Publications, INC.

Glover, N. 2006. Elijah versus the Narrative of Elijah: The Contest between

the Prophet and the Word. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 30,4: 449 – 462. Available at: http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.873.5551&rep=rep1&type=pdf (Accessed on 29 November 2018.) https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089206066319

Gunda, R.M. & F. Machingura 2013. The 'Man of God': Understanding the Biblical Influence on Contemporary Mega-Church Prophets in Zimbabwe. In Chitando, E., R.M. Gunda & J. Kügler (eds.): *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.

Harare 24. 2020. 31 December.

Reilly, J. 2014. Congregation Eat Grass to be Closer to God. *Mail Online* 10 January.

Smit J.A. & M. Osborn. 2007. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. Available at: http://med-fom-familymed-research.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2012/ 03/IPA_Smith_Osborne21632.pdf (Accessed on 21 August 2019).

The Sunday Mail, Religion. 2017. 06 August.

Togarasei, L. 2010. Churches for the Rich? Pentecostalism and Elitism. In Togarasei, L. & E. Chitando (eds.): *Faith in the City: The Role and Place of Religion in Harare*. Uppsala: Swedish Science Pr.

Dr. Tenson Mabhuya Muyambo
Gender and Religion
Department of Teacher Development
Great Zimbabwe University
Masvingo
Zimbabwe
tmuyambo@gzu.ac.zw

Wailing More than the Bereaved: Afrocentric Reflections on Gender Issues in Shona Traditional Religion and Culture

Beatrice Taringa

Abstract

Gender issues in the context of African culture and religion have been explored from a Western liberal feminist approach. This approach, assuming Western ontology and epistemology, approach gender issues with pre-set categories that indicate that African women are oppressed. As a result, the main argument has been that the relationship between males and females serves to divide, oppose and alienate females from males. So, even African feminists who have attempted to address gender issues in African culture and religion tend to produce Western research on gender issues done by indigenous people. To this end, they also end up wailing more than the bereaved regarding the status of African women in terms of gender. They end up giving an outsider perspective, like a stranger who upon arriving at a funeral and wails more than the bereaved and later asks, 'Who has died?' Therefore, the central questions in this paper are (i) are Shona women oppressed? (ii) is there a framework that can be used to account for gender issues in Shona communities in their own terms? This paper explores Shona ontology as an indigenist research paradigm to account for gender issues in Shona culture and religion. The paper argues that the relationship between males and females in Shona culture and religion must be understood in the context of a truly relational ontology where all things are recognized and respected for their place in the overall system. While males and females are differentiated, their relationships are neither oppositional nor binary, but inclusive and accepting diversity.

Keywords: gender, ontology, relational, indigenist paradigm, feminist

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a3

Introduction and Background

The main question in this paper is how we might account for, or explain gender issues in African communities and in particular in Shona traditional religion and culture. Most scholars on gender issues in African communities have tended to account for and analyse gender issues in the light of Western feminist theoretical frameworks, in particular Western liberal feminist theoretical perspectives. For example, the different forms of gender bias that may be found in literature texts have been considered in terms of Sadker and Sadker's (2001) pre-set categories of invisibility, stereotyping, linguistic unreality, fragmentation, selectivity, and cosmetic biases. This is consistent with their research questions, which tend to point to gender issues picked through pre-set categories already encompassed in Western feminist theories. Rarely do we find cases where gender issues are regarded as affirming the African male and African female relational ontology. In order for this research to build in openness to the unexpected, to new findings, it employs an interpretive theoretical framework using an Afrocentric perspective, particularly Africana womanism. This article therefore departs from Western feminist approaches to gender issues in African communities and employs an Afrocentric theory called Africana womanism in order to account for and analyse gender issues in their own terms; that is in the context of the Shona culture which the authors presuppose.

Afrocentrism

Afrocentrism is a complex concept. It defies a single and simple definition. Mazama (2003: 5) notes,

> There is still confusion on the definition of the term Afrocentricity as some scholars tend to give their own definitions, free versions and often choosing to emphasize on certain aspects of the paradigm to suit their own purposes. Others take term Afrocentricity for granted and ignoring to define it.

It is not the intention of this paper to settle the definitional problems related to Afrocentrism. Afrocentrism is rather complex. It has many manifestations and expressions. As a result, this study is going to settle for the common characteristics of the Afrocentric perspective, particularly as espoused in definitions by leading scholars such as Asante, and settles for choosing to em-

phasize certain aspects of the paradigm to suit the purpose of this study.

One way in which Afrocentrism is defined is with reference to the establishment of a particular frame of reference and as an intellectual theory. For example, Asante (1991: 172) tells us that Afrocentrism establishes,

> A frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person ... it centres on placing people of African origin in control of their lives and attitudes about the world. This means that we examine every aspect of the dislocation of African people; culture, economies, psychology, health and religion .... As an intellectual theory, Afrocentricity is the study of the ideas and events from the standpoint of Africans as the key players rather than victims. The theory becomes, by virtue of an authentic relationship to the centrality of our own reality, a fundamentally empirical project ... it is the African asserting itself intellectually and psychologically, breaking the bonds of western domination in every other field.

An important implication of this definition is, as Mazama (2003: 5) rightly points out,

> Afrocentricity, contends that our main problem is precisely, ours, usually unconscious, adoption of the Western worldview and perspectives and their attendant conceptual framework. The list of those ideas and theories that have invaded our lives as 'normal', 'natural' or even worse, 'ideal', is infinite.

The scholar further contends that, 'Rarely would people question concepts like 'the need for democracy', planning, progress, the nation state as the best form of political and social organization, to name only a few'. One of the concepts that have not been questioned in relation to gender issues in Shona traditional religion and culture is the liberal feminist approach. as conceptual framework.

In order to desist from adoption of the Western worldview and perspectives and their attendant conceptual frameworks. this study takes heed of Asante's call for the need for an Afrocentric orientation towards data. This involves, in the case of this study, a way of analysing information from an African Shona perspective, as opposed to from a Western feminist perspective. The central issue is: How would Africans look at gender issues if there was no

Western feminism? To continue using Western gender-perspective means, according to Afrocentric terminology,

> we do not exist in our own terms, but on borrowed terms, European ones. We are dislocated and having lost sight of ourselves in the midst of European decadence and madness, it becomes increasingly difficult for us to orient our lives in a positive and constructive manner, hence the plight that is ours.

Mazama (2003: 5) sums this up by saying,

> The challenge is monumental: our liberation, Afrocentricity contends, rests upon our ability to systematically displace European ways of thinking, being, feeling, etc. and consciously replace them with ways that are germane to our own African cultural experience.

This article therefore assumes that gender means different things to different people since it carries the ideologies of the sociocultural context within which it is constructed (Gambahaya, Muwati & Mutasa 2008: 41). Therefore, the focus is on reflecting the possibility of an indigenist paradigm for accounting for the state of gender relations in Shona traditional religion and culture. In this way this paper argues for different points of departure in order to understand gender issues among the Shona by taking Shona views of reality (ontology) as a starting point. We are encouraged more than before, in the light of Afrocentrism, to rely on local perspectives to measure our African phenomena and gender issues should not be an exception. Thus, the current study argues for Afrocentric paradigm, in particular its branch called Africana womanism.

Africana Womanism

Africana Womanism, like Afrocentrism, is a broad-based theoretical perspective. It accommodates several motifs, if not species, under its genius. No definition or shortlist of characteristics could be exhaustive, but many, although by no means all, Africana womanism theories are able to identify their perspective with the idea that Africana womanism proceeds from the proposition that relations expressed in African culture, and in my case in Shona culture, need to be taken seriously, and shall be considered in their own terms.

This paper therefore differs from liberal feminist approaches that premise gender issues on the philosophy of Western individualism and tends to describe such gender relationships as massive gender oppression, gender stereotyping, gender bias and gross human rights violation. The strength of Africana womanism is therefore that it assumes that African gender relationships must be grounded in distinctive ontologies and epistemologies characterized by a holistic approach in which male and female constitute an organic reality.

This is why Hudson-Weems (2003: 157) argues that Africana Womanism is,

> neither an outgrowth nor an addendum to feminism, or Walker's womanism that some Africana woman has come to embrace. It is an ideology created and designed for all woman of African descent. It is grounded in African culture and, therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs and desires of African women.

We therefore agree with Gambahaya *et al.* (2008), who find it quite disturbing to continue using Western feminist approaches when dealing with gender issues in Africa. They note,

> Quite disturbing, though, is the fact that in many instances today, women's studies in particular and gender studies in general continue to be directed and informed by western feminist ontologies, as if they are a naturalized reality in a multicultural context.

Gambahaya *et al.* (2008:41) decry Western feminism as an approach that has fundamentally eclipsed the African gender possibility, which in many ways has nothing in common with the Western view with its insatiable inclination towards polarization. What is more important for this paper is the way the position they argue for is consistent with Africana womanism. They rightly point out the thrust of Africana womanism when they say,

> The thrust is on casting a different gender ontology that taps from African ontological and epistemological experience; it should occur that it is natural and legitimate for any people to approach their life from the perspective of their own culture.

In this article I will take the issue of ontology further and qualify it as Shona relational ontology. I will explain this at the end of this section.

Hudson-Weems (2003: 153) shares the same concern. The scholar finds Western feminism embarrassing. He regards feminism as 'an embarrassing Western philosophy'. He therefore discredits feminism as the destroyer of homes that were imported from America to ruin nice African women (Ama Ata Aidoo, 1999) and insists that the African context needs to consider the role of African women and her family, her community and her career in today's society as the central question. In approaching gender issues this paper does not assume that gender issues in Shona culture primarily involve seeing men as the primary enemy of women. I therefore agree with Hudson-Weems (2003: 158) who argues that

> first, Africana woman does not see man as her primary enemy as does the white feminist, who is carrying an age battle with her white male counterpart for subjugating her as property. Africana men have never had the same institutionalized powers as to oppress Africana women as white man has had to oppress white women'.

Theoretically my point of departure is therefore that gender issues in the context of African culture have been explored from a Western liberal feminist approach. This approach, assuming Western ontology and epistemology, approach gender issues with pre-set categories that indicate that African women are oppressed. As a result, the main argument has been that the relationship between males and females serves to divide, oppose and alienate females from males. This is because the philosophical basis of liberal feminism is individualism. Even African feminists who have attempted to address gender issues in African culture, tend to produce Western research on gender issues done by indigenous people. To this end, they also end up wailing more than the bereaved regarding the status of African women in terms of gender. They end up giving an outsider perspective, like a stranger who upon arriving at a funeral and wails more than the bereaved and latter asks, 'Who has died?'

This article employs African womanism grounded in Shona relational ontology as an indigenist research paradigm to reflect on the context in which gender issues in Shona communities must be considered. In using Africana womanism as theoretical framework we argue that the relationship between males and females in Shona culture must be understood in the context of a truly

relational ontology where all things are recognized and respected for their place in the overall system. While males and females are differentiated, their relationships are neither oppositional nor binary, but are inclusive and accepting diversity. We assume Gambahaya *et al.*'s (2008:41) observation that, the Shona and Ndebele conception of gender means 'different things to different people since it carries the ideologies of the socio-cultural context in which it is constructed'.

I therefore argue that the ontology and personhood embedded in Western feminist discourses on gender are not universal. Gender issues in Shona communities must be approached against the backdrop of Africana womanism featuring Shona, relational ontology. In Shona context, gender does not necessarily imply asymmetrical dualism that characterizes Western feminist discourse regarding gender issues in African contexts. It might be that our gender data are groaning, being forced into pre-set Western feminism gender categories.

Wailing More than the Bereaved: Position of Women a Little Lower than a Slave

Many scholars influenced by Western feminism mourn the position of women in traditional African society. Among the Shona in Zimbabwe, Owomoyela (2002: 91-92), who observes that,

> Men and women had well-defined roles and obligations that were specific and exclusive to their respective genders. The division of labor was such that the domestic sphere, on the one hand, belonged to the woman, and there her authority was unchallenged; the public domain, on the other hand, belonged to the man. Neither arena was regarded as superior to the other. The woman had the responsibility of distributing food and managing household affairs. Women also did work outside the home. They did most of the lighter work on the farm like planting and weeding. Heavier work like felling trees and cleaning the land fell to men. Husband cuts the poles, and builds and thatches the hut. He builds also the *bakwa* (wood storage area). He makes the bark sacks and the baskets such as *dengu* and *misero*. He makes reed sleeping mat and pillow of wood. He makes hoe handles axe shafts and bow; also, wooden plates, spoons and porridge sticks.

> He makes drums, spears. He hunts, milks and he is also the butcher and skinner. As for the woman she makes the inside of the huts, jugs, pots, cuts roofing grass, cooks food, draws water, grinds the meal, catches white ants and caterpillars.

In light of this observation the conclusion is that women have little or no status. The reasons are given in various directions. The most common reasons are summarized by Bourdillon (1987: 50) when he writes,

> there are many reasons given for this view: women are said to be bought and sold in marriage like chattels; at the death of a husband, his widows are inherited with his estate; since women could not represent themselves in traditional courts but had to be represented by a senior male relative, it is said legally they were minors all their lives; wives are said to be completely subject to their husbands who have the right to beat them within limits; women do most of the work in the fields and in the home while men spend much of their time sitting in idle chatter. So, some conclude that the traditional position of Shona women is a little better than the position of a slave.

The conclusion indicated in this quotation summarizes the findings reached by many Western feminist-oriented treatments of gender issues in African communities. They leave us with gender analyses based on an ontology that is trapped in a Cartesian 'subject-object' relation. Gender issues in African societies and in particular Shona society must be approached in the context of Shona relational ontology featuring, kinship, *hunhu*, opposites as sides of the same coin, sanctity of the individual as not the highest moral good and all is one and all is well.

Relational Ontology: Kinship

At the heart of Shona people are kinship. Mbiti's (1970: 135) observation about in kinship among Africans in general is apt and therefore worth quoting at length. He notes that:

> Kinship is reckoned through blood and betrothal (engagement and marriage). It is kinship which controls social relationships between

> people in a given community: it governs marital customs and regulations; it determines the behavior of one individual towards another. Indeed, this sense of kinship binds together the entire life of the tribe and is even extended to cover animals, plants, and non-living objects through the totemic system. Almost all the concepts connected with human relationships can be understood and interpreted through the kinship system. This it is which largely governs the behavior, thinking, and whole life of the individual in the society of which he is a member.

This idea of kinship is based on the belief that all people are descended from a common ancestor who long ago lived in their territory (Paris, 1995:77). The status of women *vis a vis* men in Shona society must therefore primarily be considered in the context of kinship. In this context, the key word is relationship; in fact, ontological relationship. The Shona views the world in such a way that everything in the universe is due to relationships. Everything is interconnected, interwoven, one; everything can relate to us and we can relate to every 'thing' as one. Therefore, relations between males and females are more fundamental than the males and females themselves. This flies in the face of substantivism ontology, which implies that males/females are ontologically primary and relations ontologically derivative (Wildman, 2006:1). The ontological primacy of relations is emphasized in Shona *hunhuism*.

Hunhu and Nested Relatedness

At the heart of Shona traditional religio-culture is *hunhu*. *Hunhu* expresses and promotes an ethic of kinship between human beings and other forms of life; plant and biological. *Hunhu* turns attention to we-ness. *Hunhu* is against the individualistic framing of male and female as discrete individuals. They have the following wisdom sayings, '*Rume rimwe harikombi churu, Chara chimwe hachitswanyi inda, Kutsva kwendebvu varume vanodzimurana* (At the heart of hunhu stands a relationality which frames males and females as 'nested relatedness).' *Hunhu* is not premised on the dichotomous opposition of culture and nature. *Hunhu* privileges knowing how to behave within relations in order to nourish these relations more than knowing things in and for themselves as objects separate from the knower. Based on the relational personhood concept *hunhu* fosters a relational perception of husbands and wives.

Hunhu does not take the axiomatic biological split between husbands and wives as essential. The Shona person is a composite of relationships. The person is conceived of as dividual and not individual. The Shona is misrepresented if depicted as an individual. The person has a holistic collective identity. Gender in Shona is relational, premised on personhood regarded as dividual rather than individual. In essence, dividual means a person is constitutive of relationships. The issues are how one relates to others, and part of the others is the female, conscious of relatedness. So, there is consciousness of relatedness. The central idea is that one shares space, things, and actions with others. There is a strong sense of sharing with others vs distribution of rights. The Shona people address each other by kinship terms: *baba, mai, Mbuya, Sekuru, muzukuru, mainini, tezvara, mwana, mukoma, munin'ina, hanzvadzi, tete*, and also totems (*Dziva, Shumba, Tembo*, etc.). The Shona therefore do not, in their conception of gender, through *hunhu*, individuate but dividuate husband and wife in their relationship. They are attentive to, and work, towards making relatedness. The Shona not only share relationships with fellow Shona, but also with members of other species in the vicinity. They make their personhood by producing and reproducing sharing relationships with surrounding beings; humans and others. They do not dichotomize other beings *vis-a-vis* themselves but regard them, while differentiated, as nested within each other (*Mudzimu weshiri uri mudendere*). They therefore appreciate that husbands and wives share responsibilities and not rights. They emphasize a one we-ness, the heart of *hunhu*; 'we are because we are'. There is a 'we-ness' versus 'sameness'.

For past centuries gender issues in African cultures have been hijacked by a Western worldview and have been interpreted from a Western feminist perspective in order to maintain the individualism at the heart of Western culture. The 'I' in the often cited 'I am because we are' is not the primary axis of *hunhu*. The 'I am' is a smuggled Western individualism. The correct rendering is 'we are because we are'. This is consistent with Shona culture where the primary unit of the society is not the individual.

Opposite Sides of the Same Coin

An African is never regarded as a loose entity to be dealt with strictly individually (so the idea of exclusion/inclusivity does not arise). His being is based on, or coupled with that of others. Next to – or behind – or in front of him there is always someone through whom he is associated. The concepts of

plurality and belonging to are always present, e.g. a person is always viewed as '*Motho aw batho*' (person of person or belonging to persons) or '*Motho weso*' (our person of person that is ours) (Paris 1995: 101).

First and foremost, of course the African person is defined as a member of a family, and so the African person is never alone in self-concept or in the perception of others. In fact, one can rightly claim that the African person is related to the family as the part of a living organism is related to the whole. As the former cannot live apart from the latter, so the life of a person is wholly dependent on the family and its symbiotic functions of biological lineage, communal nurture, and moral formation (Paris 1995:101).

Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: 'I am because we are: and since we are, therefore I am. This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man.' (Paris 1995: 111). In short, it means we are because we are. The Shona person is dividual rather than individual.

This is difficult for Western minds to grasp; Africans have no conception of a person apart from a community. This means more than the maintenance of a symbiotic relation between the individual and the community. Such implies a prior separate state. No such separation is possible in African thought. The two are related as opposite side of the same coin. The one implies the other (Paris 1995: 111).

The Sanctity of the Individual Person not the Highest Moral Good

Traditional African cultures are ordered in accordance with the principle of community that was hierarchically arranged, with the community of ancestors as the primary ruling power, followed by the descending authorities of tribal and familial communities respectively. The African person can only be understood in that tripartite communal relation. Interdependent relations among persons, families, tribe, and ancestors comprise the nature of African humanity. Since each is a part of a whole, all are related to one another reciprocally. That is to say, the purpose of each is to contribute to life and to receive life from all the others. No one community can exist severed from the others. In other words, each part of the whole social organism is necessary. As the value of the individual derives from the community, the goal of the community is to pro-

mote the life of the individual. Thus, individual rights and liberties cannot be determined apart from this communal context and the necessary responsibilities and obligations implied by membership to it (Magesa 1997: 114).

This type of thinking is difficult for the Western mind to appreciate, because the latter alters the relation by giving primacy to individual persons and lesser value to either the family or the larger community. Such thought virtually reverses the African understanding of the relation of person and community. Much of Western society has tended to view the sanctity of the individual person as the highest moral good (Magesa 1997: 114).

All is One and All is Well: Lessons from Taoism

Taoism is tied to the traditional Chinese yin/yang symbol. The symbol is usually pictured as summing up all of life's basic oppositions: good/ evil, active/ passive, positive/ negative, light/ dark, summer/ winter and male/ female. Although the halves are in tension, they are not flatly opposed; they complement and balance each other. Huston (1991: 214-215) explains the balance and complementarity as follows:

> Each invades the other's hemisphere and takes up its abode in the deepest recess of its partner's domain. And in the end, both find themselves resolved by the circle that surrounds them, the Tao in its eternal wholeness, the opposites appear as no more than phases in an endless cycling process, for each turn incessantly into its opposite, exchanging places with it. Life does not move onward and upward toward a pinnacle or a pole. It bends back upon itself to come, full circle, to the realization that all is one and all is well.

This shows that Taoism eschews all sharp dichotomies. This way of looking at reality is consistent with the Shona traditional religio-cultural beliefs. Through Western ontology, Western feminist interpretations have tended to dichotomize male and female. After all, who knows what is good or bad? The major problem is,

> If a conceptual framework that assumes gendering is fundamental social distinction, as evidently is the case in Western society, and is used to 'understand' a society in which gendering is not of such funda-

> mental importance, obviously misrepresentation and misunder-standing will result (Hallen, 2002: 106).

It may be that among some traditional Shona families each individual person accepts his or her sexuality and gender roles with grace and ease, without any undue embarrassment.

Conclusion

This paper has explored Shona ontology as an indigenist research paradigm for accounting for gender issues in Shona culture and religion. This is done against the backdrop of a strong distaste for Western liberal feminist approaches. The paper decries this type of Western feminism for championing the view that gender issues in African communities serve to divide, oppose and alienate females from males. In light of this the paper has likened Western feminism to a stranger who upon arriving at a funeral and wails more than the bereaved and latter asks, 'Who has died?' The paper has argued that the relationship between males and females in Shona culture and religion must be understood in the context of a truly relational ontology where all things are recognized and respected for their place in the overall system. It has highlighted the key components of Shona relational ontology framework as kinship, *hunhu*, opposites as sides of the same coin, sanctity of the individual as not the highest moral good and all is one and all is well. In this context it may be possible to view males and females as differentiated, their relationships being neither oppositional nor binary, but inclusive and accepting diversity. Since the paper has remained much at the theoretical level, future studies may need to test this alternative framework against qualitative data regarding how gender issues are being experienced in Shona communities.

References

Aidoo, A.A. 1999. *Unwelcomed Paws and Decorative Slaves or Glimpses of Women as Writers and Characters in Contemporary African Literatures*. Trenton: Africa World Press.

Asante, M.K. 1991. *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change*. Revised and Expanded. New York: Armlefi.

Asante, M.K. 1998. *The Afrocentric Idea.* Revised and Expanded Edition. Philadelphia: Temple University.

Bourdillon, M.F.C. 1987. *The Shona Peoples: An Ethnography of the Contemporary Shona with Special Reference to their Religion.* Gweru: Mambo Press.

Bourdillon, M.F.C. 1997. *Where are the Ancestors? Changing Culture in Zimbabwe.* Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications.

Gambahaya, Z., I. Muwati & D. Mutsa 2008. Restructuring the Gender Conceptual Matrix from an African-centered Perspective: Repudiating the Feminist Ontology. *Zambezia* 35,i/ii: 40 – 51.

Hallen, B. 2002. *A Short History of African Philosophy.* Indiana: IUP.

Hudson-Weems, C. 2003. Africana Womanism. In Mazama A. (ed.): *The Afrocentric Paradigm.* Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc.

Huston, S. 1991. *The World's Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions.* New York: Harper San Francisco.

Magesa, L. 1997. *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life.* Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa.

Mazama, A. 2003. An Afrocentric Approach to Language Planning. In Mazama A. (ed.): *The Afrocentric Paradigm.* Trenton: Africa World.

Mbiti, J.S. 1970. *African Religions and Philosophy.* New York: Doubleday.

Owomoyela, O. 2002. *Culture and Customs of Zimbabwe.* London: Greenwood.

Paris, P.J. 1995. *The Spirituality of African Peoples: The Search for a Common Moral Discourse.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Sadker, D. & M. Sadker 2001. Gender Bias: From Colonial America to Today's Classroom. In Banks J.A. & C.A.M. Banks (eds.): *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives.* New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Wildman, W.J. 2006. An Introduction to Relational Ontology. Available at: www.wesleywildman.com/.../2010-wildman-introduction-to-relational ontology (Accessed 12 July 2015).

Beatrice Taringa
Research Methods and Indigenous Languages
Department of Professional Studies
Belvedere Technical Teachers' College
Harare, Zimbabwe
taringabeatrice@gmail.com

Gender, Religion and/ or Culture and Academic Gullibility in Zimbabwe

Tabitha Bishau

Abstract

Bishau and Taringa (unpublished), in a study that culminated in a paper presented at the University of Zimbabwe 2019 Research Week, carried out broad-based research on the question of gender representation among the Jindwi people in Zimunya, Mutare, Zimbabwe. They probed the question: Gender Discourse in Zimbabwe: Whose Construct is on the Agenda? This followed Taringa and Museka's (2014; 2020) research interests on the subject of *roora,* commonly referred to as *lobola*. This study set out to test key axioms in contemporary gender discourse among academics in Zimbabwe in a bid to establish whether ordinary Zimbabweans identify with those axioms about gender in Zimbabwe today. The study selected and analysed ten studies from among Zimbabwean academics inside and outside Zimbabwe. The study reviewed these ten studies and came up with two major axioms on gender coming from them. The study then assessed these key axioms in terms of their validity through a phenomenological examination of the marriage rite among the Jindwi, a section of the Shona people living in the Zimunya area in rural areas around Mutare, Zimbabwe. The key axioms isolated for study were, first, the Shona society is patriarchal; further, patriarchy is the key causal factor for the oppression of the Shona woman in Zimbabwe; and secondly, that *roora* reduces women to mere commodities up for grabs (Togarasei, 2012:153). The study observed that the majority of ordinary Jindwi people could not confirm these constructions of gender, which most Zimbabwean academics appear to have adopted and propagate through their publications. This observation led to the key research question: how might we explain this behaviour among academics in Zimbabwe? May this be a question of gullibility in terms of adopting and propagating Western gender axioms among academics even when the reality on the ground speaks otherwise?

Keywords: *Roora*, gender, gender role, patriarchy, ritual, rite of passage

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a4

Introduction

Scholars generally refer to *roora* as *lobola. Lobola* or *lobolo* comes from Zulu, Xhosa, and Ndebele, while in Sesotho it is referred to as *bohali* (Ansell 2001:697). While each indigenous language has its own term for *lobola* that depicts exactly what goes on during the marriage rite, *lobola* is the term that most scholars prefer (Ansell 2001: 697). However, meaning resides in terms, and translations sometimes dilute the meaning. I will stick to the Shona term for *lobola* that the Jindwi people use, which is *roora*, to maintain the meaning the Jindwi people hold for this marriage rite.

Taringa and Museka (2020) do a good job to debate whether or not *roora* can correctly translate to bride price or bride wealth. Therefore, I will not dwell on the same subject. The need to verify the scholarly conclusions about the Shona culture in general and about gender in particular motivated this study. The study analyses a purposeful sample of studies from a number of academics in Zimbabwe and abroad, but who deal with the Shona culture and/ or religion. In this study, I take the distinction between religion and culture as blurred. I entirely agree with Beyers (2017: 1) that the distinction between religion and culture in Africa is paper thin, because religion in Africa is an identity marker, which makes it a custodian of culture. Therefore, conclusions about African culture necessarily become conclusions about African religion. As I proceed, I will use the term 'religion' also to embrace the culture of the Jindwi people.

In terms of the research strategy, data saturation, more than representativeness of the population, determined the sample size of ten studies. As I demonstrate in the brief review of literature below, after ten studies, the two axioms under study continued to emanate, though stated in different terms. No new data came out thereafter, and I had already determined that I had reached data saturation. All ten studies and more reach the conclusion that the Shona religion is patriarchal, and patriarchy influences Shona men to oppress women in various ways and degrees. *Roora*, which is an aspect of the Shona religion, reduces women to mere objects for sale, and therefore *roora* does not accord African women the gender equality they deserve and need.

Therefore, the goal of this study was to probe these key questions:

- Is the Shona society patriarchal, and to what extent can patriarchy be regarded as the key causal factor for the oppression of the Shona woman in Zimbabwe?

- How far valid is the assertion that patriarchy influences *roora* heavily in several ways that have affected gender relations within marriage in Zimbabwe today?

- How applicable are Western lenses to studies of the Shona culture?

Before I proceed to probe these questions, it is necessary to offer a brief review of each of the ten studies in order to maintain my observation that the key axioms on gender I refer to above, and from where the questions above come, indeed emanate from these studies.

Brief Review and Analysis of the Sample Literature

I start with five pieces of literature emphasising patriarchy, and then I will look at the other five emphasising *roora.*

Wells (2003) looks at evidence from a University of Zimbabwe oral history project featuring rural women in colonial Rhodesia. According to the study, several elderly women from the colonial Rhodesia played an active role in undermining patriarchal customs, which they experienced as oppressive. The patriarchal customs that they are said to have undermined included the custom of having husbands chosen for them, involvement in income generation, which was a preserve of men and pursuit of formal education becoming more and more autonomous in their operations. Wells' study purports to compliment other pieces of research that depict women of that period primarily resisting patriarchal customs they perceived as oppressive.

Wells drew her conclusion from interviews carried out by a group of University of Zimbabwe students with elderly women, whom the students had invited to tell their stories. According to the results from students' interviews, the elderly women from the colonial period 'unleashed reservoirs of pent-up emotion' over, and fiercely condemned, the suffering they had experienced due to customary patriarchy over the years (Wells 2003: 114). I have serious misgivings about Wells' study, but those would be a subject for another study. For example, the design is vague and the population ill defined. Thus, the constant reference to 'many rural women' whose number is never really stated does not surprise me. In addition, it is very difficult to determine the sample size from where the conclusions were drawn and therefore it is difficult to ascertain the validity of the conclusions. What is of interest for now is that the

study rests on the assumption that during the colonial era, the Shona society was patriarchal. Even now it is still patriarchal, although patriarchy is fast fading away due to resistance from 'many' women.

A close analysis of the research write-up reveals some tension between what is stated explicitly and what is not, but which forms an irritating undergrowth within the research, causing the outbursts against an assumed 'patriarchy enemy' that must be done away with at all costs. Wells (2003: 114) herself states that when she presented the findings of her study at a seminar at the University of Zimbabwe in November 1994, black male historians disputed the possibility that African women had done anything but passively accept their status in society, alleging that students must have distorted their data. The skin colour and gender of the historians put aside, throughout Wells punctuated the research write-up with footnotes, explaining what probably turned out to be flaws in the student research assistants' data collection and data generation procedures. The tension comes out clearly even in her contradictory assertions such as 'although also limited in scope' the data ''substantially expand the input from African women'. How can findings that are limited in scope expand the input of the women in a 'substantial way'? I can go on with my critique that exposes Wells' bias and deliberate effort towards the conclusion that the Shona society is patriarchal, but I have said enough to demonstrate that she reached that conclusion hurriedly and from a surface analysis of a culture in which she should have immersed herself for some time. Worse, she was not patient enough at least to pause to listen to the critique of 'black male historians' and discard it later after verifying it.

However, despite the loopholes I pointed out, I ignored others for lack of time and space. Wells' study and similar ones from some foreign and senior researchers like her seem to have influenced a number of academics to look at the Shona religion and related religious constructions of gender through the lenses of patriarchy. I demonstrate this using examples that follow.

Mutekwe and Modiba (2012) evaluate gender sensitivity and balance in selected textbooks in the Zimbabwean school curriculum. Their study examined both the content and discourse of selected history textbooks in which the authors assessed gender sensitivity and balance against the backdrop of interpretations of participants' verbatim statements during focus-group discussions. The researchers studied four history textbooks, namely Birmingham and Martin (1983), Makuyana (1994), Mlambo (1995), and Barnes *et al.* (2010). The study concluded, among other conclusions, that the textbooks embodied a

great deal of patriarchal values and ideologies, gender biases, imbalances and stereotypes. The study further concluded that the gender representations in textbooks overtly and covertly affected students. Logically, the study recommended a careful selection of textbooks for schools that would avoid gender bias and/or stereotypes and would ensure gender sensitivity and balance. The study envisaged a hidden curriculum within the textbooks comprising gendered and patriarchal ideologies, which schools consciously or unconsciously subtly transmit to pupils.

I cannot claim to be a historian per se, but I can say with confidence that history differs from fiction and a history textbook differs from a novel that contains a fictitious story. A picture in a history textbook depicts, or is supposed to depict, what really transpired in space and time. Yet Mutekwe and Modiba (2012: 370) lament that Makuyana's book, for example, is gender insensitive and unbalanced, because a picture on page 186 of the book shows four men, Smith, Muzorewa, Sithole and Chirau, signing the 1978 Agreement. Worse, the researchers insinuate in their conclusion that Makuyana and the other three historians include such pictures to peddle their patriarchal ideologies. If the signing of the 1978 Agreement involved four men, how else was Makuyana supposed to depict it? Was he supposed to manufacture a woman representative to include in the picture for the sake of being gender sensitive? This critique serves to show that the researchers already had predetermined lenses with which they looked at the history textbooks. The lenses led them to their predetermined conclusion that patriarchy is a key feature of the Shona society.

With a slightly different motivation, Mapuva (2013) looks at recent literature on women and gender in a bid to highlight violations of women's rights against the backdrop of a predominantly patriarchal Zimbabwean society. In his study of the role of the Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA), in articulating the role of women in nation building by, *inter alia*, observing their rights, Mapuva is honest enough to betray his sources of influence, which are the global recognition and efforts to uphold the status of women. I am not interested in the specific conclusion that Mapuva reaches. What I need to underscore is that like the rest, he begins and proceededs from the axiom that the Zimbabwean society is patriarchal.

Manyonganise (2015) offers a more detailed analysis of the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean society in her analysis of Ubuntu, which is arguably the defining philosophy and ethic not just of Zimbabwe but of Africa as a whole.

Her study sought to examine how most academic writings shower eulogies on the concept of *Hunhu* (*Ubuntu* in Shona) as the indispensable African philosophy and ethic, without attention to the detail of how the philosophy and ethic intersect with gender. Agreeing with Mangena (2009: 20), Manyonganise (2015: 2) argues that despite the communitarian nature of *Hunhu*, the philosophy is riddled with the whims and caprices of patriarchy. She then goes into a detailed analysis of evidence from the social life of Shona women where these 'whims' and 'caprices' of patriarchy manifest to disadvantage and oppress women. In doing this, Manyonganise cites several studies from Zimbabwean and non-Zimbabwean researchers that she agrees with, covering a wide spectrum from Chimuka (2001) to more recent studies like Chitando and Mateveke (2012). Going through her study accorded me the opportunity to get a satisfactory sense of what those other academics think about patriarchy and gender constructions among the Shona in Zimbabwe.

Despite efforts at providing a balance, Manyonganise's analysis still betrays the tension I refer to regarding what the academics state and what prevails on the ground. Manyonganise (2015: 1) acknowledges openly that *Ubuntu* is embraced not just in Africa but even abroad as an African ethic that defines an individual's Africanness. She claims that beyond the African borders other ethnic groups, interestingly including Westerners, pondering how it can be embraced in their contexts. Manyonganise, as expected, does not pursue this observation to its logical conclusion, which would entail raising a very critical question: if *Ubuntu* as a philosophy were this patriarchal and oppressive to the extent to which it is vilified, would it be this attractive and charming so as to draw the attention of the global community? Academics appear to have been gullible enough to accept the critique wholesale without questioning it.

Chikunda and Chikunda (2016) explore the underlying mechanisms that influence gender transformation in the uptake of science subjects by the girl child in Zimbabwe. They argue that despite the strides made concerning gender equality in education in Zimbabwe today, gender disparity persists in terms of the general uptake of natural science subjects by the girl child. This is because the natural science teachers succumb to patriarchy and other forms of gender inequality caused by structures deeply imbued in the societal norms of the Shona culture. The two academics single out patriarchy as a cultural norm that decisively plays a determining role in constraining the uptake of natural science subjects by the girl child. Suffering from the effects of patri-

archy, the teacher educators in the natural science subjects that the two scholars studied demonstrated a very limited grasp of gender-responsive pedagogies. The two scholars observed that the teacher educators concerned perpetuated the fundamental belief that girls are socialised to do easier stuff and should reserve difficult subjects like the natural sciences for boys. The study makes several observations and recommendations, which are not the current focus of my paper. However, the two scholars engage in a reflexive exercise in which they criticise their own theory as too deterministic and argue for openness in considering other factors that may be at play in terms of the uptake of natural science subjects by the girl child. The two scholars do not consider revisiting their lenses of patriarchy with which they penetrated the subject, which they probably gullibly adopted from previous studies, especially from Western scholars that dominate their paper.

Below I make the same observations regarding the selected literature on *roora*. I begin my review with a 2001 study on *roora* from a London-based scholar, Nicola Ansell. Although it is an early study, like Wells' study on patriarchy, the study provides the basic analytic lenses with which the selected African academics looked at *roora.*

Ansell (2001) looks at the concept of *roora,* which she calls 'bride wealth or *lobola'.* Although she studied the concept as it is practised in Southern Africa she zeroed in on Lesotho and Zimbabwe, looking at how the Basotho in Lesotho and the Shona in Zimbabwe carry out the practice of *roora.* Ansell's conclusions are drawn from analyses of a series of focus-group discussions among senior students at two rural secondary schools, for which she used pseudonyms as Mahloko High School in Lesotho and Ruchera Secondary School in Zimbabwe (Ansell 2001: 705). Ansell's study is important for my study in that it compares the students' views on *roora* with both historical and contemporary academic interpretations of the practice (Ansell 2001: 697). This is quite similar to what I am doing here: comparing results from the field with academic interpretations of elements of Shona culture.

Ansell makes several key positive observations about *roora,* which she must have taken from her field study, because my field study led me to the same observations. It is clear from Ansell's study that *roora* is a significant element of marriage among the Basotho of Lesotho and the Shona of Zimbabwe (Ansell 2001: 697). In fact, using the indefinite article to describe the value of *roora,* especially among the vaJindwi that I studied, is an

understatement. *Roora* is the significant element of marriage among this Shona group. Ansell does not seem to pursue this key observation to probe exactly why it is a significant element of marriage, because of her obvious preconceptions, which she brings into her analysis of field notes in a very pronounced way. It becomes obvious as one reads her analysis of the results from the field that she provides an explanation on every positive aspect of *roora,* especially why the African cultures studied continue to embrace the practice, despite serious efforts to paint it negatively. The lenses she used to penetrate the data she got from the field like control, equal rights, property rights, men's space, commercialization of *roora,* patriarchy and gender relations, seem to have contributed to the tension that characterizes her study where a practice that she describes so negatively continues among the Africa cultures she studied unabated. Ansell concludes, as her title states, that the practice continues simply because the Basotho and Shona people think it is their culture. Apart from lacking respect for the people studied, ontologically and epistemologically such a conclusion is empty because it lacks a deep axiological appreciation of *roora* and the African culture in general. Unfortunately, African academics, a sample of whom I review below, adopted Western lenses like those that Ansell used to analyse African cultural elements like *roora,* without questioning their applicability to the African context. I demonstrate this through brief reviews of selected studies on *roora* below.

Mawere and Mawere (2010) carry a philosophical examination of African forms of marriage, especially the customary marriage practice of *kukumbira* (asking for a bride/woman's hand in marriage from her parents, but with her informed consent). Their study was particularly interesting for me because it took the Shona ethnic group of Zimbabwe as a case study. After a thorough analysis of the perception of the Shona people towards the customary practice of *kukumbira* and their receptivity of this traditional Shona marriage custom, the two scholars made several observations that were of interest to me. First, the study observes that an overwhelming majority of respondents give a thumbs-up to the marriage practice because they think it is very valuable. It is valuable as a crucial part of the Shona culture that respects women's human rights, stresses the prohibition of pre-marital sexual conduct and it reinforces family ties. The minority, despite being a minority, raised points that are subjects of my study here. Mawere and Mawere (2010) point out that the custom should not be commercialized, as hefty bride wealth leads to the commodification of women. This observation led to their main point that the

custom is at odds with gender equality that contemporary women are fighting for, especially that this practice and other forms of marriage where *roora* is paid take place within the context of patriarchy that was meant to serve males, not the women concerned. This makes the practice open to abuse by some parents who charge hefty bride wealth, as well as by some husbands and in-laws who abuse the married women's rights on the grounds that they have bought them at a price. The study concludes that the custom of *kukumbira* should be maintained ,but for purposes of building family ties, avoiding abuse of women in marriage and promoting respect of human rights.

This study reveals that the practice of *roora* has a functional value among the Shona and that is why it continues. However, as I stated earlier, in their analysis, Mawere and Mawere employ Western lenses like gender equality, commercialization, patriarchy and human rights abuse to penetrate the data from the field. They do not raise critical questions like whether or not there is a significant causal relationship between *roora* and the abuse of women in a marriage relationship. The study seems to adopt Western lenses of analysis as standard and the study and the others below inevitably develop a one-size-fits-all approach to culture.

In his discussion of Pauline challenges to African masculinities, Togarasei (2012) discusses marriage within the context of I Corinthians 7. Among other things, he discusses the issue of *roora* among the Shona, during which discussion he calls for the abolition of the custom. For him Shona men accumulate bride wealth for purposes of recognition as men and therefore, payment of bride price becomes a masculine attribute which, among other things, is a marker denoting that the man has enough money to take care of his wife (Togarasei 2012: 153). Togarasei betrays his Western lenses when he supports LaFont (2007)'s argument that *roora* today is regarded as payment for the bride and it boils down to the conclusion that the husband and his family purchase the woman in her totality, including her domestic labour and her children (Togarasei 2012: 153). He immediately points to *roora* as the cause of the married woman's inferior position that makes her powerless to fight against all sorts of physical abuse in marriage. It is not immediately clear how Togarasei establishes this causal relationship between *roora* and masculinity, let alone, abuse in marriage, other than the lenses that he used to look at the practice. Unfortunately, evidence of data from the field is lacking and what comes out are Togarasei's opinions. It would have been interesting to see how Togarasei's opinions would compare with data from the field.

Chiweshe (2016) isolates two Western lenses, commercialisation of *roora* and patriarchy, to penetrate gender and power relations in Zimbabwe. The study analyses how the commercialisation of *roora* has had an impact women's bodies in Zimbabwe today. He concludes that the conversion of *roora* into cash has resulted in the commercialisation of *roora* and this has led to a widespread belief that marriage payments are synonymous with buying a wife (Chiweshe 2016: 229, 235). This has impacted gender relations in marriage, as women are left with little power to negotiate on issues such as safe sex or the use of family planning methods (Chiweshe, 2016: 239). Again, there is a lot of ideological and axiomatic tension in this study, probably emanating from Chiweshe's lenses that influenced him to just gloss over the value of the practice that would have provided an answer to the puzzle about the persistence of the custom, despite its obvious flaws that Chiweshe (2016: 236) belabours to document. Like Mawere and Mawere, Chiweshe fails to raise critical questions. For example, does the practice of *roora* have structures that prevent its commercialisation and abuse? It is strange that Chiweshe (2016: 236) observes that the custom has obvious flaws and yet it persists among the Zimbabweans. Does this not call for an empirical axiological study of the reasons why this is so? In fact, he does not even raise these questions as areas for further study. Chisi (2018) almost comes to the same conclusions as Chiweshe.

Chisi (2018) carried out research on the pastoral challenges the practice of *roora* poses for the Zimbabwean society. *Inter alia,* this study looked at the challenges of *roora* within the context of the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe which, according to the study, has resulted in the majority of men being unemployed. Allegedly, according to the study, *roora* becomes a main source of income when it is due and this makes men strive to maximize on *roora*. I am not clear on what evidence some of the conclusions were based, but the study managed to conclude that Shona men now send their daughters to school and care for them properly to increase their worth when they get married. Education and status are key determinants of *lobola* charged. Shona men endeavour to recoup all expenses paid on rearing their daughters plus profit. Men now perceive their daughters the same way an investor looks at his investment. As I stated earlier, field evidence for this conclusion is lacking, but throughout Chisi applies the Western lenses I indicated earlier to analyse the cases isolated for study and those lenses seem to be the bases for the conclusion that the study makes.

The five studies that place emphasis on *roora*, which I isolated for review, all show some tension between their conclusions and the evidence they gathered on the ground. The two axioms under study tend to override the value of *roora*, which all the studies seem to endorse. I take particular interest in this tension, because that tension helps to vindicate and put to the fore the point in my analysis. My point is that the scholars' approach to Shona culture is skewed in that they approach the culture with a pre-determined meaning that they construct using Western axioms and inappropriately attribute it to the phenomena under study. I isolate the Shona rite, *roora*, which I approach using empirical interpretive phenomenology to see if I can come up with meaning that is different from the reviewed articles.

Empirical Interpretive Phenomenology as the Methodology for the Study

The brief literature review above was meant to problematize the study. The brief literature review revealed that academics who did research on the Shona cultural elements under study used lenses which Westerners must have prescribed. The task in this section is now to instrumentalize the study. It is necessary to make explicit how data were gathered, presented and interpreted and therefore, to briefly make explicit the academic basis for my claims.

The broad focus of the study was basically to look at the lived experiences of the people of Zimunya, Mutare, Zimbabwe. I isolated three cases involving *roora* for analysis from among the Jindwi people. I focused in particular on how 'the mode of being' of this Jindwi cultural phenomenon is constituted within a particular meaning-context, that of the Jindwi. In their distinction between several types of phenomenological methodologies, Soule and Freeman (2019: 858) describe interpretive phenomenology as an approach that is based on Heidegger's conception of intentionality that mainly looks at how modes of phenomena are constituted within particular meaning contexts. Therefore, my methodology of choice was the qualitative methodology of empirical interpretive phenomenology**.**

The use of this qualitative research methodology underpinned by constructivism arising from phenomenology was determined by one key consideration: empirical interpretative phenomenology leads to a more informed understanding of phenomena from the perspective of participants, which is what I think lacked in the selected works reviewed. In particular, empirical

interpretive phenomenology is designed to determine and understand the beliefs of the devotee from the devotee's perspective. I am indeed cognizant of reservations which some scholars have on this objective of phenomenology like those that Manen (2017: 776-777) raises. However, empirical interpretive phenomenology remains my methodology of choice because my aim is to get to the unique meaning (*eidos*) of phenomena among the Jindwi. As such, it is best suited to investigate major claims that I highlighted from the brief review of literature above and to see if the Jindwi people can easily identify with those claims about their culture, especially in relation to gender. The focus and key objective of the research are on 'pulling out' the people's story about elements of their culture in relation to gender and then seek to listen to their description of what their subjective world is like for them.

Ultimately, from the descriptions, I then arrived at my statement of eidetic intuition regarding the essential meaning of the isolated rite. I then looked at how they shape constructions of gender in Zimbabwe.

Population

It was not possible to focus on all Shona-speaking groups in Zimbabwe. We zeroed in on the Shona people in Manicaland, mainly the Jindwi in Zimunya and Marange (Bocha), and some Manyika people in and around Zimunya in Manicaland, Zimbabwe. Similarly, it was not possible to investigate all aspects of the Jindwi and Manyika cultural and/or indigenous religious phenomena. However, I took comfort in the fact that, thick descriptions work well with few, but key cultural and/or religious phenomena isolated for study. One key rite of passage was selected for observation, namely *roora* (marriage rite). Therefore, the population comprised the Jindwi and Manyika people in and around the Zimunya and Marange areas in Manicaland who are familiar with the two rites of passage isolated for study. It is unusual to state a population for such a qualitative study as ours, but we do so in order to demarcate the boundaries from where data were generated until we reached saturation point

Sample

A purposeful sample of carefully chosen participants was chosen from among family people with the experiences of the two rites of passage stated above to avoid accusations of bias. Three key informants were identified because of

their age: one informant was 94 years and female; two other informants were male, one 97 years and the other 101 years old. They were deemed as key informants because we assumed that at the time they were born the white settlers had just settled in Zimbabwe. Therefore, chances of their descriptions of *roora* and the death rite to be free of Western bias were very high. Their descriptions compared with the descriptions of generations younger than them, which gave us an indication of the historical development of the cultural practices in question.

Data Generation and Presentation

I carried out interviews among as many Jindwi people as possible until we could not get any new data. At that point (saturation point) we sat down to sort out the descriptions of the phenomena and to name the phenomena for purposes of ease of discerning the phenomena. The descriptions from key informants were regarded as the primitive forms of the phenomena and therefore, the primary data.

Thick Description as My Data Analysis Method

Consistent with the philosophical assumptions of empirical interpretive phenomenology, for data analysis I will use thick description that gives voice to the participants or devotees' beliefs and concerns within their worldview (Thompson 2001:63). The principle behind this is that when we describe phenomena in sufficient detail we can evaluate the extent to which conclusions drawn from observations of the phenomena can be transferable to other settings, times and/or people (RWJF 2008: para. 1). In this paper I describe in sufficient detail one rite of passage, *roora*, indicated earlier, among the Jindwi in Zimunya, in Mutare, an eastern border area in Zimbabwe. While in doing so I give voice to the Jindwi. The description will be thick enough to allow my conclusions regarding constructions of gender exhibited through the rite to be transferable to other Shona groups within Zimbabwe and perhaps abroad to other African people.

Thick Description of the Marriage Rite, *Roora*

Below I describe three families who have recently been involved in the mar-

riage rite, *roora.* For ethical reasons of protecting the participants, I have used pseudonyms to refer to both the surnames and some family members of the three families in question. I called the first family the Mutseswa family, the second the Musweuyu family, and the third, the Butau family. The Mutseswa family referred to the marriage rite as *doodzi* and reserved the term *roora* to refer to the bride-wealth itself. The Musweuyu and the Butau family concurred, although they preferred the term *kuroorwa kwemwana* to *doodzi*. In the two latter cases, a daughter of the family was getting married, while in the case of the Mutseswa family it was their son who was getting married. The marriage rite for the Mutseswa and the Butau families, respectively took place in an urban set-up while the marriage rite involving the Musweuyu family took place at their rural homestead.

In two cases, the marriage ceremony took place in two different suburbs in Mutare. In the third case, the marriage ceremony took place in the rural areas, *kumusha*. All participants and informants agreed that traditionally the rite should take place *kumusha* and specifically in the round hut, *musha,* at the homestead. From the two rites under study, I came to know that the round hut was a significant building at the homestead. All three key informants agreed in principle that this hut is more than a simple shelter. It carries a religious, if not sacred, significance among the Jindwi. *Musha* is what Cohen (2011: 195) refers to as the *axis mundi*, the symbolic centre of the Jindwi religious cosmos. Interestingly, at the Musweuyu homestead there were two big houses where the close to fifty-strong participants to the ceremony could fit in and sit comfortably. However, they squeezed themselves into this round hut.

When I learnt about the significance of this round hut, I interviewed some elders from the Butau family who also had a daughter who was getting married. They too confirmed they had a serious debate about the venue. They wanted the ceremony to take place *kumusha,* but the Covid-19 induced lockdown conditions restricted them. I also interviewed representatives of the in-laws to the Musetswa family regarding the venue of the marriage rite. They gave a similar answer.

However, the constraints on the venue notwithstanding, all three the marriage ceremonies involved the same symbolic figures representing the families of the two parties to the marriage. In each case, the groom's delegation comprised the groom's brother or brothers, the groom's *sekuru* (uncle as in the brother of the groom's mother) and either *tete* (the groom's sister or sister of the groom's father) or *mukwasha* (*tete'*s husband) and a brother of the groom's

father. In all three cases, *sekuru* was *samaukuru,* that is, the head of the delegation. Variations were in others who accompanied this core group stated above, like the groom's best friend or friends who, together with the groom, remained outside the in-laws' homestead waiting to be called at the appropriate time during the ceremony. In all three cases, the bride's father invited all his immediate siblings as well as his brothers and sisters from the extended family. The bride's mother also invited her sisters to the ceremony. In the case of the Butau family, the bride's mother had only one sister present, but she invited her brother's wife. While the numbers were limited in the case of the ceremonies that took place in Mutare urban, it was clear that more would have been involved, had the environment been conducive. It became apparent that among the Jindwi marriage is a bond that transcends the two parties to the marriage.

In all three cases, *tete* (sister to the bride's father) played a key role in the marriage rite. She acted as the 'bridge' of communication between the groom's delegation and *vanatezvara* (the in-laws). The rite began with the ritual of *kukumbira ndiro* (asking for a wooden bowel/plate) from the mother who is the owner of the round hut and everything in it. I asked what would happen if she refused to give them the plate. All key informants were unanimous that if the mother refused she would be sending a clear message that she was not approving the marriage and therefore, the ceremony should not go on, although this was very rare.

There were variations regarding the other preliminary charges. Common were *mavhuramuromo* (a fee for requesting the in-laws to open their mouths), *manon'ora nzeve* (a fee for requesting the in-laws to open their ears), *matekenyandebvu* (It was not immediately clear what this was for, but it seems that it is an acknowledgement fee that when growing up the bride used to play with her father's beard. Put simply, this is an acknowledgement of the father's role in the upbringing of his daughter). There were other such small charges. I asked why it was not possible for the in-laws just to charge one lump sum. Again all three key informants agreed that each of the little charges was a ritual pointing to a certain element in both the existing relationship and that which the ceremony intended to build. During the ceremony, the money charged in each case was placed in the *ndiro,* which was then circulated around all the in-laws present, including the women, for all to witness. When all have looked, the in-law leading the ceremony would remove the money from the *ndiro* and go on to the next charge. In all three cases, it was clear that of all the charges, there was strict emphasis on *mafukidza dumbu* (this is an equivalent of *mate-*

kenya ndebvu in that it is an acknowledgement of the role of the mother carrying her daughter for nine months in the womb), *mombe yemusana* (explanations of the meaning and ritual significance of this varied. The general agreement was that this was a fee, usually paid as a live cow, given to the bride's mother for carrying the pregnancy and nursing her daughter to adulthood).

Besides, all three cases involved Christian families. Each ceremony ended with the ritual of *kukumbira muchato* (requesting to have a white wedding). In all three cases, the in-laws granted permission on one condition, namely that the groom would have paid everything that was due to the bride's mother. All men whom I interviewed acknowledged that they prioritized this, especially *mombe yemusana.* Almost all of the men whom I interviewed associated this with some spiritual misfortune if the cow was not 'paid'. This also included other 'payments' due to the mother of the bride.

I paid particular attention on the charges involved and how each family arrived at the figures. I discovered that each family had a predetermined figure for each item. The reason why the bride's extended family gather is to make sure the bride's father does not go outside the agreed family boundaries in terms of charges. The *roora* applies across the clan, irrespective of the daughters' educational background or employment status. This is why *roora* is charged in cattle. If someone wants to pay cash, the family sits down to agree on the monetary value of each cow using current rates.

From an in-depth analysis of the three cases discussed above, accusations of gender bias may be without basis. The very first ritual places the mother at a vantage point to decide whether or not her daughter should be married to the groom. When I asked whether it was fair to give the bride's father the bulk of the *roora* when the mother was only getting *mafukidza dumbu* and *mombe yemusana,* all key informants were unanimous to affirm fairness in the practice. What the mother got was truly hers to take to her family and the bride's father does not query. However, what the bride's father got belonged to the family, which included the mother. She can sell any off the cattle that the father gets from the *roora* without any consequence, but her husband has no say whatsoever on *mombe yemusana.* The mother has priority in terms of what the groom should pay first. Besides, there is a sense in which her position and status in the family is spiritual, if not sacred.

Overall, the Jindwi consider marriage as relational. Marriage is an essential part of the Jindwi (Shona) culture. It defines who they are, as one elderly man had this to say:

> *Kubvisa roora, kubvisa pfuma inhaka yatakasiirwa namadziteteguru edu, inzira yekuratidza kuumba ukama pakati pemhuri mbiri …. Mukadzi haagari mumusha asina kuroorwa.. ingozi kana akafa asina kubvisirwa pfuma. Mukadzi anopiwa chiremera chake kana aroorwa, abvisirwa* (Paying *roora* is an inheritance from our ancestors; it is a way of building relationships among the two families … A wife cannot stay in the family without *roora* being paid; if she dies without being married her spirit becomes an avenging spirit. A woman is given her proper place and sacred status through, and in, marriage).

It is interesting that the marriage rite does not exhaust itself with *roora.* The rite ends with a meal prepared from the food items brought by the sons-in-law to fulfil another important idiom among the Jindwi, *ukama igasva unzadziswa nekudya* (gaps in relations are filled through or during meals). Later, when the bride eventually joins her husband's family there is another ritual, *mashandwa* or *mabumbwe*, symbolising the cementing of relationship between the two families.

Conclusion

If by patriarchy we mean a system of society in which the father or eldest son is the head of the family and descent is reckoned through the male line, then indeed data confirmed that the Jindwi society is patriarchal. While the mother is the owner of the round hut, the father is the one who leads the ritual ceremonies in the hut. However, if by patriarchy, we mean a system of society in which men hold power and women are largely excluded from it, then indeed the Jindwi society is certainly not patriarchal.

Data on the rites of passage that I described showed that we could not easily discern power dynamics between the two genders in such a simplistic way. The male among the Jindwi is not inherently and normatively a conduit for the exercise of power. Similarly, the female is not inherently and normatively a subordinate recipient of male power. The rituals comprising the marriage rite showed various levels of consultation between males and females involved. Power struggles between the two genders were not at the centre of the rite. In fact, the emphasis on prioritizing *mombe yemusana* elevated the mother figure almost to a venerated and/or sacred status.

Data confirmed that rather than being commercial, *roora* is relational.

All the relations are invited and they take part in the decision-making. The price of *roora* is determined not by an individual, but by the family, both the immediate and the extended family. What also emanated from the data was that the marriage contract is not between the two individuals but between the two families. This is evidenced from the Shona statement, '*warume wako awo'*, referring to her husband, his brothers and sisters. This showed us that among the Jindwi, the terms *murume* and *mukadzi* are not gendered and so, the Jindwi do not always organise their life around biological sex differences. The big question then is: if this is what is coming from the data, where are we getting the prevailing gender constructs among some academics in Zimbabwe? Indeed, there are challenges associated with generalizing findings from a case study and there may be a need to test these conclusions with more Shona and perhaps Ndebele groups beyond the Jindwi. However, given the fact that the data were checked for consistency mainly through member checking and audit trails, and therefore considered trustworthy for the Jindwi society, the question above can still be raised in respect of this particular case. The study may be a wake-up call to academics who are gullible enough to consider every Western analysis of elements of our culture as valid enough to adopt.

References

Ansell, N. 2001. 'Because it's our culture!' (Re)negotiating the Meaning of *Lobola* in Southern African Secondary Schools. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27,4: 697 – 716. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070120090691

Barnes, T. *et.al.* 2010. *People Making History 4: 'O' Level History.* Harare: ZPH.

Beyers, J. 2017. Religion and Culture: Revisiting and Close Relative. *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 73,1: 1-9. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i1.3864

Bishau, D. & N.T. Taringa Unpublished. Gender Discourse in Zimbabwe: Whose Construct is on the Agenda? Paper presented at the University of Zimbabwe Research Week, 3 August 2019.

Chikunda, C. & P. Chikunda 2016. Patriarchy Rules: Transforming Resistance to Gender Inequalities in Science Teacher Education in Zimbabwe. *Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry* 8, 2: 11 – 22. https://doi.org/10.18733/C3JG64

Chimuka, A. Tarisai 2001. Ethics among the Shona. *Zambezia* 28, 1: 23 - 38. https://doi.org/10.4314/zjh.v28i1.6756

Chisi, J.T. 2018. *Lobola in Zimbabwe: A Pastoral Challenge.* Master of Theology in Practical Theology, University of Pretoria. https://doi.org/10.14387/jkspth.2018.60.159

Chitando, E. & P. Mateveke 2012. Challenging Patriarchy and Exercising Women's Agency in Zimbabwean Music: Analysing the Careers of Chiwoniso Maraire and Olivia Charamba. *Muziki: Journal of Music Research in Africa* 9, 2: 41 – 52. https://doi.org/10.1080/18125980.2012.742234

Chiweshe, M.K. 2016. Wives at the Market Place: Commercialisation of *Lobola* and Commodification of Women's Bodies in Zimbabwe. *The Oriental Anthropologist: A Bi-annual International Journal of the Science of Man* 16, 2: 229 – 243. https://doi.org/10.1177/0976343020160202

Cohen, H.E. 2011. Facet Theory Methods. In Stausberg, M. & S. Engler (eds.): *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. London: Routledge.

Makuyana, S. 1994. *Dynamics of History.* Harare: College Press.

Manen, Y.M. 2017. But is it Phenomenology? *Qualitative Health Research* 27,6: 775–779. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732317699570

Manyonganise, M. 2015. Oppressive and Liberative: A Zimbabwean Woman's Reflections on *Ubuntu. Verbum et Ecclesia* 36,2. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v36i2.1438

Mapuva, J. 2013. The Feminist Discourse and the Development of a Civic Virtue in Zimbabwe: Case of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA). *Journal of African Studies and Development* 5,8: 261 – 270.

Martin, P. & D. Birmingham 1983. *History of Central Africa.* Harare: Longman.

Mawere, M. & A.M. Mawere 2010. The Changing Philosophy of African Marriage: The Relevance of the Shona Customary Marriage Practice of 'Kukumbira'. *Journal of African Studies and Development* 2,9: 224 – 233.

Mlambo, A.S. 1995. *Focus on History Book 4.* Harare: College Press.

Museka, G. & N.T. Taringa 2014. Social Media and the Moral Development of Adolescent Pupils: Soulmates or Antagonists. *Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research* 26, 1: 100 - 121.

Mutekwe, E. & M. Modiba 2012. An Evaluation of the Gender Sensitive Nature of Selected Textbooks in the Zimbabwean Secondary School Curriculum. *Anthropologist* 14,4: 365 – 373. https://doi.org/10.1080/09720073.2012.11891259

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation [RWJF] 2008. Thick Description, Qualitative Research Guidelines Project. Available at: http://www.qualres. org/HomeThic-3697.html (Accessed on 25 February 2019).

Soule, E.K. & M. Freeman 2019. So You Want to Do Post-Intentional Phenomenological Research? *The Qualitative Report* 24,4: 857 – 872. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2019.3305

Taringa, N.T. & G. Museka 2020. No to Bride Price/ Bride Wealth, Yes to *Roora:* Investigating the Meaning, Function and Purpose of *Roora* as a Ritual. In Togarasei, L., E. Chitando (eds.): *Lobola (Bridewealth) in Contemporary Southern Africa*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-59523-4_2

Thompson, W.B. 2001. Policy Making through Thick and Thin: Thick Description as a Methodology for Communications and Democracy. *Policy Sciences* 34,1: 63 – 77. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1010353113519

Togarasei, L. 2012. Pauline Challenge to African Masculinities. *Acta Theologica Supplementum* 16: 148 - 160.

Wells, C.J. 2003. The Sabotage of Patriarchy in Colonial Rhodesia: Rural African Women's Living Legacy to their Daughters. *Feminist Review Identities* 75*:* 101 – 117. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400061

Tabitha Bishau
Mutare Teachers College
Africa University
bishaut@gmail.com

Religion, Science and the Paranormal

J.D. McClymont

Abstract

The article considers the relationship between religion, science and the paranormal. Having distinguished between cultural and critical thinking, the article considers the relationship of both to scholarship and secularism. The article discusses how one should respond to paranormal claims, taking into account S.T. Gill's approach to dealing with smokescreens that paranormal claimants use when confronted. From another point of view, the article looks at the approach to claims of private revelation proposed by the Catholic theologian Adolphe Tanquerey, and evaluates the Humean approach to miracles. The article adopts a middle position between two extremes. On the one hand, the philosophical stance that there should be no blanket exclusion of scepticism for miraculous, supernatural, paranormal or magical claims. On the other hand, the Humean stance that neither should the possibility of the miraculous be ruled out by prior prejudice. Through a dialectical philosophical discourse that often gets into the second person singular to bring the discourse closer to the reader, this paper argues that evidence should speak for itself, without prejudice having any influence.

Keywords: religion, science, paranormal, miracles

Introduction

This article shall consider the relationship between religion, science, scepticism and the paranormal, and shall look at some approaches to miracles and the paranormal, including a secular/Humean approach and the approach of Gill (1991) in the *Skeptical Enquirer.* In Africa, many people believe in the powers attributed to *ngangas* (herbalists or witchdoctors) and in the miraculous

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a5

claims of Pentecostal religious teachers. In addition, even in Zimbabwe, one can find literature associated with the New Age movement, a new religious movement associated with the occult (cf. Steyn 1994: 304ff, 308). The question of the relationship of reason with religion and magic[1] is therefore a relevant one for people living in Africa. What should be the attitude of a rational person to religious and/or magical claims? To start the discussion we may begin by describing two kinds of thought below[2].

Cultural and Critical Thinking

The first form of thought may be called cultural thinking. It consists of taking one's fundamental positions or views of life from the surrounding culture, or from an authoritative source, in an uncritical fashion, accepting such views as, so to speak, part of the air one breathes. It is in this way that young children learn many things from their parents. Adults who feel out of their depth in certain areas of life and take the word of eminent authorities or experts may adopt it.

The second form of thought may be called critical thinking. It involves the adoption of fundamental principles and of argued positions based on rationality, using starting points admitting of an objective defence in terms of experience and reason. It is a more adult form of thinking than cultural thinking and can be used to criticize cultural tradition on the basis of experience and reason.

Neither form of thought is inherently invalid, but the former is less mature a form of reasoning than the latter. Thus, it is acceptable to make a personal decision to disbelieve in goblins, simply because you were brought up in a culture that disbelieves in goblins and you have seen no reason to change your mind so far. On the other hand, if you were writing a thesis on some scientific question, you might adopt a more complex form of argument-

[1] I regard magic and the occult as a form of religion in the broad sense. Both of these fit Kruger's (1985: 6) definition of religion as an experience of radical transcending with a view to cosmic orienting. My own definition of religion is a modification of Kruger's, whereby religion is an orientation to what transcends ordinary experience, whereby one's entire life is ordered.

[2] The distinction of cultural and critical thinking may owe something to Horton's (1995) discussion of African traditional thought and Western science.

tation, looking at the evidence for and against your position. To the extent that your evidence was based on experience and reason, it would amount to critical thinking.

Cultural Thinking, Scholarship and Secularism

Is it critical thinking to quote a literary source, of the kind that is found in bibliographies? Here we have a paradox. If you simply cite a source uncritically, then you are thinking culturally. You are trusting the source like a baby trusts their mother. This may be valid in areas where the source is your only source of information and there is no good reason to doubt it so far. A transition to critical thinking is made when the credibility of the source is rationally examined and/or defended, so that the idea that the source is competent or veracious, if adopted, has a rationale, rather than being a default position.

Yet this puts us in a curious position. How often are scholarly sources in a bibliography given this sort of scrutiny? To assume the truth of a source uncritically is cultural thinking, not critical thinking, even if your 'source' is recently published scholarship generally (McClymont 2014: 2).

A person who accepts an idea uncritically may be right, or may be wrong, but is not in either case exercising critical reason. The term 'reason' is something requiring interrogation. It could refer to the actual use of the understanding in accepting self-evident logical truth or arguing from evident premises. That is how the term has mostly been used in this article so far.

On the other hand, a person could use the word 'reason' to refer to cultural ideas of what is sane or sensible. This use of the word 'reason' is deceptive; it can be applied to ideas that have not been reached rationally, yet in such a way that the prestige attaching to ideas that *are* reached rationally is effectively hijacked.

It is sometimes said that religion is based on faith, while a secularist may claim their ideas are based on reason (Feser 2008: 3). It is true that religious belief is often uncritically imbibed from a specific culture and takes the form of what I have called cultural thinking. It is wrong, however, to think that religion cannot be a matter of reason. It is possible to propose rational grounds for belief in God, in the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and even the idea that the Catholic Church is the true church of Christ (Sheehan 1937: 17ff, 56, 98ff, 141ff).

Magic

When it comes to magic, it is certainly the case that many believe in it for cultural reasons. Yet it is possible for disbelief in magic to be held for cultural reasons also. If one does not hold a belief in *n'angas* it may be asked: why not? Is such disbelief held on the basis of a general Westernized cultural sense that belief in witchdoctors is irrational and superstitious, which seems so obvious to you that you do not question it? Is it part of the modern air you breathe rather than something you have thought through yourself? If so, then you may be engaging in cultural thinking, and may be vulnerable to the criticism that your ideas are just uncritically held Western cultural beliefs pitted against uncritically held African cultural beliefs.

This is not to say the *n'angas* are right, but in order to make the issue of the works *n'angas* that many Westerners may regard as magic, a truly rational debate rather than a clash of cultural ideologies or prejudices, we need a critical framework for evaluating magical claims.

Strategies for Confronting Paranormal Claims

The first requirement for a critical framework for thinking about magic is that there should be no prejudice for or against magic. We are to have no prejudice in favour of magic or the paranormal. At the same time, we also should have no prejudice against the paranormal. Prejudice, in the sense of the prejudging of an issue without good reason, should have no place in rational thought.

The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of the Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), according to the description of its activities given on the back cover of the *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine (CSICOP 1991), 'does not reject claims on a priori grounds, antecedent to inquiry, but rather examines them objectively and carefully'. Yet a cursory examination of this magazine reveals a generally sceptical attitude to paranormal claims. Thus, a sceptical approach to magic and the paranormal need not require a priori rejection of the possibility. How, therefore, should the paranormal be approached?

Gill (1991: 271) insists that in confronting paranormal claimants the basic principles are that the burden of proof is on the claimant, and extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof. We may comment here that the idea that 'the burden of proof is on the claimant' is probably understood by Gill not as a prejudice but a common-sense presumption in favour of the normal working of nature. We presume in everyday life that the laws of nature

will continue to work; we do not expect our relatives to rise from the dead on a daily basis, for example, nor do we expect elephants to fly; and therefore if somebody says he saw an elephant fly, it is for the claimant to prove that the elephant flew. It is not for us to prove that the elephant did not fly, because the non-flight of elephants is the ordinary default common-sense position. To dislodge that position, some impressive evidence would be needed. That is how I would try to explain Gill's view here.

Gill on Paranormal Smokescreens and How to Respond to Them

Gill (1991: 272–273) mentions some 'smokescreens' that paranormal and other claimants will raise when asked for evidence. It should be noted that his article deals not only with strictly paranormal claims, but also with fringe science stuff like UFOs (ibid. 272). These smokescreens, and the strategies he recommends for meeting them (ibid. 272–273), may be summarized as follows:

1) It may be claimed that some truth transcends the need for proof. Gill recommends the following: Ask whether the beliefs of a claimant are his or her religion. If not, then they are subject to rational inquiry. If they are, then you should ask the claimant whether God told them this or that was correct, at which point you can claim that God told YOU just the opposite!
2) It may be claimed that the claimant's teacher was sincere and convinced, and would not lie. Gill replies by indicating that sincerity falls short of proof.
3) The claimant may encourage you not to take his word for anything but offers to teach you to do paranormal things yourself (like travelling outside of the body, psychokinesis[3], etc.). Gill recommends doing some consumer research and asking for a demonstration of the power concerned.
4) The claimant may accuse you of closed-mindedness. Gill would reply that he himself would be willing to change his mind on the production of

[3] Psychokinesis is the power to move things with your mind alone. Chandler (1988: 180–181) talks of a class that claims to teach people how to make spoons bend using only the power of thought.

impressive enough evidence, but he would ask the claimant whether it was possible that they might themselves be wrong or have been convinced by inadequate evidence. If a 'No, never' answer were given, Gill would ask who then truly had an open mind here.

5) It may be claimed that the claim cannot be proven wrong. To this Gill poses the question of what the best evidence is in favour of the claim, thereby shifting the debate not to whether the claim can be proven or disproven but whether the evidence in favour of the claim is simply the claimant's word for it, or something better.
6) It may be claimed that science does not know everything. Gill responds that science is not about memorized facts but about finding things out and evaluating evidence. (In support of Gill we may point out that a person who has incomplete factual knowledge may still have valid critical observations to make on an issue.)
7) It may be claimed that the subject-matter of the claim is 'spiritual' like what is found in the Bible. Against this Gill cites biblical verses like Isaiah 2: 6, Deuteronomy 18: 9–12, etc. which are critical of psi-type powers.
8) It may be claimed that studies of the subject-matter of the claim were more advanced in other times and places (e.g. ancient times, or in the East). The question would then arise what evidence convinced people in these times or places.
9) The claimant may say they have themselves made a study of the subject-matter of the claim. At this point Gill would challenge the claimant to produce the evidence that convinced him or her.
10) The claimant may claim the questioner is not qualified to question the subject-matter of the claim. At this point they may be asked what qualifications are needed here. Gill envisages a situation where a claimant claims they can teach a class to do something paranormal, and would respond by asking why, if a person could learn to do something paranormal, they could not investigate it.

My Comments on Gill's Paranormal Smokescreen Strategies

A general theme that emerges in Gill's discussion of smokescreens is the use of techniques to get people to reason culturally rather than critically, and the attempt to substitute uncritical or minimally critical acceptance of authority in the place of rational inquiry that might arrive at awkward conclusions.

In Strategy 1 ('Some truth transcends the need for proof') the attempt is made to get the hearer to accept something using a mode of belief that does not involve proof, as sometimes happens when religious claims are made. It may be observed that Gill's counter-trick, of claiming that God told him the opposite of what God is said to have told a paranormal claimant, is not really ethical. This is because it involves deception; nevertheless, it does reveal that religion cannot do without critical reason, since it is necessary to evaluate contradictory religious claims, and simple assertion of religious authority can be performed with respect to contradictory religious doctrines. In Catholic apologetics an attempt is made to find reasons for believing the claims of the Catholic church rather than other churches (Sheehan 1937: 141ff), and simple appeal to the 'Bible only' as the sole source of faith is deemed unsatisfactory, since contradictory religious positions can appeal alike to the 'Bible only' (ibid. 146–147).

In Strategy 7 ('It's all spiritual, like in the Bible'), there is a similar attempt to get the hearer into the mood of acceptance generally offered in society towards religious teachers. Yet Gill's quotations from scripture reveal that fraudulent forms of religion need to be guarded against, so mere acceptance of an unusual religious message can be a pitfall. According to Gill (1991: 273), the biblical authors 'knew a con game when they saw it 3000 years ago'.

In Strategies 2, 8 and 9, there is 'minimally critical' appeal to authority. Strategy 2) appeals to the sincerity and Strategy 9) to the competence of the claimant. It is true that sincerity and competence are relevant to the critical evaluation of authority, but the 'smokescreens' attempt to reduce such inquiry to an elementary and toothless level. Similarly, Strategy 8 ('The matter was studied at a more advanced level at other times and places'), is an appeal to competence, which however may not stand up to searching inquiry.

In Strategy 6 ('Science doesn't know everything'), and Strategy 10 ('You are not competent to question the subject-matter'), there are attempts to discredit the authority of the questioner. It should be noted that questioning the competence of an authority should take into account available data on such competence, which includes whether the authority talks sense or nonsense. This will require giving the authority a fair hearing instead of saying, 'You are not an expert, so shut up.' It is also a mistake to turn a rational query into a debate about authority, for a valid argument or observation remains a valid argument or observation, whether the proposer or observer is an expert or a novice in a particular discipline. You do not have to have a university degree

in mathematics, or even a high school diploma, in order to say that 2 + 2 = 4. In Strategy 4 ('You are closed minded'), there is another attempt to discredit the authority of the questioner, this time by imputing base motives.

In all of the above, authority is used in such a way as to pit it against reason. This observation does not mean that authority is wrong, but rather that authority should be used in such a way as to allow free play to critical reason. Gill's article was mostly about paranormal claimants in America, but we can apply his strategies to claims made in Africa by traditional healers and even by prophets who claim miraculous powers. It is desirable that a miraculous claim be evaluated using critical reason. A Christian may profess to believe in the whole Bible as the word of God, and may believe as part of his faith-commitment that the miracles of Jesus and Paul really happened; but modern 'prophets' do not necessarily fall under the mantle of Jesus and Paul.

Evaluating Private Revelations

In fact, it is part of the strategy of the Catholic Church to be critical of claims of private revelation in our day. A modern prophet who wished the Catholic Church to officially view his revelations as worthy of belief would have to run a formidable gauntlet of testing. Tanquerey (1948: 704) recommends that the claimant of a private revelation be tested, and the following should be established, inter alia:

1) Whether the recipient of revelation is well-balanced or affected by neurosis or hysteria.
2) Whether the recipient is possessed of common sense or, on the other hand, has a vivid imagination along with excessive emotionalism.
3) Whether the recipient is educated, and by whom.
4) Whether the recipient's mind is weakened by disease or fasting.
5) Whether the recipient is given to exaggeration.
6) Whether they are self-possessed or passionate.
7) Whether they are solidly virtuous.
8) Whether they are humble.
9) Whether they first communicate their revelations to their spiritual director, instead of the general public. (Rushing to publicize one's revelations immediately, instead of consulting one's spiritual director privately first, is a bad sign. Applying this criterion may expose those

people who use claims of revelation as a means of self-aggrandizement and self-publicity. The spiritual director may take a more critical attitude to claims of private revelation than the more gullible members of the general public.)

10) Whether the virtues have been practiced to a heroic degree.

Tanquerey (1948: 705–706) advises the rejection of revelations which are contrary to Catholic orthodoxy, obscene, without dignity or ridiculous, and those which enjoin impossible commands. He is suspicious of revelations, which pronounce on theological matters that Catholic theologians freely discussed. Examples include the argument between Thomists and Molinists (Tanquerey 1948: 705–706) and he finally outlines how a revelation may be evaluated according to its fruits (Tanquerey 1948: 706) and indicates the proof which would be afforded by the verification of a miracle and its relation to an apparition (Tanquerey 1948: 707).

This example shows that belief in the reality of the miraculous need not imply credulity about every claim of supernatural revelation. It is not true that 'if you believe in miracles, you will believe in anything'[4]. In fact, the history of religious controversies and disagreements is in fact precisely an account of the refusal of religious persons to believe in just anything. It is fashionable to deplore the bad results of religious disagreements; the World Council of Churches, if I remember correctly, have a slogan to the effect that, 'Action unites, but doctrine divides'. Yet the existence of religious argument may be a sign that the minds of religious believers are awake and functioning, especially when it is a question of systems of theology which take philosophy into account.

I do not therefore regard a blanket prejudice against the supernatural as the sign of a critical mind. To dismiss miracles with a wave of the hand takes much less intellectual effort than to evaluate a claim of private revelation using Tanquerey's criteria.

What About Hume's Argument?

Having indicated our position that there should be no prejudice for or against

[4] This is a paraphrase of an author, whose name I have now forgotten, who opined that one who believed in the Virgin Birth would believe in anything.

miracles, we may address a further question: can a true sceptic admit a priori that miracles are possible, however antecedently improbable, or does scepticism require an undefeatable prior rejection of miracles? The discussion of miracles from a philosophical point of view often pays attention to the argument of Hume concerning miracles. Zacharias (1994: 357) summarizes it as saying that a miracle as an exception to the law of nature is by definition based on the lower degree of probability. The wise person, however, will base his views on the higher degree of probability and therefore will always disbelieve in miracles. Zacharias criticizes this argument as circular and points out that it can be argued that the existence of the world is improbable. Should we therefore disbelieve in the existence of the world?

It has been said that Hume's argument is not as circular as has been claimed (Taliaferro 1998: 376) and, as shall be pointed out later, Hume did not rule out the theoretical possibility of a credible miraculous testimony (McNabb 1967: 89). We will return to Hume later.

We may recall at this point what science fiction author Stanislaw Lem (1977: 86–87) points out, that the probability of dragons is overwhelming once they have actually come into being. Indeed, natural law is the default presupposition of common sense, which makes defensible a certain scepticism about paranormal claims, as described earlier. Yet perhaps extraordinary proof might be of sufficient force to set aside this presupposition, especially if it takes the form of a direct experience.

Natural and Psychological Law

The norms of nature include not only physical but psychological norms. Take the case of Jesus' resurrection. It is not normal to rise from the dead, but at the same time, neither is it normal for people to lie about something and stick to it even under the threat of death, with nothing to gain by the deception, nor is it normal for hallucinations to be collective, nor is it normal for there to be a sudden transition from scepticism to faith with no proportionate cause (cf. Strobel 1998: 238, 246–248). Hence, the idea that the apostles were deceivers or deceived in the matter of Jesus' resurrection seems to involve violations of psychological law. It is not a matter of weighing natural versus supernatural hypotheses, but of weighing a supernatural claim against a paranormal claim. Even Hume admitted the theoretical possibility that the testimony favouring a miracle could be plausible if the falsehood of the testimony involved a greater

miracle (McNabb 1967: 89).

How would we decide between the two? In my view the principle of simplicity, which is a principle one may use to decide between varying hypotheses with equal empirical backing, is an expression of a basic desire to abolish disorder which underlies all human attempts to create order and meaning in life, and amounts to a presumption of order or unity over disorder or disunity. According to the principle of simplicity, we seek the hypothesis or idea which involves the least amount of complication and fits the data (Burnam 1975: 201).

Now a miraculous or paranormal idea may be associated with two kinds of complication: first, the basic complication whereby natural order ceases to apply; secondly, the complication arising from the production of residual disorder as the result of a miracle. The creation of a discrepancy between appearance and reality is one possible form of disorder.

Thus, a healing, being the miraculous production of an orderly condition, would possess only the first kind of complexity; but a miraculous earthquake would possess two kinds of complexity, the basic suspension of natural law plus the mess or destructiveness attendant on the earthquake. A paranormal psychological deception would also have both kinds of complexity – the basic suspension of natural law and the production of disorder in the mind because of this suspension, resulting in a discrepancy between appearance and reality.

We may therefore conceive two kinds of non-normal event, in ascending order of complexity:

1) A constructive miracle, where one of the aforementioned two kinds of complication is present (i.e. there is an event transcending natural law);

2) A destructive paranormal event where two types of complexity exist (i.e. there is an event not fitting in with natural law, and furthermore the event is of a type that creates chaos or destruction. 'Chaos' includes the presence of a discrepancy between appearance and reality).

A worldview favouring the less complex hypothesis will therefore, if it is a matter of choosing between a constructive miracle on the one hand and a destructive and deceptive paranormal event on the other hand, presume in favour of the constructive miracle.

Now the resurrection of Jesus is a constructive miracle, while the hypothesis of apostolic hallucination or deception in defiance of psychological law involves the disordering or malfunction of the apostles' psyches, in such a way as to cause a discrepancy between appearance and reality, which would be a destructive and deceptive paranormal event. So, in this case, presuming in favour of the constructive miracle would mean presuming in favour of the resurrection of Jesus. Hence, the idea that Jesus rose again takes precedence, even in critical thinking, over the more complex hypothesis of a deception of or by the disciples with paranormal qualities.

Thus, in my view, there can be a rational defence of miracles. There can also be a rational critique of excessive scepticism towards miracles, as I demonstrate in the following section.

The Case Against Tigers: A 'Humean' Proposal

Hume's idea of natural events is related to uniform experience (McNabb 1967: 89), and his disbelief in miracles is grounded on the idea that 'firm and unalterable' experience of the law is what renders miracles improbable (Flew 1989: 319). I presume that this 'uniform experience' or 'firm and unalterable experience' means the reported experience of the majority that the laws of nature are observed, which is set against the claims of the minority to have experienced miracles (cf. Taliaferro 1998: 376–377). By Humean standards, the fact that the majority of experiences favour the law of nature grants higher probability to the law of nature over miracle (ibid. 376), and the wise person will proportion his belief to the higher probability (Flew 1989: 318). One can expose problems in the Humean position, so understood, by constructing a Humean argument against the existence of tigers, which I employ here as a *reductio ad absurdum*.

To begin with, let us note that the uniform experience of those who have not experienced tigers is comparable to the uniform experience of those who have not experienced miracles. Just as there is a minority of people who claim to have seen a miracle and a majority who may claim not to have done so, so there is a minority who claim to have seen tigers; yet the vast majority of people in the world have never seen a tiger in the flesh. So, the existence of tigers seems to be against majority experience in the same way as miracles are. The norm that tigers are not seen is based on firm and unalterable experience, and thus, by Humean standards, the case against the sighting of tigers is as firm

as empirical experience can make it (cf. Flew 1989: 319). However, a tiger is the sort of thing that would be sighted if the empirical and testimonial evidence in its favour were credible. Therefore, by Humean standards, no credible evidence of tigers exists, and therefore tigers almost certainly do not exist.

If an appeal is made to pictures of tigers in books, on TV and in the movies, a Humean response against these seems proposable. For instance, when faced with a reference to miraculous events in a book, or a mysterious photograph, or a piece of footage apparently documenting a paranormal event, a Humean could reply by saying that uniform experience establishes the existence of various forms of deception, lying, hoaxes, fakery, and so on. Thus the possibility of fakery or deception is more firmly evidenced and more empirically grounded than the possibility of miracles. The Humean would therefore reply that the higher probability is that there is fakery or deception in certain books, photographs and film clips, rather than that genuine miracles or paranormal events took place.

Similarly, we may note that a wide range of human experience supports the existence of lots of ways of faking the existence of strange animals, e.g. digital imaging, trick photography, costumes, puppets, toys, Animatronix, false reports, and so on. Most people have experienced a form of fakery of this kind, and some have experienced many of them. So it appears the existence of fakes and deceptions is a truth grounded in majority experience, while the existence of tigers is not. Therefore, it seems the wise person will by Humean standards believe it more likely that a given photo or picture or report of a tiger is a fake or deception than that it is real evidence of a tiger's existence.

Hume stated that if he were to find evidence of Queen Elizabeth dying and rising again he would marvel at the deception involved, but not admit the miracle (Mullin 1979: 12–13). On similar grounds, once one establishes that most people have not seen a tiger, but are acquainted with the existence of some form of falsehood or trickery by which a tiger's existence could be faked, one might imitate Hume's attitude to the putative historically evidenced miracle. One might do so by saying that, in the face of strong-seeming photographic or other evidence of a tiger's existence, one marvelled at the deception involved, but still did not believe in tigers.

By this logic the proper initial response for a Humean, when dragged to a zoo in front of the tiger's cage and asked, 'What is that, then?' is to say, 'My goodness, that is really lifelike. If I were not trained in Humean philoso-

phy, I would think that was a real tiger. Amazing what these puppeteers can put together these days, isn't it?'

One might try replying that the existence of tigers is not a paranormal event. How would you prove this? For known laws of nature for Hume are established by uniform experience (McNabb 1967: 89). The non-experience of tigers is a widespread uniformity of human experience, for which many empirical testimonies from around the non-Asian world can be adduced in evidence, particularly in Africa, where tiger sightings are, shall we say, difficult to accumulate in great numbers. So, by Humean standards it seems to be a law of nature that tigers cannot be sighted - so that claiming tigers have been sighted in Asia is a paranormal claim which the Humean may by their own standards deem incredible, as they would any other paranormal claim.

Whether or not there is a hidden flaw in my logic, I think the example highlights the need to think carefully about what is meant by the 'natural'. If it means what is normal, in what sense are tigers natural? One might argue there are different norms for different natural conditions, and the natural conditions of parts of Asia (perhaps favouring tigers) are different from those of Africa. How do we know that the natural conditions of Asia favour tigers? The majority experience of humanity is of natural conditions that are not accompanied by tigers, so that by Humean standards (if I interpret Hume's principles correctly) it seems to be, *prima facie*, a known law of nature that 'conditions of nature do not involve the existence of tigers'. A Humean therefore can claim to be justified in rejecting the claim that natural conditions in Asia involve the existence of tigers, just as he would reject as improbable the claim that natural conditions at the North Pole involve the existence of Santa Claus and his elves.

Common sense, however, says that belief in tigers is reasonable, and that my argument in the preceding paragraphs has got to be a joke of some sort. It would appear that the so-called Humean proposal about tigers given above favours a scepticism of miracles that goes beyond what common sense considers sensible. How does common sense treat tigers?

To ask a related question, how would we know if the norm or expected trend we are used to is more likely to apply in a given case? A presumption that our familiar everyday expected norm for events holds true would be defensible on Occam's razor grounds (violation of a norm being a complication). Therefore, if I live in Africa I normally do not see tigers, and I certainly would not expect to see a tiger in the course of the next few weeks.

Yet, in the case of the tiger, this presumption in favour of the norm of 'no tigers sighted' would be one that fell away in the light of adequate empirical and testimonial evidence of tiger sighting - for example, if I saw a tiger in India, or heard from a reliable witness that tigers had been sighted in India. Otherwise, the common-sense belief that there are tigers could not be defended to one who never normally sees tigers.

Therefore, the presumption in favour of the normally expected pattern of events, according to common sense, holds true until one has sufficient empirical or testimonial evidence that conditions other than those we are used to are in operation. Yet this would allow belief in miracles to be theoretically justified on similar grounds to tiger sightings, i.e. by sufficient 'extraordinary proof' by way of experience and testimony. Just as the presumption against tigers would fall away in the presence of adequate experience or testimony, so a presumption against miracles would fall away in the presence of sufficiently strong evidence. There would be no blanket exclusion of miraculous evidence in advance.

Without the advance exclusion of miracles, or the advance decision to believe in them uncritically, the only fair way to reach judgements about miracles is to give the available evidence, such as it is, a fair and rational examination.

Conclusion

This article concludes by adopting a middle position between two extremes. On the one hand, there should be no excessive credulity towards miraculous, supernatural, paranormal or magical claims. On the other hand, neither should the possibility of the miraculous be ruled out by prior prejudice. The evidence should speak for itself, without prejudice tipping the scales either way.

References

Burnam, T. 1975. *The Dictionary of Misinformation.* London: Futura Publications Ltd.

Chandler, R. 1988. *Understanding the New Age.* Reading: Word (UK) Ltd.

Committee for the Scientific Investigation of the Claims of the Paranormal 1991. *Skeptical Inquirer* 15,3.

CSICOP. See Committee for the Scientific Investigation of the Claims of the Paranormal.

Feser, E. 2008. *The Last Superstition.* South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press.

Flew, A. 1989. The Problem of Evidencing the Improbable and the Impossible. In Zollschan, G.K., J.F. Schumaker & G.F. Walsh (eds.): *Exploring the Paranormal: Perspectives on Belief and Experience*. Dorset: Prism Press.

Gill, S.T. 1991. Carrying the War into the Never-Never Land of Psi Part I. *Skeptical Inquirer* 15,3: 269–273.

Horton, R. 1995. African Traditional Thought and Western Science. In Mosley, A.G. (ed.): *African Philosophy: Selected Readings*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Kruger, J.S. 1985. *Science of Religion.* Pretoria: UNISA. (Only Study Guide for SRB-100-A.)

Lem, S. 1977. *The Cyberiad.* London: Futura Publications Ltd.

McClymont, J.D. 2014. Religion and Gullibility. Unpublished drafted article.

McNabb, D.G.C. 1967. Hume, David. In P. Edwards (ed.): *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Volume Three*. New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers.

Mullin, R. 1979. *Miracles and Magic: The Miracles and Spells of Saints and Witches.* Oxford: Mowbray.

Sheehan, M. 1937. *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine. Part I: Apologetics.* Revised Edition. Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son Ltd.

Steyn, C. 1994. *Worldviews in Transition: A Study of the New Age Movement in South Africa.* Pretoria: UNISA.

Strobel, L. 1998. *The Case for Christ.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House.

Taliaferro, J. 1998. *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Tanquerey, A. 1948. *The Spiritual Life.* Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Bookshop.

Zacharias, R. 1994. *Can Man Live Without God?* Milton Keynes: Nelson Word Ltd.

J.D. McClymont
Department of Philosophy, Ethics and Religion
University of Zimbabwe
Harare
marmack@africaonline.co.zw

Political Theology and Gullibility in Zimbabwe: The Cases of Ralph Dodge (1956 – 1964) and Pius Ncube (1997 – 2007)

Margaret Chinyadza

Abstract

Using the historical analytical approach, the article studies two periods in the history of Zimbabwean politics through the political theological lenses. These are the periods from Bishop Ralph Dodge's appointment as bishop of the United Methodist Church in the then Rhodesia in 1956 to his deportation in 1964, on the one hand, and from Bishop Pius Ncube's appointment as Bishop of the Catholic Church in 1997 to the time of his resignation in 2007, on the other hand. From a political perspective, the two periods may be demarcated as the period leading to the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), on the one hand, and the period leading to the crisis period of the years 2000–2008. By looking at these two periods, one in the colonial era and the other in independent Zimbabwe, this paper probes the question whether the practice of political theology brings defiance by religious actors of gullibility to bad governance in a given state. The article uses the cases of Bishop Ralph Dodge and Archbishop Pius Ncube to unpack the role of political theology in terms of refraining from political gullibility with respect to bad governance in Zimbabwe. The two men stood out and spoke up for the oppressed, refusing to be gullible to the policies of their respective governments.

Keywords: political theology, political gullibility, bad governance

Introduction

The church has an important role of providing the moral foundation and being the conscience of the nation (Okunoye 2012). Over the ages, religion

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a6

and politics have developed into two inseparable twins, with God himself interested in the governance of his people from Old Testament times. It is God's will that there should be an organised state, which is shown by Jesus encouraging his disciples to play the dual role of giving to civil authority and to God their respective dues (Okunoye 2012). Christians as children of God should appreciate that God is interested in all aspects of human life – social, economic, political and spiritual (Okunoye 2012; Kaiso 2010). Luke 4:18 speaks to this effect.

> The spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisonersand recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Holy Bible. New International Version).

It is from this perspective that one sees churches and religious practitioners play an active role in the governance of a nation, especially when there is a crisis. In the case of a crisis, religion always seeks to be relevant.

Whenever there is a crisis in a country, religion also undergoes a crisis when it responds to the crisis as propounded by Chitando (2013: x). During a crisis, religious people, groups and communities always take a stand to try and find a way in which they can solve the crisis. The crisis that religion goes through is that there is support for the status quo and those who oppose it. This is mostly because; interpretation of the cause divides religious practitioners. Usually, different camps form because of supporting different groups (Chitando 2013: x). There are conservatives, radicals, and fence sitters, while the politicians capitalise on these divisions to advance their agenda. It is in light of this scenario that the article identifies two radical religious actors who operated during two crisis periods in the history of Zimbabwe. Ralph Dodge, also called The Revolutionary Bishop, was active during the period leading to the second Chimurenga, the period when Ian Smith and the Rhodesian government proposed the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). His was a voice among several missionaries that supported the African cause and the nationalists and it caused him to be deported. Pius Ncube, on the other hand, operated after independence during the crisis period of 2000–2008. He spoke vehemently against the abuses of the government and the Gukurahundi atrocities, straining the cordial relation-

ship that had been there between the Catholic Church and the government and that of other church organisations that supported his prophetic voice. His voice was silenced when he was accused of infidelity. This article identifies the prophetic voice of these two individuals as political theology. It seeks to find out how effective the practice of political theology is in contributing to better governance in Zimbabwe.

The article begins by unpacking the meaning of the word 'gullibility', and then the term 'Prophetic political theology'. From there, the researcher provides a background to the religious situation in colonial Rhodesia from the 1960s onwards. From that period, the article brings to light the role played by Bishop Ralph Dodge whose Christianity was to a great extent more practical than theoretical against bad governance by the state and its consequences. He was a bishop during the times liberation theology was at its height in Latin America and Black Liberation theology was becoming prominent among the nationalists who were fighting for their liberation in Africa. His was a prophetic message in which he foresaw the rise of the black populace and pleaded with the white supremacists and the missionaries to train Africans in administrative duties in preparation for the time the Africans would take over from colonial rule. This was, however, met with hostility by the colonial government and he was deported. In refusing to accept the status quo, Dodge was rejecting gullibility to a system of bad governance. The article then moves on to post-colonial Zimbabwe during the crisis years of 2000–2008, which saw the rise of a prophetic voice in the form of Pius Ncube. He was very vocal against the atrocities done by the Zimbabwean government then and he was silenced when he was accused of infidelity. Again one raises the issue of gullibility. In refusing to support the status quo, he was rejecting gullibility to bad governance.

Gullibility

Greenspan defines gullibility as a failure of social intelligence in which a person is easily tricked or manipulated into an ill-advised course of action. The words 'gullible', and 'credulous' arfe commonly used as synonyms. Goepp and Kay (1984) state that while both words mean 'unduly trusting or confiding', gullibility stresses being duped or made a fool of, suggesting a lack of intelligence, whereas credulity stresses uncritically forming beliefs, suggesting a lack of scepticism. Jewell (2006) states the difference is a matter

of degree: the gullible are 'the easiest to deceive', while the credulous are 'a little too quick to believe something, but they usually aren't stupid enough to act on it'. Yamagishi, Kikuchi and Kosugi (1999) characterize a gullible person as one who is both credulous and naïve. Greenspan (2009) stresses the distinction that gullibility involves an action in addition to a belief, and there is a cause-effect relationship between the two states: 'gullible outcomes typically come about through the exploitation of a victim's credulity'. Some writers on gullibility focus on the relationship between the negative trait of gullibility and positive trait of trust. They are related, as gullibility requires an act of trust. Greenspan (2009) writes that exploiters of the gullible 'are people who understand the reluctance of others to appear untrusting and are willing to take advantage of that reluctance'. In 1980, Julian Rotter (in Greenspan 2009) wrote that the two are not equivalent: rather, gullibility is a foolish application of trust despite warning signs that another is untrustworthy.

In light of this article, both Dodge and Ncube refused to be gullible to the State apparatus in their different periods of operations. During colonial times very few clergy were bold enough to stand up and critique the government as Dodge did. The occasional criticism of government policies would come from church organisations and not from individuals. Pius Ncube spoke up against the government at a very dangerous time in the history of Zimbabwe when people were being silenced by the state. He refused to be naïve or to be taken in by the rhetoric of the government that accused the West for most of its challenges and refused to take responsibility and be accountable for their actions.

Prophetic Political Theology

Political theology was developed during the 1960s as a socio-critical theology by Jurgen Moltmann and Johann Baptist Metz (Schüssler Fiorenza 2013: 38; Van Wyk 2015: 1). Van Wyk points out that when this notion was brought up, there was concern among some that it would entail politicising the church. Both theologians, however, argue that there is no such thing as un-political theology (Van Wyk 2015: 1). A number of scholars support this, stating that politics and theology cannot be separated (Kee 1978; Moltmann 2013:2). To quote Moltmann (2013: 2), 'There is consciously political theology and politically unconscious theology, but there is no such thing as an un-political theology …'. It is Kee's conviction that, when individuals

separate politics and theology, it basically points out to protecting self-interests. What brings about political theology is not opportunism or an attempt to win a strategic advantage, but it is an understanding of the way we can be true to the fundamental character of Christian faith (Kee 1978: 3). Thus, one can safely say that, political theology is a critical theology with a commitment towards justice, peace and integrity of creation although there are many variations to its definition. In different contexts it can refer to Liberation Theology as well.

For the sake of this article, an analysis of the two types of Political Theology will be made, as propounded by the proponents of the theology. Political theology is distinguished between the old and the new. The old political theology entailed political sovereignty (Moltmann 2013: 3) and Statism (Metz 2013: 13). On the other hand, the new political theology is viewed as prophetic (liberation) theology (Moltmann 2013: 11), and a theology of justice (Metz 2013: 16-20). This article focuses on the new political theology. Metz (2013: 13) explains that classic (old) political theology understood politics in terms of national and legal policy and the legitimisation of an absolute and infallible state. It was generally a theology of political sovereignty (Schmitt 2012:275-276), meaning that the end justified the means irrespective of what the means might be. For Moltmann (2013: 4), new political theology is based largely on a theology of ethical and political anticipation. He also stresses that the hermeneutics of political theology is shaped by the context and community in which it is practised. His was a German setting.

Dodge and Ncube's political theology was shaped by the context of their day. Theirs was a Zimbabwean setting, though in different periods. Dodge was dealing with the oppressive nature of the colonial government, whereas Ncube was dealing with the oppressive nature of the post-colonial government. They were not silent to the injustices of their time. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, they spoke up against the oppression of the masses. They were a voice for the voiceless. Theirs was not just a theoretical theology but a practical one. Thus in practising Prophetic political theology both men were resisting gullibility to the status quo.

Background of Religious Situation in Colonial Rhodesia

> The major aim of the missionary was therefore never to be a brother to the African – to help the African actua-

> lise himself but to ensure that the African would accept a servile and vassal role to the European. The biblical platitudes of brotherhood were nothing more than a ploy to destroy the African infrastructural basis of the society (Maboyi 2015).

This is the opinion of Ambassador Aaron Maboyi, and he is not alone. This has contributed to Christianity being viewed from a position of a sly, cunning religion that can take over the gullible at any time. The history of the country from colonial to post-colonial periods has seen a close relationship between the church and politics. Thomas (in Togarasei 2013: 97) contends that colonialism came riding on the back of religion, and the Bible has always been a political resource since its arrival in Zimbabwe, especially when it accompanied the Pioneer Column (Gunda & Mtetwa 2013: 163).

The church was also quite instrumental in advancing the colonialist agenda. Joshua Nkomo observed that, the Christian religion sought life after death for the individual, while African religion sought rain, health and peace in the world of mankind (Nkomo 1984: 10). For him the African religion was more realistic and a person could easily identify with it. During the colonial era, the Bible was used to justify racial segregation and its deployment was to serve the political interests of the elite, while emphasising the theology of suffering to the masses (Daneel 1971: 208; Gunda & Mtetwa 2013: 163). Although Sithole gives credit to the missionaries, he acknowledges that when missionaries came to Africa, they did not have intention to help African nationalism. Their sole aim was to propagate the gospel of Christ to their fellow human beings, and still some of them were more interested in the propagation of their own particular culture rather than the gospel of Christ (Sithole 1968: 84). Missionaries to and in Africa have been accused – and not without cause – of standing in the way of African nationalism. In spite of the above, Sithole still contends, and rightly so, that missionaries have been unwittingly helpful to the rise of African nationalism.

During the liberation struggle, the church was in the frontline. The church advocated the liberation of the oppressed, was active in promoting justice and human rights and identified with the suffering of the people. It also demanded accountability on the part of the colonial government (Muchena 2004: 256). In 1968, Sithole acknowledged that the enlightened political leadership of the day would have been next to impossible, but for the Christ-

ian church that spread literacy to many parts of Africa (Sithole 1968: 94). The Christian church exercised its influence on the minds, attitudes and outlook of the African people who had direct contact with it. Many of the nationalists during the liberation struggle went through the hands of missionaries. Examples are Abel Muzorewa, Joshua Nkomo, Ndabaningi Sithole and Robert Mugabe (Sithole 1968: 89; Nkomo 1984: 10; Dodge 1986; Gunda & Mtetwa 2013: 161).

Many developmental programmes were done by the church that contributed greatly to the later liberation of the African masses. Nkomo and Sithole state that the missionaries did more than spread the gospel, they actively promoted the building and maintenance of local primary schools teaching arithmetic, English, siNdebele, Religion and at secondary schools teaching among other subjects European as well African history (Nkomo 1984: 10; Sithole 1968: 91). The study of history placed very powerful weapons in the hands of many Africans and historical consciousness was one of the chief factors behind nationalism. Some missionaries were openly known for advancing the cause of the African majority. Bishop Dodge of the United Methodist Church had the tendency to appoint Africans to positions formerly meant just for whites. He was also expelled from Rhodesia when it was found out that he supported the black nationalists (Dodge 1986: 139).

The Gullible Ones

The following was the general sentiment of some missionaries at the Methodist Synod held in 1959 in Southern Rhodesia:

> Colonisation was legitimate and had among other things been of benefit to African society. The African people on the other hand, had legitimate aspirations and ultimately would control the country. For the present however they were immature and unequipped educationally and technically to do so (Peaden 1979:194-195).

Some churches employed conservative approaches concerned with maintaining the peace of mind of their white members than in making a stand for justice. The Dutch Reformed Church, for example, officially adopted a neutral stance on all political matters. However, Daneel (in Peaden 1979: 196) contends that its silence has often been interpreted by its African

members as support for government policies. In practice it actually encouraged segregation of the races in its congregations and so gave tacit support to Afrikaner political philosophy. It is in this church-state relations scenario that Bishop Ralph Dodge of the American Methodist Church came to the scene in Southern Rhodesia. The Methodist synod and the Dutch Reformed Church were in agreement with the Rhodesian government that Africans were not ready to govern themselves, which can be interpreted as being gullible to the status quo. Dodge on the other hand, as shall be discussed below, refused to accept the Rhodesian government and the sentiments of the other missionaries.

A Missionary with a Difference: The Revolutionary Bishop

For a time, the American missionaries of the United Methodist Church and other missions maintained that they were unqualified to speak on political matters because they were aliens (Peaden 1979: 196). However, in 1956, Ralph Dodge was appointed Bishop of the American Methodist Church diocese of Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique and Transvaal. In defiance of the *status quo* and clear evidence of his not being gullible, Peaden (1979: 196) reports that in the 1960s, Dodge made preparations for the africanisation of the United Methodist Church by sending promising young members to America for higher education so that they could come back to Southern Rhodesia and take over leadership of the church. Muzorewa Dodge 1986: 138) writes that he and many others would never forget that it was Bishop Dodge who had the vision and determination to crash through the barrier to higher education for Zimbabweans. Not only did the Bishop send young church members to be trained for church positions, but he encouraged those selected to train for teaching, journalism, law and medicine and also for Christian ministry (Dodge 1986: 138). In light of such encouragement, one sees that Dodge's views on racial justice were increasingly radical. His aim was to offer young Africans opportunities that were given to their White Rhodesian counterparts which they could not get in Rhodesia. Prior to this radical move of educating Africans by Bishop Dodge, instead of teaching the African students to think independently and to develop fully as human beings, much of the curriculum, especially the religious elements, trained the Africans to be obedient to their white masters (Maenzanise 2008:75). In refusing to join the bandwagon of other missionaries who seemed to flow with the expectations

of the Rhodesian government, Dodge resisted gullibility to the *status quo*.

Dodge's actions were a radical break from the usual pattern of the missionaries. Muzorewa (in Dodge 1986: viii) argues that Dodge's prophetic ministry was a challenge for those who may doubt Christ's role in social change. His sermons, teachings, conversations and actions manifested his radical ideas. As a spokesman of the American Methodist Church, he was committed to fighting against racial oppression by the white minority in Southern Rhodesia. He voiced the concerns of the African people in Rhodesia at the very time the political parties were banned and their leaders silenced in detention. He preached a gospel of political and spiritual freedom and played a leading role in the denunciation of the proposed Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) of Southern Rhodesia. He also criticised the Smith government's practice of detaining people without trial (Thomas 1985:121; Maenzanise 2008: 78). Dodge also published a book which was a critique of missionary work in Africa entitled *The Unpopular Missionary* which was not well received by the Rhodesian government. This, together with his outspoken opposition of the proposed UDI and his educational policies, caused his deportation (Peaden 1979: 196; Thomas 1985: 121; Maenzanise 2008: 78). The deportation of Dodge shows that the Rhodesian government was not in support of his ideologies, even though they did not give him a reason why they deported him. Dodge was given no reason for his deportation, but he believed that sending young people for higher education was wrongly interpreted by the government who claimed that they had gone for training in subversion (Peaden 1979: 196). In refusing to be gullible to the government, Dodge was deported, and those missionaries who were not open critice of the government remained.

More evidence of Dodge not being gullible is in the fact that he had good relations with the African nationalists and encouraged many of them to be educated and participate in politics and other administrative tasks. His message was very relevant to the context of the times he ministered, much to the chagrin of the colonial government. He was a preacher and a writer and published many articles that addressed the situation in Southern Rhodesia. In his book, *The unpopular missionary*, he challenged the agenda of missionary work during that time. He claimed that the major blind spot of the total missionary program in Africa may well have been the failure of white church leaders to train nationals for administrative responsibility. He observed that some colonial governments had shown an interest in educating the masses in

central Africa, but none had set about training Africans realistically for administrative responsibility under a democracy (Dodge 1986: 153). To support his message, he had the tendency of appointing Africans to positions formerly meant just for whites. For example, he appointed Matthew Wakatama as the first Black principal of the Old Umtali Teacher Training College. This did not meet with the approval of the Department of Education in Rhodesia. He also promoted Africans at church administrative level and was questioned by other missionaries why he was undermining their authority in terms of the discipline of blacks.

Bishop Dodge also published a substantial number of articles. He would address different social phenomena in which the church was directly involved. Some of these included, 'The Church and Freedom', 'The Church and Society' and 'The Church and Politics'[1]. The forewords to his books were always done by the educated African elite. In one foreword on church and freedom, Walter Joseph Kamba accuses the church of having fostered the opposition of African nationalist parties because of its failure to condemn and in fact often condoning social and political discrimination. He accused the church of having lost the respect and trust of the educated African due its traditional silence on matters other than sinning. Kamba's accusation of the church speaks of a church which was gullible to the system. In this article however, in contrast to the traditional silence of the church, Dodge argues that the church believed that all people should have as much freedom as possible. He supported freedom, which he claimed led to creativity. He believed that freedom from domination in politics, education or religion brought out the best in an individual. The church believes in self-determination, so people should be free to choose the political side they wanted. He was against intimidation which, he argued, negated the right of the individual to make his own choice.

Ndabaningi Sithole wrote a foreword to Dodge's *Church and society*, in which he states that politics is a filthy game, but then Christians should participate in it to purify it. He argues that it is not right that they should have nothing to do with it. Sithole's foreword shows that Dodge was in the right direction in condemning the oppression the blacks were facing at the hands of the colonial government. In the article on church and society Dodge declares

[1] Please note that the articles published by Dodge were undated and so they will be cited without the dates.

that life is a totality and Christian participation in all phases of life, politics included, is a desirable thing. He asserts that all aspects of man's life are related and so man's desire for political freedom is as much a part of him as his desire for economic advancement, spiritual certainty or intellectual maturity. He argues that the Christian should participate in all phases of life, as the politics of the nation directly affects the life of the church.

Dodge's writings show that he was not easily manipulated into believing that the situation in Rhodesia was normal. He was not naïve or credulous, nether was he uncritical of the situation in Southern Rhodesia. He was critical of the system, spoke against it and acted to bring about the change he advocated. He was a man who set an example of what is to be done, much to the chagrin of the Rhodesian government.

Political Situation in the Years 2000 - 2008

According to Alden (2002), Zimbabwe faced multiple crises which were a) a crisis of legitimacy as its postcolonial consensus crumbled; b) a crisis of expectation stemming from the failure of its economy and polity; and c) a crisis of confidence in the impartiality of the institutions of the state. Since the government's defeat in the February 2000 constitutional referendum, ZANU PF largely succeeded in re-imposing its control through a holistic strategy of repression (Togarasei 2013: 98). The crisis in Zimbabwe during this period was such that the security sector of the country was immune from the law and it occupied prominent positions in intelligence, provincial administration and even electoral administration (Kibble 2004). There was a state-driven violent land occupation which ,according to Pius Ncube, was not an attempt to help the landless, but a move to hold on to power (Kibble 2004; *La Guardia* 2004). Media freedom was shattered by the imposition of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) seen in the constant harassment of independent media and the shutting down of the *Daily News*, newspaper. The judiciary was restructured in such a way that it was in complete compliance with the government's bidding. With the judiciary being a puppet to the ruling party, there was destabilisation of trade unions, NGOs and other civic organisations. To add to that, there was torture and intimidation of individuals with a crackdown on the human rights sector. The religious leadership was not spared either, with the co-option or denigration of religious leadership, depending on which side one spoke from. Violence was also used as

an election strategy, with the bodies responsible for electoral administration firmly under government control, including the use of military person 1.

The church's position during this trying time in Zimbabwe's history was varied. Chitando (2013) observes that the church-state relations in Zimbabwe after independence were almost similar to colonial times in that there are some church leaders who are close to those who wield political power. This can be interpreted as being gullible to the status quo. These included leading church figures such as Archbishop Patrick Chakaipa, who interacted closely with Mugabe (Auret 2009: 137–138). Then there were those who were not gullible and were strong critics of the government such as Archbishop Pius Ncube.

The church in Zimbabwe has always been part and parcel of the struggles facing the nation. Traditional bodies that dealt with the crisis are the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishop's Conference (ZCBC), Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC). New bodies formed due to the crisis were Churches in Manicaland, Christians Together for Justice and Peace, Churches in Bulawayo, Christian Alliance, and the Zimbabwe National Pastors' Conference (Togarasei 2013: 100). With these criticisms, Mugabe and his cronies started extending their hand to other churches that were more gullible, especially the African Independent Churches and some Pentecostal churches. These began to be given the responsibility to pray at political gatherings, a responsibility that had previously been reserved for the Catholic Church and other mainline churches.

The Gullible Ones

Some Pentecostal leaders during the crisis period were not entirely critical of the government of the day. Andrew Wutawunashe of the Family of God declared that the results of the presidential elections of 2002 were the will of God. This he stated despite the fact that they were widely regarded as fraudulent (Togarasei 2008: 75–88). Wutawunashe soon became a darling religious minister of the state as he was invited to state functions and enjoyed positive state media coverage. His church even established the Faith for the Nation Campaign desk. This was a platform through which the church addressed political issues (Togarasei 2006: 215–225). Wutaunashe was not alone in showering the government of the day with praises. The Celebration Church founder and senior pastor Tom Deuschle in 2004 declared that then

President Mugabe had been blessed by God and that he was God's gift to the nation of Zimbabwe because God establishes leaders (Togarasei 2013: 102). The Celebration Church even presented the president with a monetary gift, a portrait and Bible storybooks for his children. Another controversial Pentecostal minister who responded to the crisis was Obadiah Msindo of the Destiny of Africa Ministries. Like the government of the day, Msindo viewed the crisis unfolding in Zimbabwe as a creation by the Western world to depose President Mugabe. He supported the government openly through running building projects, conducting economic empowerment workshops and spreading government propaganda on radio and television (Togarasei 2013: 103). He also openly campaigned for the ruling ZANU PF. In spite of the above who supported the government of the day, one lone voice stood out against the government, namely that of Archbishop Pius Ncube.

In Defiance of the Status Quo: Pius Ncube

During the crisis period in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2007, Pius Ncube was the Roman Catholic archbishop of Bulawayo and very vocal about the nature of government which was generally oppressive to the majority of Zimbabwean people. His became the loudest voice of defiance against the injustices of Robert Mugabe. Chitando, Taringa and Mapuranga (2014) report, 'He was bold enough to call on people to rise up against Mugabe's rule and he even declared his readiness to go in front of blazing guns'. He spoke at a time Zimbabwe's political rivals were harassed, imprisoned and tortured; independent newspapers closed down and a whole population being cowed by economic collapse and food shortages (La Guardia 2004). Pius Ncube spoke vehemently against the Gukurahundi in which researchers say between 2 000 and 8 000 people were killed, at least 10 000 arrested and 7 000 beaten or tortured (La Guardia 2004). Sibanda (in Chitando *et al.* 2014) states that Ncube demanded that Mugabe disclose the massacre of thousands of civilians in Matabeleland and the Midlands provinces by troops who crushed a purported army insurgency against his rule soon after independence. Pius Ncube spoke against the injustices of the land reform programme. He claimed that only 2% of the land was distributed to farmers and the rest was given to ministers and Mugabe's friends. For him to be quiet in the face of such gross human rights violations was a disservice to the people of Zimbabwe and disloyal to Christ.

Pius Ncube proved that he was not gullible to the governmental system of the day as reported by Alex Perry (2007) of *Time Magazine*. He was reported as one of President Robert Mugabe's most outspoken critics who in 2007 offered to lead a street campaign to oust him. He accused Mugabe of being extremely power conscious and being obsessed with anything that disturbed his power base. He went on to accuse Mugabe of fuelling the economic collapse of the nation through the land reform which according to him was done to spite the white farmers who supported Morgan Tsvangirai. Ncube claimed that inflation was at 4 000%, prices doubled every two days, with people leaving the country daily. Being a cleric he bemoaned the government's lack of moral values, as the country suffered, with children out of school and the officials continuing with their corrupt and cruel agendas. Ncube observed that the government did not seem to care for the health of its people, leaving the care of most Zimbabweans in the hands of the World Food Programme. He also exposed the uncaring nature of some government officials, an example being Didymus Mutasa. He quoted Mutasa, then Minister of State Security as saying, 'We would be better off with only six million people, with our own (supporters). We don't want all these extra people'. Such intolerance was deplorable to Ncube.

Ncube also published a damning report on the inhuman Operation Murambatsvina of 2005. According to the report, up to 1.5 million people were made homeless. More than 300 000 homes were destroyed, more than 46 000 people were arrested and over 4 million people were left starving (Ncube, P., Bate, R., and Tren, R.: 2005). In defiance of the system, Ncube had the guts to criticise the operation and to write a report exposing the evil orchestrated on the Zimbabwean populace. In the summary of the report, he commented that President Mugabe remained president of Zimbabwe only through corruption of the democratic process and the legal system and through suppression of the opposition. Mugabe was accused of desperately trying to maintain power and control by employing tactics used against guerrilla fighters in Rhodesia in the 1970s. In light of all this, Ncube appealed to the international community to act against Mugabe. In being a voice for the voiceless, Ncube proved that he was not gullible; however his critical nature had consequences.

Ncube's utterances were not received well by Mugabe's regime. He and other church leaders were accused of speaking falsely against the governance of the country and Robert Mugabe urged the people of Zimbabwe

not to listen to them. In the *Herald* of 5 May 2007, Mugabe is quoted as saying,

> Once the bishops turn political, we regard them as no longer spiritual and our relations with them would be conducted as if we are dealing with political entities and this is quite a dangerous path they have chosen for themselves.

Because of his speaking out against the government, his telephones were tapped, government agents monitored his every sermon and he was told that he was on the police death list. To add to that, the state-controlled press accused him of raping nuns, fathering bastard children and indulging in homosexual acts with prisoners (La Guardia 2004). Nathan Shamuyarira (in La Guardia 2004), one of Mugabe's ministers, accused him of being 'a propagandist who works for the racist imperialist government to undermine the Zimbabwean government'. Due to Ncube's utterances, the church was labelled as a church that supported white supremacy. As a result of this, Mugabe turned to the white garment churches for support which he readily got. Ncube was silenced by his being accused of infidelity and had to resign from his post of Archbishop in 2007.

Conclusion

The article has shown us some important aspects. Firstly, the periods in which the two clergy men operated were both oppressive and they stood as lone voices to criticise the status quo, thus refusing to be gullible. Secondly, they practised prophetic political theology, which was a refusal to be gullible to the policies of the government of the day. Thirdly, their refusal to be gullible had a detrimental effect on them, as they were both silenced by the governments of their time. Dodge was deported for his refusal to align himself with government policies that encouraged the oppression of the black majority. The fact that some missionaries did not support Dodge's stance shows that there were some who were in support of the government's stance, or maybe they were afraid to raise their voices. In Ncube's case he refused to be silent in the face of the suffering of the masses. As in Dodge's case, there were also some ministers who were in support of the status quo. This was doing injustice to the liberating scripture of Luke 4:18. The support these

ministers gave to the government shows gullibility to a system that went against biblical principles. The article has also shown that political theology is safest when done under the umbrella of an organisation. Under an organisation, the government cannot victimise individuals like it did in the case of Dodge and Ncube.

References

Alden, C. 2002. South Africa's Quiet Diplomacy and the Crisis in Zimbabwe. *Cardenos de Estudoes Africanos* 2, Janeiro/ Julho. Available at: https://journalsopenedition.org (Accessed on 19 September 2019.)

Auret, M. 2009. *From Liberator to Dictator: An Insider's Account of Robert Mugabe's Descent into Tyranny*. South Africa: David Phillip.

Chitando, E. (ed.). 2013. *Prayers and Players: Religion and Politics in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Sapes Books.

Chitando, E., N.T. Taringa & T.P. Mapuranga 2014. Zimbabwean Theology and Religious Studies during the Crisis Years (2000 – 2008): A Preliminary Study. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 40,1: 173 – 189. Available at: http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php (Accessed on 19 September 2019.)

Daneel, M.L. 1971. *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches: Volume 1: Background and Rise of the Major Movements*. The Hague: Mouton.

Dodge, R.E. 1986. *The Revolutionary Bishop who Saw God at Work in Africa*. California. William Carey Library.

Goepp, P.H. & M.W. Kay 1984. *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Synonyms: A Dictionary of Discriminated Synonyms with Antonyms and Analogous and Contrasted Words*. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.

Greenspan, S. 2009. *Annals of Gullibility: Why we get Duped and How to Avoid it*. Westport, CT, US: Praeger Publishers/ Greenwood Publishing Group.

Gunda, M.R. & A.K. Mtetwa 2013. The Bible as a Political Resource in Zimbabwe: The Subtleness of Biblical Teachings in Zimbabwean Politics. In Chitando, E. (ed.): *Multiplying in the Spirit: African Initiated Churches in Zimbabwe*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.

Jewell, E. (ed). 2006. *Pocket Oxford Dictionary & Thesaurus*. 2nd American Edition. New York: Oxford University Press US.

Kaiso, G. 2010. The Church and Good Governance. Available at: https://religionunplugged.com/news/index.php (Accessed on 20 September 2019.)

Kee, A. 1978. *The Scope of Political Theology*. London: SCM Press.

Kibble, S. 2004. Zimbabwe: The Government wants the People to Give up Hoping. (Archbishop Pius Ncube, Bulawayo). *Review of African Political Economy* 31, 100: 364 – 372. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/ 4006900 (Accessed on 21 September 2019.)

La Guardia, A. 2004. 'I'm not going to be bullied by Mugabe'. *The Telegraph*. Available at: https://telegraph.co.uk (Accessed on 19/09/2019).

Maboyi, A. 2015. Role of Religion in Colonialism. Available at: https://www.chronicle.co.zw (Accessed on 21 September 2019.)

Maenzanise, B. 2008. The Church and Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle. *Methodist History* 46:*2*. Available at www.archives,gcah.org (Accessed on 20 August 2019.)

Metz, J.-B. 2013. Two-fold Political Theology. In Schüssler-Fiorenza, F., K. Tanner & M. Welker (eds.): *Political Theology: Contemporary Challenges and Future Directions*. Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox Press.

Moltmann, J. 2013. Political Theology in Ecumenical Contexts. In Schüssler-Fiorenza, F., K. Tanner & M. Welker (eds.): *Political Theology: Contemporary Challenges and Future Directions*. Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox Press.

Muchena, D.T. 2004. The Church and Reconciliation: A Mission Impossible? In Raftopoulos, B. & T. Savage (eds.): *Zimbabwe: Injustice and Political Reconciliation*. Harare: Weaver Press.

Ncube, P., R. Bate & R. Tren 2005. State in Fear: Zimbabwe's Tragedy is Africa's Shame. A Report on Operation Murambatsvina – 'Operation Drive out the Filth' – and its Implications. Available at: www.archive.kubatana.net>html>archive>demgg (Accessed on 25 august 2019.)

New International Version. Holy Bible. 1984. Luke 4 Verse 18. England: International Bible Society.

Nkomo, J. 1984. *The Story of my Life.* Zimbabwe: Pacprint.

Okunoye, J.O. 2012. The Role of the Church towards Achieving Good Governance in Nigeria. In Ayantayo, J.K., O.A. Dada & H.A. Labeodan

(eds.): *Religion and Governance in Nigeria.* Available at: www.slideshare.net (Accessed on 28 August 2019.)

Peaden, W.R. 1979. Aspects of the Church and its Political Involvement in Southern Rhodesia, 1959-1972. Available at: http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/africanjournals/ (Accessed on 29 August 2019.)

Perry, A. 2007. Zimbabwe's Outspoken Archbishop. Available at: https://www.content.time.com (Accessed on 28 August 2019.)

Schmitt, C. 2012. Political Theology. In Cavanaugh, W.T., J.W. Bailey & C. Hovey (eds.): *An Eerdmans Reader in Contemporary Political Theology.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Schüssler-Fiorenza, F. 2013. Critical Feminist Theology of Liberation: A Decolonizing Political Theology. In Schüssler-Fiorenza, F., F.K. Tanner & M. Welker (eds): *Political Theology: Contemporary Challenges and Future Directions.* Louisville CY. Westminster: John Knox Press.

Sithole, N. 1968. *African Nationalism*. London: Oxford University Press.

Thomas, N.E. 1985. Church and State in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Church and State* 27, 1, Winter: 113 - 133. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/27.1.113 (Accessed 25/08/2019)

Togarasei, L. 2008. Jerusalem and Antioch: Inter-state, Intra-church Politics in the Family of God Church in Botswana. *PULA: Botswana Journal of African Studies* 22,1: 75 – 88.

Togarasei, L. 2013. Pentecostal Churches and Politics in Zimbabwe's Turbulent Years (2000 – 2008). In Chitando, E. (ed.): *Prayers and Players: Religion and Politics in Zimbabwe.* Harare: SAPES BOOKS.

Van Wyk, T. 2015. Political Theology as Critical Theology. *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 71,3: Art. #3026, 8 pages. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts (Accessed on 28 August 2019.)

Yamagishi, T., M. Kikuchi & M. Kosugi 1999. Trust, Gullibility, and Social Intelligence. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 2,1. Available at: https://doi.org.10.1111/1467-839X.00030 (Accessed on 28 August 2019.)

Maragret Chinyadza
Church History
Africa University
Mutare
chinyadzam@africau.edu

‘It is the gullible ones that survive’: Armour-bearers and Bodyguards in New Pentecostal Movements in Zimbabwe

Francis Machingura
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5161-5369

Nomatter Sande
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4177-8391

Abstract

The New Religious Movements (NRMs) have attempted to distinguish themselves from the other Christian movements in Zimbabwe in many ways. The flamboyance, glamour and executive touch in their approach copy or supersede national presidents and celebrities. Instead of being seen and suspected as ‘gullible crooks or hucksters’, the men or women of God (MOG) of the NRMs have become celebrities. ‘Curses’ and ‘blessings’ have been gullibly used as a shield for their failures, abuses and extortions of gullibly naive followers. Inevitably such presentation by the MOG is gullibly opening the door for celebrity worship. What is interesting is that the Bible is against celebrity worship, which is commonly regarded as evil, enslavement, idolatry, false and superficial. The pertinent concern or question that quickly comes to mind is the extent to which the concept of armour-bearer and bodyguards is morally compatible with both the biblical and contemporary church perspective. The article explores the meaning, significance and role of armour-bearers’ NRMs. We used a purposive sampling of 50 respondents or key informers from three Pentecostal Churches in Harare urban. The three Pentecostal Churches share similar beliefs and practices.

Keywords: Armour-bearer, Bodyguards, New Religious Movements (NRMs), Pentecostalism, Man of God (MOG), gullibility.

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a7

Introduction

Pentecostalism has been a leading force to reckon with within the religious landscape of Zimbabwe. However, many people have mixed feelings on the claims of miracle we witness every day and the continued mushrooming of the Pentecostal Churches. As such, the office of the Man or Woman of God (MOG) in 'New Pentecostal movements in Zimbabwe'[1] is receiving signifycant attention in both private and public spheres. The MOG office is characterised by media attention, gimmicks and abuses. It has become apparent that most of the MOG are taking advantage of the social decline, religious confusion, economic hardships and political challenges the people are experiencing in Zimbabwe. As observed by Gunda and Machingura (2013: 16), the MOG in Zimbabwe has captured the attention of the populace with their extravagant lifestyle and exquisite flamboyance coated with spiritual healing powers. Of late, people have witnessed biblical manipulations and modifications to help the MOG to achieve their self-aggrandizing appetite. MOG have responded to most of the allegations by citing biblical scriptures that support their appetite for having bodyguards (Genesis 14: 14, 7: 0, 9: 1, 40: 3–4, 40: 10–12; 1 Samuel 21: 1, 22: 14, 28: 2; 2 Samuel 8: 18, 15: 18, 20: 23, 20: 27; 2 Kings 1: 38, 11: 4, 11, 19; 25: 18-25, 20: 14; I Chronicles 11: 25, 18: 17; Nehemiah 4: 2; Jeremiah 26: 21, 9: 9-13, 40: 2–5; 41: 10, 4: 6, 52: 12–30; Psalms 25: 21; 1 Pet 1: 5; Mk 6: 27 and Acts 17: 15). The Old Testament is usually cited as source of legitimation when it comes to the relevance of bodyguards or armour-bearers in the modern church.

Old Testament kings and religious luminaries were attended to by armour-bearers who gave them help. The picture of armour-bearers is not vivid in the New Testament; although the case of Jesus' disciples and those of his followers are usually given as examples of armour-bearers in the New Testament. However, the phenomenon of bodyguards has become a familiar Pentecostal image whereby the MOG appear guarded at church services and in public places. Even when they are preaching, there are bodyguards who always make sure that they are with the MOG. As a result, there are mixed feelings about the role and significance of bodyguards in a church setting.

The basic question posed is: What is the need or role of body bodyguards for the MOG? Does the MOG in the church today need

[1] The 'New Pentecostal Movement in Zimbabwe' is discussed below in the Zimbabwean Pentecostal Landscape.

bodyguards? Are the bodyguards or armour-bearers giving their services for the love of God or as a form of employment or the respect of the MOG due to their patronising and selective reading of the Bible? An attempt to respond to the above question calls for criticism for a number of reasons. A number of respondents gave us various reasons. These include, first, the role of bodyguards creating a room for the deifying of the MOG; secondly, the simplistic assumption that the deification is a result of what they see in the MOG or the amount of money that they benefit from the MOG. Thirdly, in the process of protecting the leader, bodyguards control access to the MOG, making him/ her special and unique; thus bureaucratic procedures and protocols are put in place to distance the MOG from the congregation. Fourthly, there is wide consensus that the concept of servant leadership presupposes the MOG to serve the congregation, but what we find is the opposite, as it is the congregation that guards and serves the MOG instead of the reverse. By being a MOG, it presupposes an anointed individual who get their protection from God and not from paid bodyguards. In the fifth instance, the issue of bodyguards is an influence from Western nations where they have been cases of pastors who get shot in churches by gangs. Some of the bodyguards are from the professional security establishment, ex-military officials and companies. This boggles the mind as to why a church would spend money on the security of the MOG who is supposed to be protected by God. In extreme cases, some bodyguards are not even Christians at all but have been hired as a result of their military or security skills, or they are relatives.

The Zimbabwean Pentecostal Landscape

This study is situated in the Zimbabwean Pentecostal landscape and how the concepts of bodyguards and armour-bearers impact believers. In Africa, Pentecostalism is becoming a prominent type of Christianity (Ngong 2012: 216). Statistically, Pentecostals comprise 17.1% of Africa's 1,044,107,000 billion people (Kaunda 2016). The Pentecostal strand of Christianity has become a powerful force to reckon with, apart from the indigenous religion. Studies have been done on how the Pentecostal started and moved to South Africa (Chandomba 2007). Further, the article by Lovemore Togarasei (2016) historicises the emergence and development of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe. Studies show that the Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe are not homogenous. In recent years since 2006, a new wave of

Pentecostalism, which emphasised the 'prophetic mantle' emerged in Zimbabwe. Popular proponents of this wave were Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa, Prophet Chipunza, Prophet Uebert Angel and Apostle Tavonga Vutabwashe. These MOG are responsible for the popularisation of the concept of bodyguards in Zimbabwe. Chitando, Gunda and Kugler (2014) argue that the Zimbabwean neo-prophets are young men who masquerade as indispensable mediators of spiritual resources and mysteries. The neo-prophetic Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe is 'New Religious Movements (NRMs)'. Neo-prophetic movements or New Religious Movements (NRMs) have their own ethos, missions and style, which are different from Pentecostal traditions and it should be discussed in its own right (Omenyo & Atiema 2006: 59).

According to Mananavire (2014), Emmanuel Makandiwa, founder of the United Family International Church (UFIC), Uebert Mudzanire Angel, founder of the Spirit Embassy, and Walter Magaya, the founder of Prophetic and Healing Deliverance, are 'always surrounded by heavily-built personal bodyguards as they battle for supremacy'. Perhaps it is important to understand the teachings and theology in these churches that necessitate the need for bodyguards. The miracles that are claimed by these churches include, but are not limited to prophetically identifying people's identity numbers, mobile phone numbers and residential addresses. Other miracles are associated with blessings, weight loss, penis enlargement, fast-tracked baby birth, and miracle moneys. As such, the assumed ability to solve enormous existential challenges makes the MOG powerful to deserve protection. The amassing of wealth by new Pentecostal founders inevitably makes the suffering population align with the MOG as a means to access a better future. Human experience is akin to power in the context mediated by the divine encounters.

The Theology of Armour-bearers and Bodyguards

Analysing armour-bearers in the context of the Old Testament helps in setting a template for understanding bodyguards in the New Pentecostal Movements. The idea of armour-bearers must be understood in the light of welfare (Seevers 1998: 2). The biblical writings have rich data on welfare from the triumph of Israel and the foundation of the Israelite state. The biblical concepts of armour-bearers are linked to the militia. Though there is debate about the military age for the men going to war, Herzog and Gichon (1978: 67 - 68) propose that the age of 16 is the age base. Mendenhall (1958: 60) contends

that, the age of 20–45 is bolstered by a few messages (Numbers 1: 3, 45, 26: 2, 4, 14: 29; Deuteronomy 2: 16; and 1 Chronicles 27: 23). In any case, the proposition by Van Selms (1960: 55) that the military age was 13 appear to be misrepresented, since no writings talk about that scenario. Armour-bearers in the Bible seem to have been servants who carried additional weapons for army commanders. Abimelech (Judges 9: 54), Saul (1 Samuel 16: 21), Jonathan (1 Samuel 14: 6–17) and Joab (2 Samuel 18: 15) had armour-bearers. Armour-bearers would kill enemies wounded by their masters. The duties of an armour-bearer were threefold:

a. Carrying the leader's additional weapons. The armour-bearer carried extra weapons by quickly replacing the leader's weapon in combat.
b. Assisting the leader in finishing the enemy. The armour-bearer was skilled in the weapons he carried. He had the gruelling job of finishing off the wounded warriors for the leaders' sake.
c. Protecting the leader at all costs. The armour-bearer would ultimately be responsible for protecting the leader from danger (Mcaurther 2017).

After David, we do not find armour-bearers being mentioned in the Bible, as commanders began to fight from chariots, as mentioned in 1 Kings 12: 18, 20: 33. Armour-bearers were popular with the office of the king and some selected prophets, for example, Joshua assisted Moses; Elisha assisted Elijah; and Gehazi assisted Elisha. For example, 2 Kings 3: 11 states,

> But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the kings of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat who poured water on the hands of Elijah.

For us to take Joshua, Elisha and Gehazi as possibly bodyguards would be stretching the argument too far, as texts give us the picture of them being helpers or assistants. The assistant or helper succeeded the master; yet bodyguards or armour-bearers cannot replace the master or founder of the Church in the sense of the modern Pentecostal churches. It is possible that the bodyguards in the contemporary sense are the version of the sons of the prophets in the Old Testament whose responsibilities included providing services and protection to the MOG. Prophecy was viewed as risky and not as

the lucrative business it has turned out to be where prophets have become a danger to the people they are leading.

The idea of bodyguards comes with hero-worshipping of the clergy. The Christ model teaches servantship and not Lordship. Perhaps, the MOG are tempted to receive this Lordship because of how the church portrays the MOG. The MOG is often pictured as a representative of God, the Vicar of Christ and the embodiment of the Spirit of God; hence the church teaches that instead of God doing everything on earth, He has put the MOG in place to function on His behalf. Do we have texts to support this? When the bodyguards are protecting the MOG, they have a feeling that they are serving God in the person of the MOG, which is a form of gullibility, as this results in hero worshipping. Universal scriptures that are misquoted and abused, to show the idea of protection of the MOG are Matthew 19: 14, 'But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven"'. Secondly, Luke 18: 38-29 states, 'And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"' The assumption is that serving the MOG, automatically brings the mercies of God in the life and families of the bodyguards. Yet those who went before him were not bodyguards per se. People take it to extremes to associate the disciples of Jesus with bodyguards. In fact, the people who tried to silence the blind man are viewed as Jesus' disciples, yet it is not clear whether it was the disciples of Jesus or the blind man's contemporaries. Even if it were the disciples, it has nothing to do with the protection of Jesus or keeping Jesus away from the people. In the case of the cited biblical texts, the disciples of Jesus cannot be equated to bodyguards. It is common to point to Peter's action in John 18: 10, 'then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus'. Peter is associated with modern-day bodyguards, considering his violent behaviour in trying to protect Jesus Christ against his accusers. Jesus' behaviour in avoiding violent acts speaks volumes about his lifestyle and ministry. Jesus did not need bodyguards to protect him against his adversaries.

The New Testament gives two structures: elders and deacons as the inner circle of the MOG. The elders are responsible for leading spiritual issues of the church, while deacons are positioned to deal with the physical needs of the church. We do not find elders and deacons serving in the Early

Church as bodyguards or armour-bearers. However, the two offices have created enmity within the MOG because of the power struggle. The two offices of the elder and deacon, rather than the bodyguards, protect and support the MOG socially, morally and financially. In some circles, the office of elders and deacons is potentially to be equated to the supposed bodyguards in the church that protect and guide the MOG. What is generally clear is that the New Testament does not have the concept of armour-bearers or body-guards. What is visible is the idea of carrying the Bible, anointed hand-kerchiefs, chauffeurs, butlers and not bodyguards. Some associate the concept of bodyguards in Pentecostal Churches as something that was borrowed from African Traditional Religion and Culture.

Bodyguards and African Traditional Religion (ATR)

The issue of bodyguards is not foreign to ATR. The proliferation of the Shona/Ndebele culture in Zimbabwe can be the source of the bodyguards in the Modern Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. Although the Pentecostals claim to have a total break from their past history and life, the indigenous culture remains resilient within their practices (Biri 2012). In the Shona indigenous culture, *Machinda aMambo* are equivalent to the political bodyguards. As stated by Machingura (2012: 186), the role of the *Machinda aMambo* was to protect the community, subjects (complainants and accused) awaiting trial, to act as the chief's advisors (Zvikonzi), as well as community policemen to protect the destitute and travellers who stopped in the village for the night. As such, the issue of the bodyguard does not raise eyebrows since this is in tandem with the traditional indigenous culture. Bodyguards played an important role in protecting the chief and his household. When taken from that political context of *Machinda aMambo,* some Pentecostal MOG can be understood and interpreted as religious outfits who have the same needs as political elites.

Armourer-bearers/ Bodyguards in Modern Pentecostal Churches

Modern Pentecostals churches in Zimbabwe are emerging churches focusing on the prophetic frenzy miracles. Manyonganise (2016: 271) argues that the Pentecostal prophetic ministries have received an overjoyed response dubbed

as 'this-worldly' as they deal with issues of poverty, violence and social pressures. The question of the compatibility of bodyguards in the church today is vital. The function of the bodyguards is not defined in Pentecostal movements. There are schools of thought on bodyguards in the modern Pentecostal churches; that is, those in support of and against the use of bodyguards by MOG.

Pastor Stias Chivenge (Interview, 28 August 2017) explains that there is no big deal about bodyguards; it is just a department which deals with order, security and ushering services. Chivenge further adds that,

> Bodyguards are part of security department. If a pastor leads a large church and know[s] that he [she] could be at risk of being attacked by robbers [they need to put up contingency measures for their own protection]. You don't have enough faith to believe God for supernatural (angelic) protection in risk situations that needs physical protection. Go ahead and get yourself a good bodyguard. No use trying to be a hero and ending up a zero. Ignore the critics and do what you need to do.

Even Paul the great preacher needed protection in his missionary journeys. Acts 9: 23–25 narrates that,

> And after that many days were fulfilled; the Jews took counsel to kill him: But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

In this case, disciples are taken as having played the role of security personnel or body guards. This passage shows that even MOG must not just wait for calamities to befall them, but they must plan and protect themselves. Bodyguards can be viewed as a Pentecostal model of providing security to their leaders. The Apostles were harassed and murdered. This possibly forces MOG to think of having bodyguards. Above half of the respondents take bodyguards as a safety and security measure. However, the responses were not convincing on the following questions: Why are MOG afraid of their members? Apostles' lives were at risk from outsiders and not brethren. Does it mean that contemporary MOG are afraid of death? Is it not

a security measure against congregants who would have been financially short changed? What about the security of the Church members? The Pentecostal gospel that is preached and the accompanying money spinning initiatives make some of the MOG feel vulnerable to physical attack and public harassment. According to Pastor Makari (Not her real name, Interview, 11 July 2017),

> Most of these prosperity preachers realise the damage and criminal behaviour in their preaching and teaching. Their fear is real and practical. They know that they will definitely be beaten up for gullibly short-changing people using the Bible. A number of people are bitter and angry for the lost money and properties. The bodyguards are hired thugs meant to protect the MOG from possible attack or confrontations.

The Zimbabwean economic meltdown makes it easy for the MOG to gullibly defraud congregants, who are also gullible and they get away with it. Sande (2017: 57) argues that the leaders of mega-Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe use the discourse of 'blessings and curses' as their trump card. For example, MOG seek to protect themselves in advance against any eventualities. In that case, MOG protect themselves against defrauded members of the church. Prophet Sanyangore's brother was beaten up by bodyguards and left for dead when he revealed all the fake miracles the prophets purported to perform (Anon 2016). The MOG makes sure that access to them is limited and highly controlled. People are disgruntled with the 'no refund tag' attached to the services given by the MOG. The bodyguards are hired to deal with any possible confrontations or uprising or showdown. For instance, Maxwell (2000: 270) argues that Ezekiel Guti, the founder the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God (ZAOGA) and his family was forced to relocate to Mutare following the grumbling regarding the prominence of Guti's second wife and businessman who were appointed overseers. Guti's wealth was questionable and as a result bodyguards were hired to protect him in case of any physical attack. For critics, the followers are to blame and not the MOG, because members volunteer to be bodyguards. As a result, followers are the ones who choose to protect their leaders, as we see in the story of Thomas. John 11:16 narrates that 'Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with Him''. It would not be outrageous

to think that Thomas in this scenario wanted to fight, protect and even die for Jesus; hence taking the place of the bodyguard out of context.

Some respondents and pastors talked about health reasons, namely that it is common that some pastors are not in good health, and if someone collapses on stage, first aid is provided quickly. The impression given is that of helpers and not bodyguards. However, it could not be established as to how much training and skills are needed for one to qualify as a bodyguard. The level of protection is also another challenge since it is difficult to guard effectively without weapons. Does it mean that the helpers are militarily or medically trained? What criteria do they use in the selection of bodyguards? Three respondents exonerated pastors who utilise the services of bodyguards by arguing that bodyguards are there to protect the MOG from followers who shove one another during altar calls for healing. The respondents cited an incident when Jesus had to withdraw from the crowd (John 6: 15-18). People just rush and come towards the MOG in the middle of a session, thereby causing confusion. Justification is given in having bodyguards to protect the MOG. According to Elder Moyo (Not his real name, Interview, 18 March 2017), some people are troublesome and bodyguards make sure order is maintained in the church. As a result, some bodyguards are armed, whilst some are trained to protect the leader without the use of arms. Dave Chikosi (2014) sketches the tricky scenario of Western countries when he argues that,

> There is always the real possibility of being attacked and robbed if you are a preacher working in dangerous inner city neighborhoods. Some pastors in these neighborhoods have even gone on to heaven a little sooner than they anticipated.
>
> a) Take for instance the widely-reported cold-blooded murder of a minister at Creflo Dollar's mega church in Atlanta, Georgia. The assailant calmly walked into the church's prayer service one October 2012 morning. With 20–25 people watching in horror the gunman opened fire, killing Mr Greg McDowell, the prayer leader in cold blood. Does anybody seriously think that the widow and surviving children of this slain faith hero would stand up and criticize a church for putting into place elaborate security arrangements? Most people who are quick to criticize have never stood where these unfortunate people stand. Until you have had someone take a swing at you or

> some deranged gunman places you in the crosshairs of their shotgun, and you lived to tell the story, then you really have no business judging a preacher for having personal security or bodyguards.
>
> b) I remember nine years ago (2005) watching a very disturbing video online of a man assaulting the late Rev Billy Joe Daugherty at his Victory Christian Center church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The man had come forward during an altar call at the end of a Sunday service. He motioned for Pastor Daugherty to approach and then hit him twice; opening a cut above the pastor's eye that required two stitches.
>
> c) Then consider the tragic case of Pastor Ronald J. Harris of St Charles, Louisiana. While preaching a special Friday night service at his church in Sept 2013, a lone gunman walked in with a shotgun and shot Pastor Harris twice. Question: would a tighter security regime have saved this preacher's life? Maybe.

For Dave Chikosi, most large ministries (over 2 000 members) around the world have some security arrangements around their premises as well as around their pastors. Most critics would however concede that that it is therefore counterintuitive for MOGs working in high-risk neighbourhoods not to put in place some level of personal security rather than take unnecessary risks in the name of God and put the family or himself at risk. However, the scenario may be tricky to use as an excuse for Zimbabwean MOGs, considering that the environments are totally different. Zimbabwe has not witnessed cases of gunshots in church, save for armed robberies targeting collected offerings and tithes.

Consequently, this calls for understanding what the Bible teaches about self- defence. Are Christians supposed to carry guns in Church for self-defence? Did Jesus' disciples prepare themselves for self-defence? Luke 22: 35-36,

> And he said unto them, when I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said nothing. Then said he unto them, but now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise,

> his script: and he that has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.

Jesus seems to have encouraged the buying of swords. The question of whether a man of the cloth should be armed or have bodyguards is very controversial. But if we substitute gun for sword in the above passage the issue may not be as controversial as it first appears. In the context of Zimbabwe new Pentecostal preachers face no physical threats. People need to be careful when using biblical texts in light of modern developments in the Church. Texts must be understood within their context. Jesus never implied MOG only if we take the text as a reference to about self-defence, but every Christian believer or his followers. The sword in this context has nothing to do with violence but peace. According to Ezekiel 33: 6,

> But if the watchman sees the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword comes, and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

Findings by Johns (2012: 144) show that personal bodyguards protected many Roman Catholic Popes. They also initiated wars, raised armies and military campaigns. So, from this context, apologists argue that the issue of bodyguards is not peculiar to the modern Pentecostals in Zimbabwe. Therefore, the need of a bodyguard depends on the threat level to the MOG.

With a quick response, Pastor Tinotenda Machingura (Not his real name, Interview, 27 August 2017) points to the scripture that the issue of bodyguards is there in the Bible. He further points to Nehemiah 8:4,

> So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose; and beside him, at his right hand, stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Urijah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah; and on his left hand Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbadana, Zechariah, [and] Meshullam.

In this passage, the pastor understood men standing at the left and the right as Ezra's bodyguards. On the contrary, 15 respondents from three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), where 65% were against the concept of bodyguards as a

self-serving measure borrowed from the state and its protection of political and government leaders. One senior pastor dismissed the idea of bodyguards as nonsensical and this-worldly. In fact, the title 'bodyguard' is standard in social politics where bodyguards are responsible for protecting and escorting famous people. However, in this case the use of bodyguards in some Pentecostal Churches could have been borrowed from society by ambitious and flashy pastors. Thus, MOG finds it tempting to also have bodyguards by imitating political leaders. Politicians have many fears which call for protection from possible assassinations. Inevitably, some MOG find the role of bodyguards irresistible. Perez (2013: 51) argues that the church is moving towards the worldly viewpoints of success and it is hard to distinguish business enterprises and the church, let alone helpers and bodyguards.

Within the Zimbabwean context, the risk of MOG needing bodyguards can be many, but much risk comes from the disgruntled church members who strongly feel they were somehow gullibly duped to follow the MOG. In some cases, the MOG threatens by curses to silence the people. Matenga (2015) in *Newsday*, reports from a *Judgement Night 3* that, during the miracle service, Prophet Makandiwa cursed three individuals who wanted to declare that he was a false prophet. Marongwe and Maphosa (2015: 12) argue that the terrain of miracle-making is growing amongst the high-profile figures in Pentecostalism. For example, they protect themselves by saying, 'Do not touch God's anointed', but the context in which they use this scripture is wrong. It is cited out of context; a common feature with neo-Pentecostal Churches. The favoured texts are mostly taken from the Old Testament for the obvious reason that Old Testament texts places the MOG at the centre of things, thereby disempowering followers, whereas New Testament texts place every believer at the centre, thereby empowering all believers or followers. In the New Testament, the MOG is taken as a servant of the people and not vice versa. The call to ministry in the New Testament calls the pastor to serve the congregation and not the reverse. The New Testament is not popular with new Pentecostal movements because of its priesthood of all believers. The Old Testament empowers the priest on behalf of all believers.

The model of servant leadership creates an active relationship between the MOG and the congregation. Thus, the ministry of the MOG must be that of a servant leader who is there to serve others. The clergy needs to serve the church, and Jesus teaches that anyone who wants to be great among

you must serve others. Brown and Bryant (2015: 20) define servant leadership as the leader's humility, which authenticates and accepts interpersonal acceptance by those they serve. Pastor Chisoro (Not his real name, Interview, 17 September 2017) explains that the existence of bodyguards shows prestige, fame and an exaggeration of social status. As much as Christians are commanded to honour their pastors; pastors are commanded to be servant-leaders, not celebrities, who want to be flashy by taking armour-bearers or bodyguards. Pastor Gomo (Not his real name, Interview, 17 September 2017) argues,

> The problem today is that the leadership in the church is centred on personal gain and not Christ-like servant-hood and humility. Therefore, the idea of comfort and healthy living for the MOG is topical thereby opening room for the ideas of bodyguards. The idea that the MOG are afraid of congregants who will harm them is unthinkable. One pastor denied that pastors do not need bodyguards, but rather pastors need inner prayerful brethren who protect them with prayers, love and encouragements.

In fact, MOG are supposed to go through rough patches, according to this analogue of John the Baptist in Matthew 11:8, 'But what went you out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses'. Most respondents who seem conservative on the issue of bodyguards argue that the Christian bodyguards are not carnal or physical but spiritual. Notable examples come when the Bible refers to 'the sword of the Spirit' (Ephesians 6: 17; Hebrews 4: 12). For Beaular Kamuriwo (Pastor Gomo (Not his real name, Interview, 06 October 2017),

> Matthew 10: 28 says: 'And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.' Is there anyone on earth that can kill your soul aside God? Of what use are those bodyguards if they cannot stop God from killing your soul? MOG must never have bodyguards. There must never be scared of anything, even death or being physically harmed by gun-wielding men even during church service. Why must a MOG have bodyguards to protect them against thy enemies when your God says he will fight for us (Deuteronomy

> 3: 22)? Pastors teach followers to pray before going to bed for the Lord will protect them in the night against the principalities of the earth. Why would those bodyguards man their houses? God has not given us the spirit of fear (2 Timothy 1: 7) so why would MOG afraid that their enemies?

Unfortunately, in Pentecostal churches, biblical interpretation is both literal and literary. Thus, the literal meaning is visualising the Roman Soldier as in Ephesians 6: 17. In such instances, it is easier for the church armour-bearers to serve the church leader as bodyguard.

Implications for Armour-bearers and Bodyguards

The notion that questions whether it is the gullible ones that survives, invites a reflection on the implication of having armour-bearers and bodyguards in the church. These implications challenge the theology of the church on the meaning of equality, justice and brotherly love. The study concludes by suggesting three implications for bodyguards and armour-bearers in the church:

- First, the MOG should be clothed with the spirit of humility to overcome the temptations of personal glory. This means that the MOG are 'gifts' to the church, called to serve the people, rather than burdening them. The MOG as a servant of both God and humanity should shun the celebrity spotlight which is brought by armour-bearer and bodyguard mentality. The bodyguard looks like a gangster and the MOG becoming the king of the Mafia.

- Secondly, the MOG must articulate his accessibility to the congregation. The MOG should be aware that the congregation has many options to listen to sermons on social media. But they prefer to sit down with them. Thus, if the MOG has a personal presence within the congregation, it promotes equality in the church. Whenever there is transparency, admission of fault, and the church knowing that the MOG has struggles, it helps to keep everything real.

- Thirdly, the MOG should be aware that the armour-bearer mentality

invokes the spirit to cling on to power. It brings a sense of invincibility, yet the MOG ought to walk in humility and groom others for succession. Pastors as leaders should model Christ-like humility and servant-hood. The goal of biblical church leadership should be congregational health, not personal comfort.

Conclusion

The continued elitism of the MOG has inevitably resulted in the employment of bodyguards or armour-bearers who are there to attend to the needs of the MOG. The bodyguard concept as we see it today was analysed from biblical perspectives in order to try and engage the new Pentecostal movement's rising numbers of MOGs with personal bodyguards. The teachings, miracles and doctrine of the New Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe provide gaps to amass wealth, fame and celebrity lifestyle. Therefore, the theology of bodyguards is premised on the idea of self-defence, mostly to protect themselves from their shady deals. The presence of bodyguards in the new Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe gullibly enhances the notion of an invincible and untouchable MOG.

Reference

Anon. 2016. Left for Dead. Available at: http://www.updates.co.zw/2017/06/sanyangores-brother-andy-severely-assaultedleft-for-dead-after-exposing-prophets-fake-miracles/ (Accessed on 16 August 2018.)

Biri, K. 2012. The Silent Echoing Voice: Aspects of Zimbabwean Pentecostalism and the Quest for Power, Healing and Miracles. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 38: 37 - 55.

Brown, S. & P. Bryant 2015. Getting to know the Elephant: A Call to Advance Servant Leadership through Construct Consensus, Empirical Evidence, and Multilevel Theoretical Development. *SLTP* 2,1: 10 - 35.

Chandomba, L. 2007. *The History of the Apostolic Faith Mission and Other Pentecostal Missions of South Africa*. Keynes: Author House.

Chikosi, D. 2014. Should Preachers have Bodyguards? Available at: http://nehandaradio.com/2014/08/25/should-preachers-have-body guards/ (Accessed on 17 June 2018).

Chitando, E., M.R. Gunda & J. Kugler (eds.). 2014. *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe: Festschrift for Aynos Masotcha Moyo*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg.
https://d-nb.info/1058949144/34

Gunda, M.R. & F. Machingura 2013. *The 'Man of God': Understanding Biblical Influence on Contemporary Mega-Church Prophets in Zimbabwe*. Bamberg: University Press.

Herzog, C. & M. Gichon 1978. *Battles of the Bible: A Modern Military Evaluation of the Old Testament*. New York: Random House.

Johns, R. 2012. *The Visions of Daniel the Hebrew Prophet*. Bloomington: WestBow Press.

Kaunda, C.J. 2016. Neo-Prophetism, Gender and 'Anointed Condoms': Towards a Missio Spiritus of Just-Sex in the African Context of HIV and AIDS. *Alternation* 23,2: 64 - 88.
http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/Files/docs/23.2/05%20Kaunda%20f.pdf

Machingura, F. 2012. *The Messianic Feeding of the Masses: An Analysis of John 6 in the Context of Messianic Leadership in Post-colonial Zimbabwe*. University of Bamberg Press.

Mananavire, B. 2014. Of Prophets, Overzealous Bodyguards. Available at: http://www.weekendpost.co.zw/articles/2014/07/21/of-prophets-overzealous-bodyguards
(Accessed 23 December 2018).

Manyonganise, M. 2016. Zimbabweans and the Prophetic Frenzy: Fertile Ground for Women's Sexual Abuse? Hunter, J. & J. Kügler (ed.): *The Bible and Violence in Africa*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.
https://d-nb.info/1104733374/34
(Accessed 23 December 2018).

Marongwe, N. & R.S. Maphosa 2015. PHDS, Gospreneurship, Globalization and the Pentecostal 'New Wave' in Zimbabwe. *Afro-Asian Journal of Social Sciences* Xi,1: 1 - 22.

Matenga, M. 2015. Makandiwa Curses Three People amidst Miracle. Available at:
http://newsday.co.zw/2015/08/makandiwa-curses-three-people-amid-miracles/
(Accessed on 7 January 2018).

Maxwell, D. 2000. 'Catch the cockerel before dawn': Pentecostalism and Politics in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe. *Africa* 70,02: 249 - 277.

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2000.70.2.249
Mcaurther, J. What is an Armor-bearer? Should There be a Church Position of Armor-bearer? Got Questions?org.
Mendenhall G.E. 1958. The Census Lists of Numbers 1 and 26. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 52 - 66. https://doi.org/10.2307/3264330
Ngong, D. 2012. Christianity in Africa. In Bongmba, E.K. & J. Olupona (eds.): *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to African Religions.* Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118255513.ch13
Omenyo, C.N. & A.O. Atiemo 2006. Claiming Religious Space: The Case of Neo-prophetism in Ghana. *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 1: 55 - 68.
Perez, V. 2013. *Let God be True and Every Man a Liar: Are We the Structural Church?* Bloomington, IN: Westbow.
Sande, N. 2017. The Impact of the Coalition of Pentecostalism and Africa Traditional Religion (ATR) Religious Artifacts in Zimbabwe: The Case of United Family International (UFI). *Journal for the Study of Religions of Africa and its Diaspora* 3,1: 46 - 59.
Seevers, B. 1998. *Israelites Warfare from Joshua to David*. Available at: http://reclaimingthemind.org/papers/ets/2003/Seevers/Seevers.pdf (Accessed on 14 May 2017).
Togarasei, L. 2016. Historicising Pentecostal Christianity in Zimbabwe. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 1 - 13. https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/103
Van Selms, A. 1960. The Armed Forces of Israel under Saul and David. *OTWSA* 3,1: 55 - 66.

Interviews

Pastor Stias Chivenge (Not his real name), Interview, 28 August 2017.
Pastor Makari (Not her real name), Interview, 11 July 2017.
Elder Moyo (Not his real name), Interview, 18 March 2017.
Pastor Tinotenda Machingura (Not his real name), Interview, 27 August 2017.
Pastor Chisoro (Not his real name), Interview, 17 September 2017.
Pastor Gomo (Not his real name), Interview, 17 September 2017.
Beaular Kamuriwo (Pastor Gomo (Not his real name), Interview, 06 October 2017.

Armour-bearers and Body Guards in New Pentecostal Movements

Dr. Francis Machingura
Intercultural Biblical Studies
University of Zimbabwe
fmachingura@yahoo.com

Dr. Nomatter Sande
Religion and Social Transformation
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Durban
pastornomsande@yahoo.com

‘Crossing Over’ from an Ideal to a Real Church: Journeying from Gullibility to Responsibility

Gift Masengwe
ORCID iD: http://orchid.org/0000-0003-1222-9067

Abstract

The Church of Christ in Zimbabwe (COCZ) lived in an environment of idealism, and at the onset of the third millennium, regained its consciousness towards reality. Since the 1960s and 1970s, when great theologians like Bolaji Idowu and John Mbiti wrote on indigenizing theology, that in 70 years, the COCZ has failed to move with the times. This study discusses the awakening of the COCZ from its religious gullibility to a common heritage through conference centre construction and constitution making (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019). The study was done through interviews, observations and literature reviews. More ideas came from conference topics and reactions by church members during discussion periods. The study examines the gullibility of the COCZ from a religious and ideological perspective, and suggests how the church can move with the times to become a modern institution. The COCZ has been run like family business where individual missionaries have appointed their own successors without the use of church laws, and such successors have humiliated every member who questioned how things should be done in the church. In the third millennium thus, the COCZ has built structures to localise the church, hence the awakening of the church to a common heritage.

Keywords: Church of Christ in Zimbabwe, Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement, Autonomy, Gullibility, Heteronomy, Glocalization

Introduction

The Church of Christ in Zimbabwe (COCZ) failed to move with other denominations onto the bandwagon of transformation during and after the colonial

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a8

struggle (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019:3). COCZ members suffered from ideological identity and other forms of gullibility, as they lived under the proverbial singing of a local song, yet forever living as a foreigner in the religious landscape of the restoration family of churches (Psalms 137:4). Faithfulness to Jesus Christ has been confused with faithfulness to extending and perpetuating American cultural forms in which they received the gospel (Hunter III 1996:65). Pastor Enock Jirrie (2018) argues that the COCZ did not receive the best of missionaries, hence too much 'unprofessionalism, arrogance and lay incompetence' (Magwidi 2018). While most denominations changed during the liberation struggle, 'the COCZ maintained idealistic forms of the RM principles' (Makadho 2018). Thus in 2011, someone stated that 'the COCZ has uncoordinated visions, purposes and directions, pitting us as the church to be at the "crossroads"' (Makarudze 2011). The COCZ has been viewed as a giant awakening from its 'grasshopper mentality' (Mate 2018). The move towards glocalization was meant to sustain its articulation of the faith in its Church business. The transformation of the COCZ attempted to restructure the COCZ faith content and faith structure (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019:5). The African experience in the transforming institution did not have to undergo conflict with Western ideologies of mission and identity (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2020). All fellowship groups (the Men's, Women's, Youths' and Pastors') sententiously remarked that the COCZ was in the process of localizing the faith traditions along ideological and administrative structures (Mabani 2018). The transformation of the COCZ marked a serious shift from 'autonomous' to 'heteronymous' thinking. The COCZ transformation attempted to make Jesus Christ a real object of faith in the denomination rather an ideal that no-one ever dreamt of achieving (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019). Idealism led members to consume wholesomely a wave of teaching brought by missionaries as orthodox; hence gullibility as members never questioned the actions of missionaries or their proxies. This leads us to investigate the question: 'To what extent can heteronomy address the challenges of gullibility advanced by autonomy in the COCZ?'

Background to the Journey

The COCZ occupies an interestingly precarious position in the country of Zimbabwe, where the formative traditions of the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement (SCRM) have prevented the church from bearing a distinctively

Zimbabwean stamp, which in essence the church 'must preserve full allegiance to the Eternal Cosmic, unchanging Christ, who is her only Lord' (Idowu 1965: 7) by preserving and dedicating herself 'to the glory of God anything that is of value in the [Zimbabwean] culture and institutions' (Idowu 1965: 1). The COCZ of the third millennium must benefit from the general and specific historical developments of the Christianity of the post-development era. In the COCZ, 'the RM is a central ideology that has even replaced the Lordship of Christ in the way the maxims are revered' (Magwidi 2018). Rather, the RM was purposed at 'communicating the ideals of a true Christian institution, in a descriptive rather than in a prescriptive manner' (Magwidi 2018). This article argues about the liberation of the COCZ reader of the Bible to reflect freely on the ideals of the RM without 'placing ourselves in a questionable position, if in defence of the truth we run away from the truth' (Dickson & Ellingworth 1969: 15). That is why Maluleke (2000: 2) states, 'For this generation of theologians nothing was more important than the quest for a coherent African religious identity which would account for the African past and present', also called the fight against subjectivism (Beiser 2002).

Further, the transformation of the COCZ was concerned about mission and identity (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2020), as African leaders were seen manipulating the RM declarations such as the 10 September 1803, *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* (Foster & Dunnavant 2004: 696); and the 17 August 1809, *Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington* (Campbell 1960: 25); what scholars and theologians in the COCZ captured as 'African Church Elites' (Masengwe *et al.* 2012: 185–194). The RM principles were purportedly transliterated to serve the interests of individuals. Thus, Pastor Mordecai Chikwanda (2018) argues that,

> The declarations were done to, and by, people with a federal democratic mentality who believed in the importance of private ownership and individual determination of social and business entities.

H. Eugene Johnson (1975: 81) argues that,

> Alexander Campbell was a brilliant pioneer; he was a child of his culture with his thinking largely circumscribed by the theologies and philosophies of his day.

These declarations incorporated a new wave of American political and philosophical thinking, and thus embraced a diverse group of persons from a variety of Christian walks. One more pastor in the COCZ argued that 'These are solidarity speeches in line with cultural and political sentiments of their revolutions' (Kakava 2018). The restoration fathers were raised during the industrial revolution, thus capitalism, liberalism and individualism was captured in their thinking of church governance. However, another COCZ pastor feels that 'it was conceptually reasonable to make the movement self-sustaining, self-governing and self-propagating as surety for its life and growth' (Magwidi 2018). Their members were coming from Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican and Catholic backgrounds; hence the 'three-self formula' was very relevant (Reese 2007:29). In Africa, its Christians come from a completely different conceptual system of governance that cannot operate from an exclusivist approach (Cox 2001:292), especially where autonomy in the COCZ was used without guiding principles or constitutions (Johnson 1975: 70); hence the issue of religious gullibility.

Normative Developments in the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe

The Church of Christ is one of the oldest denominations in Zimbabwe, with an estimated paltry membership of 18 138 members from an estimated number of 306 active congregations (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019: 9). The COCZ began in 1898 (Savage 1983: 3) with the arrival of self-supporting stone mason, John Sherriff (1864–1935) 'for the purpose of raising up and training national evangelists' (Zvobgo 1996: 79). 'He left Melbourne, Australia, on 2nd February 1896, and arrived on the 28th of that same month. Later that year he went north to Bulawayo, in present day Zimbabwe' (Lusby 1990:7). He came to Zimbabwe from South Africa after the outbreak of the Shona-Ndebele wars against the Boers in March and June 1896 (Lusby 1990: 7). From this early missionary history, New Zealand missionaries believed in equality between all races (Savage 1983: 1–2), and hence engaged in enormous developments of educational and health institutions (CBACC 1948–1965). It is these institutions, with over sixty-six schools under the Dadaya board and twenty-seven schools and seven health centres under Mashoko that have landed the COCZ in religious gullibility. Religious gullibility surfaced when ordinary members demanded ownership of Church institutions as boards of trustees and administrators. On the other hand, a crop of African Church Elites (ACE),

schooled (or bred) in the West (Masengwe *et al.* 2012), was seen as representing foreign missionary interests rather than Jesus Christ (Bediako 1992). By transforming the Church, African Christians attempted to disregard missionary revivalism, European superiority and Western progressivism in order to be committed to Jesus Christ (Magirosa 2014). Mbiti (1969: 66) argued earlier that 'Christianity is not a ready-made commodity which has to be transplanted to a local area', but rather we need a theology that is 'authentically African while at the same time being ecclesiastically universal' (Bediako 1992: 306). However, threats to Church Unity, based on the 'subject of authority, freedom and autonomy has turned out to be a highly charged political issue in the Zimbabwean Chapter of the Church' (Bhebhe 2013: 109); as if 'the way to human dignity and full-grown personality is in everything that has a European feel thereby despising their own cultures and institutions' (Idowu 1965: 5). Failure to live within the confines of its historical and cultural contexts threatened to destroy African selfhood, the very essence of mission and work in the African Church; hence dwindling numbers, a de-motivated pastorate and a double-faced membership (Chikwanda 2018). Pastors felt that ACEs treated them as juveniles who never went overseas; hence this awakening from religious gullibility in order to restore African selfhood and identity, and ultimately the Lordship of Christ (Nyoni 2018).

Further, the COCZ has in many ways provided leadership and education in the country (CBACC 1948–1965; Chimhungwe 2001). The ideology of autonomy came from Western capitalism, liberalism and private/ individual ownership (Magwidi 2018; Chikwanda 2018). Individual determination and self-interest undermines participation, voluntarism, unity and patriotism, of the common family (Masengwe *et al.* 2012: 185–194). Christian revivalism among Africans is possible as long as we 'ground the church in the culture of the people' (Mugambi 1998: 10). The COCZ, however, failed to capture the beliefs and practices of the African people and failed have self-determination and resolve many things in the country (Chikwanda 2018). Rather, 'church leaders fight for positions and power in schools and hospitals, neglecting the preaching of the word to the dying world' (Magwidi 2018). 'Autonomy is the culprit on church folly' (Makadho 2018) as the COCZ's 'roots dried after the war of independence' (Chikwanda 2018), as 'the husk [of imported Christianity] hid the kernel [of the gospel] through the autonomy adage' (Mate 2018). The COCZ needs to remember that 'The first two phases of Christianity in Africa vanished because of its lack of rootedness in the people's culture'

(Waruta 2000: 125–127). Probably, this lack led to distrust, disillusionment and discouragement towards the patrons of the post-independent COCZ; hence the COCZ has decided to 'stop depending on foreign funding for the sake of its own mission in the country' (Magwidi 2018).

Rejection of Gullibility for Pragmatic *Moralism* in the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe

Contention in the post-millennium COCZ came from 'lack of transparency and accountability on how schools and hospitals were run to advance the preaching of the gospel, or the general work and mission of the church' (Makarudze 2018). Institution boards claimed to have been appointed by foreign missionaries who left the country upon the expiry of their permits. One elder, also a medical doctor, was quoted saying 'institutions were individual missionary families' ministries, who chose appointees when they left the country' (Bungu 2015). He continued, 'They are running these ministries through Diaspora and general welfare funding' (Bungu 2015). The argument contrasted with the new wave of locally funded projects, especially following the adoption of Somabhula by the COCZ in the wake of the dwindling of foreign support (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019). However, foreign support did not give priority to local needs such as the construction of church buildings, effective and efficient use of resources, and engagement of modern methods of leadership management. Religious subservience led to costly management tools and failure to follow up on realistic outcomes of donor-funded projects (Chikwanda 2018).

> This has thus led to unsatisfactory performance of churches and institutions, and we hope, until the autonomy adage is properly defined, the COCZ will continue to fumble in darkness (Magwidi 2018).

COCZ members have been clamouring for the redefinition of autonomy because they felt it never gave local churches the self-rule it claimed; and thus the localization of the COCZ was viewed as true autonomation of the church, where accountability and transparency empowered the church for evangelization and visibility in the world (Masengwe, *et al.* 2012). Localization bridged the gap between the Church as a 'Whiteman's burden' to an African burden.

> Localization is a moral obligation placed upon African recipients of the gospel for their generous spirit of sharing with the needy that is realized through the lives it ultimately transforms (Chikwanda 2018).

'Interests of the COCZ can be fully realized when all concerned people of the common family are served' (Bandera 2018); hence the move towards the indigenization of the Church. Thus, 'we do not need to hear narrations of the Stone-Campbell maxims that bog us into the cultural idioms of western individualism, capitalism and privatization' (Makadho 2018).

Further, it has been argued that 'some people think that Africans are inadequately aware of a single ruling deity so they can worship God in their own contexts' (Bandera 2018; Bediako 1992: 291). Transformation of the church is viewed as both a universalisation and localization of Christianity to achieve authentic followership of Jesus Christ (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019). Africans have been made to consume everything foreign, hence the term 'gullible'. Denial of foreign products, including religious products, has been viewed as a desire to move away from gullibility to authentic religiosity (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019). New models of church structuring have been suggested (Sibanda 2016), with an unfortunate struggle for power between the lay and the clergy (Mafohla 2017). Mostly, those who acted as barons of the faith, especially the ACEs, interfered with the clergy, as there were no clear rules and regulations to inform strategic church partnerships and administrative processes (Sibanda 2016; Mafohla 2017). The transformation of the COCZ has thus interfered with the *quasi-joint stock* model that gave individuals direct ownership of church buildings and institutions (Makadho 2018).

Congregational autonomy in the USA has led to a successful COC in the West (Foster *et al.* 2004). Abuse of autonomy in Africa, one would believe, has led to religious failure as Africans were made to consume everything in the name of obedience to the Western forms of the gospel. Western churches have succeeded with autonomy, but African churches have been calling for a redefinition of autonomy by transforming both the faith content and the structure of the church (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2020). Inclusivity in life world of the members has led to localization of the church, hence increased participation, ownership, accountability and transparency, and hence increased efficiency and effectiveness in church affairs.

Localization in the COCZ is a belief that 'we are no longer a mission field, but rather the missionary team in the mission of God' (Magwidi 2018).

When local churches take the initiative to lead, they doctrinally become sound, stable and constant, as they 'can support local evangelization, develop new form of the moral fibre that supports community and church growth' (Magwidi 2018). This consequentially makes the church attractive to non-believers, and potentially viable for leadership planning. This allows a variety of church members to expand their personal and institutional resources to support high-quality evangelism and discipleship programmes that can realize the dreams, vision and mission of the RM (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019).

Glocalization: Is it Exploitation or Transformation?

The process of localizing the church can be viewed as a costly exercise because it is quite demanding (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019). When achieved, localization increases effectiveness and efficiency as individuals' potential for contribution is increased. Scepticism about the endeavour arose from the thinking that the transformed COCZ would veer away from the Stone-Campbell initiative (Masengwe *et al.* 2012; Sanneh 1995). For this reason, 'Our training at Zimbabwe Christian College [Bible College for Church ministers], ensured that no form of localization should take place as church support was from the West. We were grilled in Western conceptions and taught that any form of transformation, especially of the church ideology and structures was ungodly' (Nyoni 2018). Unfortunately, the dwindling foreign support led to all reasons for the domestic initiatives (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019). Localisation has been meant to change church policies and to keep in tune with new developments (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2020). However, ministers at ZCC and those who were trained in the USA did not support a change of church policies and structures. Pastors who went to universities in the country developed a new form of thinking that authenticated and promoted the ideology of autonomy (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019).

> We have frantically denied containment by the status quo and are opting to stand by unpopular questioning of the truthfulness of autonomy; for the long-term interests of the COCZ itself (Nyoni 2018).

This has led to a new model of envisioning, evangelization and discipleship that ensures church development and growth. However, questions can be asked

concerning the viability of autonomy to achieve local and global realities in which the COCZ finds itself today!

Regionalization and Centralization: Unusual Models of Localizing the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe

Localization in the COCZ has been achieved by building regional blocks, conference centres and ministerial formations of various strengths. Conference centres are rehabilitation centres for transforming church structures and policies. Local projects in the COCZ are emblems with a universal expression of the local people's faith, demonstrating the invisibility, infinity, omnipresence and omnipotence of the immanent and transcendent God at one and the same time (Masengwe *et al.* 2012). This is the same God whose moral attributes of love, mercy, justice, honesty, kindness and faithfulness must be experienced by all Zimbabweans who want to seek him through a designated place of worship (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2020). The conference centre thus expresses that this God is for all people, and is the God of the COCZ as well (Mbiti 1970: 131–144). Hence, this localization of the church addresses the problem of gullibility in the COCZ.

The COCZ practice of autonomy in the COCZ did not counterbalance the origin of the term, where business and politics in European cities used autonomy (Weber 1978). Autonomy arose from the secular world during the industrial revolution; hence the COCZ practice of autonomy accepted individualized church settings (Johnson 1975: 81). Hence, a small number of elites tried to enfranchise the COCZ into a private-limited organisation (Masengwe *et al.* 2012). Rules, regulations and decisions thus became insidious, narrowing the interests of church institutions (Magwidi 2018). This has led the church to fail to uphold the symbolic expressions of education, health, social work, gender and religion, among others, in terms of community service and organizational performance. ACEs thus refused the generality of the COCZ to have access to the running and affairs of church schools and hospitals (Chikwanda 2018). ACEs argue against the democratization of structures and policies of the church, where new church leaders continue to argue for new operational systems (Sibanda 2016). In this way, trading using the name COCZ demands accountability, responsibility and transparency (Sibanda 2016). This can assist when church leaders face conflicts of interest, or when they struggle for power, especially between pastors and elders (Mafohla 2017),

or men and women (Jack 2017; Tembo 2017). Localisation and centralization of the COCZ have been avowed for increasing institutional memory and relevancy (Chikwanda 2018). Evangelism and community development such as *Bhaibheri neBhora* (Christian Soccer) tournaments, borehole drilling and orphanage programmes have been advanced as tools of evangelism (Chikwanda 2018). Unfortunately, without local leadership supervision, control, monitoring and evaluation, the COCZ has lived in the context of gullibility, failing to benefit the church and its membership in any significant way. It is this view of gullibility the article appraises and acknowledges the strategies to address the same. In all, the Church of Jesus Christ can benefit maximally if it has financial, material, logistical and administrative support (Sibanda 2016); hence the call for an African heteronomy model.

Heteronomy – A New Localizing Ideological Model for the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe

Heteronomy is a new concept that needs explanation, and cannot be explained in these few sentences. Heteronomy is a contrasting concept to autonomy that appeals to the nature and structure of the African family, community and society. Heteronomy puts an African complexion on the identity of the Church; hence it is not an absolute concept, with ideologizing effect (Makadho 2018). It reverses and roots the COCZ in Africa against the premises of Western autonomy. Many new leaders in the COCZ have lived to prove that 'Great ideas often receive violent opposition from mediocre minds' (Mark Twain – 14 March 1879–18 April 1955). The experience of childbirth from gullibility to responsibility has assisted in broadening the debate on church localization. The benefits of a locally owned church include winning many new converts, which may be difficult for a foreign owned institution (Magwidi 2018). Strong communal ties are strengthened by the egalitarianism model, and can withstand the adversities of life. Gullibility is overcome as local leaders lead church institutions purposefully. This contrasts with the economic framework of thinking in autonomous churches, as heteronymous churches exercise charity and love rather than profit-making (Chikwanda 2018).

Respondents commended the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) as a real Church because it has life.

> Living organizations bear children; look at the AFM and the ministries

> ministries that broke away from it. We cannot celebrate the tensions and fights in its camps, but we can acknowledge the life in the denomination that leads to those tensions and conflicts. This cannot be found in dead churches like the Church of Christ (Nyakuhwa 2018).

From the AFM, people like Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa of the United Family International Church (UFIC) and Apostle Tavonga Wutabwashe of Heartfelt International Ministries (HIM) are world-class personalities that were key preachers in the AFM (Machingura 2011: 12-29). AFM groomed prominent speakers and preachers through its governing structures and ideological policies. Its elaborate structures back up evangelism, spiritual growth and congregational unity. However, breakaways eventually happened because the structure could not sustain the fast increasing numbers of members (Chikwanda 2018). With good structures, however, the AFM had to give in to human personalities. This only happens where structures solidify, and refuse any new changes; hence the need for renewal of the human person. AFM has been a stronghold in Zimbabwe because of its elaborate structuring. This has not been the case in the COCZ, where one pastor clearly retorted:

> We, however, are aware of the horse trading, claims to entitlements, among others, which lead to the weakening of the structures in our church, resulting in that the best person is not allowed to take the reins of power (Chikwanda 2018).

This has led the COCZ to a level of religious gullibility a new crop of leaders has begun to reverse.

Further, use of autonomy as an ecclesiological model bends the Church towards the capitalist profit-making model. Heteronomy on the other hand, provides prudent and inclusive models of church leadership that are effective in an African context (Magwidi 2018). Use of autonomy, has firstly created conflict between stakeholders such as pastors and elders (Mafohla 2017). The model has affected COCZ programmes, as no proper vision, strategy or plan could be followed; hence autonomy has been regarded as a setback to the growth and transformation of the COCZ (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019). The COCZ failed to relate its teachings of the Bible to everyday human life (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2020). This has led the COCZ to be treated like a 'private limited company' (Magwidi 2018), by a few individuals who disenfranchised the rest

of the COCZ family. Privatising the COCZ for short-term interests thus has led to a particular set of Christians in the COCZ. The Christians are afraid of evil spirits (Banda & Masengwe 2018), afraid of political leaders (Bhebhe 2016) and are weak (Masengwe *et al.* 2012). ACEs thus use weak Christians and churches to achieve their economic and political goals. Thirdly, weakened Christians are vulnerable to economic changes such as the meltdown of the Zimbabwe dollar that eroded financial gains of the past. This article is not meant to blame foreign missionaries as some, for instance, the families of the Pruets, the Pembertons, the Grubbs, the Todds and the Penningtons continued to provide moral, financial and other logistical support (Magwidi 2018). Some few missionaries handpicked their lieutenants and pensioned them with mission houses, mission cars and continuous financial support, despite the changing nature of the mission field. This has led the foreign sponsored institutions to suffer heavily from dwindling foreign support, which has eventually affected Christian conversion and church growth in the COCZ. The COCZ is estimated to have fewer than 19, 000 members in the country (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019: 9). In some regions, like Mashonaland, the withdrawal of missionaries left the Church in a pathetic position, with underdeveloped structures and infrastructure. This has led to conflict between church leaders (Mafohla 2017), with a negative effect on church work and ministry.

At the end of the first decade of the third millennium, a new revival arose in the major cities of the country such as Harare, Chiredzi, Mutare, Gweru, Zvimba East and Chinhoyi. Progressive individuals were attached to such revivals, for instance Pastor Mordicai Chikwanda at Tshovani Church of Christ (2018); Mr Matthew Chishamba in Zvimba East and Rev. Dr. Nicholas Kakava in Chinhoyi (Kakava 2018). In Harare, the Church Growth Committee that was started by Pastor Enock Jirrie in the late 1990s yielded a lot of fruit (Magwidi 2018). This contrasts the idea of privately owned churches, as African communities prefer heteronomy to autonomy, and hence pool together financial, human and spiritual resources for the growth of the church, especially during the downturn of the economy. This is not to celebrate heteronomy as the same system can be abused by powerful individuals for self-interest. However, heteronomy cannot be compared to autonomy, because heteronomy applies to the African traditional system, while autonomy applies to Western capitalist and business society (Weber 1978; 2009). Autonomy has been adopted in the Church, but the concepts of profit-making for a charity organisation have proven to be disastrous (Johnson 1975: 81). In all, heteronomy, with its own

challenges, proves to be applicable to the African society, in relationship to principles of egalitarianism and equality.

Contrasting Autonomy with Heteronomy

Autonomy and heteronomy are similar, but different ideological concepts. Autonomy patronises the operations of the Church to related individuals, while heteronomy liberates the Church to the common group. Autonomy thrives on individual control and thriftiness (Weber 2009). Unfortunately, patrons can be unqualified and unprofessional individuals who terrorise institutions, especially where appointment is by precedence such as an appointment to board membership by a retiring board member (Sibanada 2016). The COCZ churches used this form of appointing successors to run mission stations (Magwidi 2021). Heteronomy, however, cannot forever condemn the institution to eternal damnation as individuals have no constitutional nor historical precedent to appoint their own lieutenants. The institutions are democratic, as approaches to leadership are open and integrative to public scrutiny and participation. Openness to members makes institutions viable, and this increases the usefulness of institutions of the church. Respondents indicated that COCZ institutions were transplanted from the West to Africa, hence the need for transformation (Bandera 2018). Respondents also cited other missionary churches such as the Methodists, Reformed, Presbyterians and Baptists, who have transformed and increased their viability, and those that did not transform and have begun to die (Magwidi 2018; Chikwanda 2018; Makadho 2018; Kakava 2018). Such denominations followed viable paths and improved on membership and church growth in the same geopolitical and socioeconomic environment. During a time of resistance, the same missionary churches suffered from breakaways, for instance the United Methodists with the breakaway of Johanne Marange and Guta Ra Jehovah (Ruzivo 2014: 19), who were heavily influenced by the Adventist and Sabbatarian movements, and the Apostolic Faith Mission's Holy Spirit possession and speaking in tongues (Ruzivo 2014: 19) are notable cases. The resoluteness of missionaries forced many Africans to begin Independent Churches as rebel movements by unhappy worshippers (Venter 1998: 412–436). The local relevance of the new movements led to the growth of AICs. The COCZ did not go beyond the attitudes of missionaries during the colonial era, hence the persistence of gullible behaviour among some of its African Christian leaders (Masengwe *et*

al. 2012). This has led the COCZ to emphasise impractical things such as denial of mass prayer and spirit exorcism as demonic; hence deny the church from transforming into a modern institution (Sanneh 1995). Autonomy made the COCZ inaccessible to ordinary Christians, demanding the use of heteronomy for authentic transformation (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019). This is believed to address the issue of gullibility.

Autonomy - Heteronomy Tension

Ideologies need to be examined seriously, especially the tension between autonomy and heteronomy. To begin with, heteronomy has a choice that autonomy lacks (Berg 2001). The church could plan to change its structures without individuals being seen as stumbling blocks, victims or perpetrators (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019). Autonomy, on the other hand, has been seen to be more efficient compared to heteronomy, because privatized entities can exploit opportunities using individual prowess and ingenuity (Weber 2009). Some Christians in the COCZ are reportedly taking away donations meant for the disadvantaged (Mate 2018). This has raised issues with some donor communities in the COC, especially concerning donations for children's homes and schools (Bandera 2018). The problem was caused by a lack of accountability to the entire church family. Heteronomy however, promises to hold technocrats accountable for their actions, because most activities will be controlled by the Church board/s (Sibanda 2016). Boards, rather than individuals, determine policies and procedures in heterodoxies while individuals determine them in autonomies. Boards are used by both ideologies, but autonomies use them to authenticate their processes, while heterodoxies use them to satisfy their stakeholders. Boards set up by institutions that consider autonomy as their major ideology are handpicked by individuals, while boards set up by heteronymous organizations are transparent and inclusive (Sibanda 2016). Autonomies hire personnel based on relationships, while heteronymous organizations use professionalism. Heteronomy makes it clear that it is a withdrawal from individuals to claim sole ownership of an institution, as well as any developments and benefits accrued through such operations (Sibanda 2016). Thus, the COCZ suggested using a new operating system (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019). In the COCZ, one respondent stated that:

> We want to critically emphasize that aspects of volitional choice by

> individuals on common entities are not acceptable because of its potential to undermine the ethical principle of solidarity. For all people to access church institutions on individual volitions are counterproductive because individuals use preferable times and relationships to choose who from among members of their common family can access such entities. As people who use the Bible, autonomy is not supported by Pauline egalitarianism; hence the need for us to use inclusive models of running the church institutions (Magwidi 2018).

In overcoming gullibility, the COCZ has adopted inclusive institutions, where heteronomy seems to be the ideological model in church institutions. This contrasts with the use of individualizing models such as autonomy. Heteronomy is an important ideology for the COCZ, because the denomination is not built by an ethnically or racially homogenous community. The COCZ cannot be understood from a constructivist perspective because its geographical boundaries are not the boundaries of its socio-political and ecclesiological body (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019: 9). The COCZ community is spread across the country, and building solidarity can just be a mere rhetorical approach in a multicultural church (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2020). This can thus bring all stakeholders closer, as members of the Church can begin to work together and benefit from the proceeds of church institutions (Magwidi 2018). For instance, one (the late) member asked,

> How can I, from Gokwe or Binga, benefit from Mashoko High School, even if I wanted to send my children to school? Am I part of that Church of Christ that built Dadaya when I am not participating in the activities and rituals of those communities? (Marumirofa 2018).

In other words, most COCZ communities are unable to access church institutions, making use of church institutions for evangelism and discipleship a fruitless endeavour. Heteronomy advances the thinking that education, health, orphanage and community projects are evangelism tools for the wider COCZ church family.

Finally, autonomy has made it difficult for the COCZ to source local funding because many entities in need of support lead to fundamental questions of *ownership*. A question of *ownership* and *responsibility* is an unconscious presupposition for overcoming gullibility, as locals participate in cost-benefit

sharing on local programmes. Ownership presupposes benefits, whereas lack of ownership due to autonomy leads to the reverse. Heteronomy increases a sense of ownership by the general membership of the Christian family (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2020). Dealing with a heterogeneous COCZ family demands that the Church provides the space to understand its membership by understanding the circumstances in which church members live. This can only be truly understood if all its members are part of the decision-making in the church, rather than followers of a foreign organization made to address African problems (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2020). Heteronomy can assist in making the COCZ projects, institutions and congregations viable, rather than the use of autonomy which undermines such viability.

How Autonomy Causes Gullibility on Public Entities in the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe

Autonomy is a concept that was derived from business and political entities; hence it has little justification from the Scriptures to teach it seriously without proper hermeneutics. It falsely promises the worshipper to be independent from questions of responsibility and accountability. This led COCZ members to say: 'We have failed to disentangle the goal and purpose of autonomy in Africa for it was designed for private entities in America' (Magwidi 2018). Autonomy thus supports private entities and individuals in preserving cash and profits for the business community. It benefits those encircled in the entity. 'Autonomy is a concept that does not give regard to personal responsibility, accountability and transparency' (Chikwanda 2018). It engages in social projects for corporate social responsibility as a business strategy for marketing and tax evasion. Its use in the COCZ has thus led to calls for a renewed ideological concept that enfranchises ordinary members to address gaps created by the use of autonomy in the infancy and history of the COCZ.

Furthermore, autonomy has led to the exclusive patenting of Christian institutions into family projects (Bandera 2018). Patenting excludes the generality of the Christian family from accessing a church that is run like a private limited company, because policies are designed and driven by patrons of the entity. Entities are monopolized by individuals intending to commercially gain from such entities (Magwidi 2018). The lifeline of a church run on autonomy is dependent on individuals as privatization and individualization of church properties undermines common access. One respondent stated:

> Even where church institutions charge very little fees for its services, lack of transparency and accountability has robbed them of efficiency and effectiveness as little fees do not encourage institutional staff (Magwidi 2018).

This is because individuals cannot motivate the entire staff compliment that is not mission conscious for evangelism and church growth. One pastor who was involved in COCZ transformation and COCZ unity talks stated:

> We are actually wary of the future because the commitment of the current leaders of our schools and hospitals may not be replicated by future leaders of those institutions. We continue to ask leaders of schools and hospitals to entrust the wider church family with their responsibility of running those institutions; so that we can groom future leaders (Bandera 2018).

One can actually understand that the leadership of mission stations in the COCZ is a committed lot, but the ideology of autonomy does not guarantee the same for the future of the Church. A younger generation of leaders has thus been demanding a conscious and sensible team of young leaders to be groomed on the vision and mission of COCZ entities (Nyoni 2018).

> Leaders in our schools and hospitals need to learn to sacrifice. There are times when institutions are bankrupt, and leaders have to sacrifice. Methods can be changed but not principles. We cannot use students' money for our personal needs. The sooner the church is allowed to run schools the better it is for grooming future leaders for these institutions (Nyoni 2018).

Viable institutions are important for evangelism and community development; hence the need to prepare the church to run schools and hospitals efficiently and effectively. Autonomy unfortunately leads to duality, which paralyses church growth, but heteronomy streamlines entities for a common good. With heteronomy, 'we can change our beliefs concerning privatization, individualism, capitalism, liberalism and self-interest' (Chikwanda 2018). Autonomy thus can be seen as supporting gullibility, while heteronomy leads to responsibility. This answers our question: 'To what extent can heteronomy address the

challenges of gullibility advanced by autonomy in the COCZ?' Appropriating heteronomy with responsibility thus can assist in addressing the problems of gullibility caused by autonomy and viability in the COCZ.

Standing on a Stamp of Indigenous Originality in the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe

Localizing the COCZ is a normative honour for Zimbabwean Christians in that denomination. Localisation assists the church to attain local roots, and thus an African identity, 'a demonstration of the very presence of God on the African soil' (Chikwanda 2018). This calls for an indigenization of both the structures and policies of the COCZ (Idowu 1965: 11). A respondent further stated:

> The COCZ stamp of approval for the COCZ does not come from Kentucky, Sydney, Peru or New York, but from a purposefully constituted African church (Chikwanda 2018).

This is believed to allow Zimbabwean Christians to worship their own God as Zimbabweans. This should be compatible with the spiritual temperament of Zimbabweans serving their own glorious God in Zimbabwe (Daneel 1987: 19). This unlocks three 'scopes' mentioned earlier, namely that the local expression of faith becomes instrumental to the life and mission of the COCZ (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019). Localizing the COCZ is in a way universalizing and popularizing Christianity, resulting in affirming and preserving both an African presence in the Christian faith and emphasizing the centrality of the Christian faith to an African indigene (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2019).

Secondly, localizing the COCZ expresses the pre-eminence and lordship of Jesus Christ, making Jesus Christ real to Zimbabwean Christians, for all along, lack of authority, identity and dignity, which were in the hands of Western overlords who supplied doctrinal teachings and resources for the COCZ was a form of humiliation (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2020). Gullibility can be found where the missionary is an overlord to COCZ Christians (Savage 1983). For a long time, the COCZ has been conditioned by Western dominance, making autonomy a strong reality of Western lordship on Zimbabwean Christians. Western overlords can be viewed as having replaced the Lordship of Christ in some communities, as church leaders served 'the hand that fed them'. Heteronomy thus addresses the question of gullibility as local Christians

begin to listen more to their Creator rather than to a mere human being.

Finally, a local COCZ is a sign of a restored African Christian identity and an expression of a true African selfhood (Masengwe & Chimhanda 2020). Heteronomy allows the COCZ to set up convenient worship spaces called conference centres, which provide the church with roots on an African ground.

> Most of those involved in localizing the church experienced missionary cruelty as most of them sold everything they raised for the church at their time of departure. With this conference centre, we are going to freely express ourselves and worship our Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord, not like some imported divinity from the Western pantheon (Marumirofa 2018).

Personalizing Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour in the COCZ goes a long way towards fulfilling the universalisation of the Christian faith in the Zimbabwean context. However, it needs to be acknowledged that imported Christianity was in fact a forerunner to the current developments, and a preparation of the African self-expression of the faith, where Jesus Christ came for every race on earth, the Jew, Scarthian, Roman, Greek, and Zimbabwean alike (Machingura & Nyakuhwa 2018).

In all, localizing the COCZ can be seen as a stamp of God's approval for making the COCZ a 'home to breathe an atmosphere of spiritual freedom', making the COCZ 'no longer a marionette with its strings in the hands of some foreign manipulators' (Chikwanda 2018). The COCZ thus 'has been waking up from its slumber of gullibility to a level of excellence that demands admiration and acceptance across the globe' (Kakava 2018). Listening to Judge Nare (2015), preaching at an ordination ceremony for Pastor Antony Bandera made me think that he was confirming Mbiti (1979: 66)'s view that the Christian faith is translatable into new forms of language and culture, which is an effective way of Christianizing the African population in Zimbabwe while at the same time Africanizing Christianity (Mbiti 1970: 430). Localizing the faith facilitates acceptance of Christianity by Africans being served by it the same way new births are accepted in their society. Thence, localizing the faith helped in addressing the question of gullibility in the COCZ.

Conclusion

Autonomy has been viewed as the source of gullibility in the COCZ, which

robbed indigenes of experiencing a fully transformed COCZ of the Stone-Campbell Movement (Sanneh 1995). Autonomy short-changed members as individuals wilfully profiteered from institutions intended for altruistic goals and civic virtues. A truly autonomous church is also a truly heteronymous church, because heteronomy helps to facilitate autonomy. Heteronomy builds leaders who can become independent, but will eventually seek for interdependdence in their independence. Rather, an exclusive use of autonomy as an ideology opens the church to risks and abuse as autonomy advances issues associated with privatisation and commercialisation. Privatisation and comercialisation of church entities undermine the trust that church leaders are appointed to serve the church members. J.J. Rousseau (2010: 1754–1762) calls this a 'social contract theory'. Gullibility is advanced in autonomous institutions, because like-minded leaders are co-opted from time to time without an idea of the social contract. Co-option is done in entities with donor mentality rather than success through innovation, creativity and self-sustenance. Some church entities driven by autonomy hide their real intentions during fundraising exercises, as their voices present a vision of a public good, but barely address the same. Others become too closed, leading to their inability to reach out and to attain their maximum potential. From an American standpoint, autonomy is a noble conception that has been obtainable due to the ideological commitments of the American community, while in Africa, where 'kith and kin' are more important engagements, rather than profits, heteronomy appeals to the externalization of decision making and control over public entities. In all, the COCZ, led by a heteronymous ideology, promises to be a COCZ of today and of the future and hence overcome the problems of gullibility in the denomination.

References

Banda, C. & G. Masengwe 2018. Overcoming Fear? A Search for an Empowering Theological Response to the Fear of Witchcraft among Urban Zimbabwean Christians. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39,1: 1–10. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v39i1.1837

Bandera, A. 2018. National Pastors' Fellowship President, Gweru. *Interview*. Somabhula Conference Centre, Gweru. 14 August.

Bediako, K. 1992. *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa.* Edinburgh: University Press.

Beiser, F.C. 2002. *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism, 1781 – 1801*. Harvard: University Press.

Berg, K. 2001. The Ethics of Benefit-sharing. *Clinical Genetics* 59,3: 237–243. https://doi.org/10.1034/j.1399-0004.2001.590404.x

Bhebhe, M. 2013. *An African Culture of Multiple Religiosity: The Perspective of the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe*. Saarbruecken: Lambert Academic Publishing.

Bungu, Z. 2015. Church Elder, Mashoko Hospital Medical Director. *Reflections.* Somabula Conference Center. 17 August.

Campbell, T. [1809] 1960. *A Plea for Christian Union: Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington*. St. Louis: Bethany Press.

CBACC (ColenBrander Avenue Church of Christ) 1948–1965. *Minute Book [1948–1965]*. Bulawayo: ColenBrander Avenue Church of Christ.

Chikwanda, M. 2018. Pastor. Tshovani Church of Christ. *Interview*. Windsor Park Church of Christ, Gweru. 3 February.

Chimhungwe, S.P. 2012. *A Descriptive Chronicle of Transition from Mission to Indigenous Leadership in Two Church of Christ Institutions (Zimbabwe 1976–1986).* McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario.

Cox, M.B. 2001. Finishing Well: Phase-Out or Partnership. In Granberg, S.E. (ed.): *100 years of African Missions: Essays in Honour of Wendell Broom.* Abilene, Texas: ACU Press.

Daneel, M.L. 1987. *Quest for Belonging: Introduction to the Study of AICs*. Gweru: Mambo Press.

Dickson, K.A. & P. Ellingworth 1969. *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs.* New York: Orbis Books.

Foster, D.A., A.L. Dunnavant, P.M. Blowers & D.N. Williams 2004. *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement.* Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

Hunter III, G.G. 1996. *Church for the Unchurched*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Idowu, E.B. 1965. *Towards the Church.* London: Oxford University Press.

Jack, J. 2017. *An Exploratory Study to the Challenges Being Encountered by Single Women in the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe: A Study of the Challenge of Single Women to the Life of the Church*. Bachelor of Theology and Religious Studies Dissertation, Midlands State University, Gweru.

Jirrie, E. 2018. Senior Pastor, Waterland Church of Christ, Harare. Interview. House, Waterland, Harare. 26 May.

Johnson, H.E. 1975. *The Christian Church Plea.* Cincinnati: Standard Publishing.

Kakava, N. 2018. Pastor, National Pastors' Fraternity Vice Secretary, Chinhoyi. *Interview*. Somabhula Conference Centre, Gweru. 17 August.

Lusby, J.L. 1990. *Historical Survey of Central African Mission, Zimbabwe.* Kentucky: Christian College Press.

Mabani, E. 2018. Pastor, Former National Youth President, Domboshava Church of Christ. *Interview*. Windsor Park Church of Christ, Gweru. 3 February.

Machingura, F. 2011. The Significance of *Glossolalia* in the Apostolic Faith Mission, Zimbabwe. *Studies in World Christianity* 17,1: 12–29. https://doi.org/10.3366/swc.2011.0003

Machingura, F. & P. Nyakuhwa 2015. Sexism: A Hermeneutical Interrogation of Galatians 3:28 and Women in the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Pan African Studies* 8,2: 92–114.

Mafohla, S. 2017. *Clergy – Laity Relations: An Investigation into Power Relations between the Clergy and Laity in the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe (COCZ).* Bachelor of Theology and Religious Studies dissertation, Midlands State University, Gweru.

Magirosa, M. 2014. Early Missionaries Destroyed African Values. *The Patriot.* Available at: https://www.thepatriot.co.zw/old_posts/early-missionaries-destroyed-african-values/ (Accessed on 20 February 2018).

Magwidi, E. 2018. National Conference President, Somabhula Conference Centre, Gweru. *Interview*. Place. 16 August.

Magwidi, E. 2021. Leadership Succession in Church and Mission: A Comparative Study of the Succession Processes between the Dadaya and Mashoko Missions from 1956–2015. University of South Africa (UNISA), Pretoria, Department of Church History, PhD Candidate Research topic.

Maluleke, T.S. 2000. Half a Century of African Christian Thought: Pointers to Theology and Theological Education in the Next Half Century. *JACT* 3,1: 5–11.

Makadho, C. 2018. Pastor, Greencroft Church of Christ. *Interview*. Windsor Park Church of Christ, Gweru. 2 February.

Makarudze, E. 2018. Former Chairperson, National Men's Fellowship, Harare Christian Church, Harare. *Interview*. Harare. 5 June.

Masengwe, G. & F.H. Chimhanda 2019. Towards an Authentic Transformation of the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe. *HTS Theological Studies* 75,1: 1–

11. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i1.4776

Masengwe, G. & F.H. Chimhanda 2020. Postmodernism, Identity and Mission Continuity in the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 74,1:1-10. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v41i1.1906

Masengwe, G., F. Machingura & E. Magwidi 2012. An Excavation on Church Governance: The Question of Autonomy in the Light of the Disempowered African Church Converts in the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe (COCZ). *Journal of Research in Peace, Gender and Development* 2,9: 185–194.

Marumirofa, M. 2018. Pastor. Svisvi Church of Christ. *Interview*. Somabhula Conference Centre, Gweru. 18 August.

Mate, F. 2018. Pastor, ColenBrander Avenue Church of Christ, Bulawayo. *Interview*. Bulawayo. 6 May.

Mbiti, J. 1969. *African Religion and Philosophy*. New York: Praeger.

Mugambi, J.N.K. 1998. Theological Method in African Christianity. In Getui M.N. (ed.): *Theological Methods and Aspects of Worship in African Christianity*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers.

Nare, S. (Retired Justice) 2016. Elder. *Message on the Ordination of Pastor Antony Bandera*. Ascot Church of Christ, Gweru. 10 September.

Nyakuhwa, P. 2018. Pastor, PhD Candidate, University of South Africa, Pretoria. Interview. Harare. 23 April.

Nyoni, L. 2018. Pastor, City Church of Christ, Zvishavane. *Interview*. Windsor Park Church of Christ, Gweru. 3 February.

Reese, R. 2007. The Surprising Relevance of the Three-self Formula. *Mission Frontiers.* Available at: www.missionfrontiers.org (Accessed on 20 October 2016).

Rousseau, J.J. 2010. *The Social Contract: A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, and A Discourse on Political Economy.* New York: Classic Books International.

Ruzivo, M. 2014. Succession Debates in the Johane Marange African Apostolic Church. In Chitando, E., M.R. Gunda, and J. Kügler (eds.): *Multiplying in the Spirit: African Initiated Churches in Zimbabwe*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.

Sanneh, L. 1995. *Encountering the West: Christianity and the Global Cultural Process.* Maryknoll Books.

Savage, M.J. 1983. *Forward into Freedom: Continuing the Story of Missionary Endeavour in Zimbabwe and Vinuatu.* Perth, Western Australia: Associ-

ated Churches of Christ in New Zealand (ACCNZ) Publications.
Sibanda, T. 2016. An Investigation into the Significance of the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe's National Administrative Operational Structure (NAOS) from 2015–2018. Diploma in Church Administration and Management (DSCAM), Ecumenical Resources Training Centre (ERTC), Harare, Zimbabwe Council of Churches Headquarters, Kentucky Hotel.
Tembo, E.R. 2017. *An Analysis of the Role of Christian Women's Groups in Advocating for Gender Sensitivity with Special Reference to Women in the Bulawayo Churches of Christ.* Harare: Zimbabwe Christian College.
Venter, D. November 1998. Globalisation and the Emergence of African Initiated Churches. *Missionalia* 26,3: 412–436.
Waruta, D.W. 2000. The Education Mission of the Church: An African Perspective. In Nasimiyu–Wasike, A. & D.W. Waruta (eds.): *Mission in African Christianity: Critical Essays in Missiology*. Nairobi: Acton.
Weber, M. 1978. *The City*. New York: The Free Press.
Weber, M. 2009. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
Zvobgo, C.J. 1996. *A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe, 1890 – 1939.* Gweru: Mambo Press.

Dr. Gift Masengwe
President of the Church of Christ in South Africa
masengweg@gmail.com

Gullibility in African Traditional Religions and Health

Religion, Gullibility, Health and Well-being: The Case of Traditional Healers in Harare, Zimbabwe

Tabona Shoko
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0093-4570

Abstract

The hyperinflationary whirlwind that has gripped Zimbabwe since 2000 has seen a sharp decline in bio-medical facilities and the resurgence of traditional and faith healers. As a result, a number of people have fallen prey to fake traditional healers and prophets. Most of these practitioners have made off with people's money. The law has been so compromised through corruption and negligence, such that most of the fraudsters have escaped without prosecution. While we acknowledge that some of these healers and prophets are genuine and do assist people, there are others who are only there to fleece ignorant people. The recourse to gullible means by the traditional healers and their clients has been exacerbated by exorbitant fees charged by some unscrupulous health practitioners in hospitals. This has resulted in the sprouting of traditional herbal practitioners at a number of public places in the streets. The motive by the clients has been to seek alternative health services that they regard as cheaper and affordable. However, the clients have ended up being vulnerable to duping by some fake traditional healers. This paper seeks to explore the phenomenon of traditional herbal practitioners under the banner of traditional medicine in Zimbabwe. Based on empirical data, the paper argues that both the herbal vendors and their clients are gullible in the use of traditional medicine in Harare, Zimbabwe. The traditional healers are but fake practitioners, shrewd and cunning business entrepreneurs who fleece innocent people of their income in a depressed economic environment in Harare.

Keywords: gullible, traditional healers, herbs, prophets, fake, health, medicine

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a9

Introduction

Traditional medicine has always been at the heart of most rural African people, in particular the Shona people of Zimbabwe (Shoko 2010: 85). Of late traditional medicine has gained popularity in the cities and towns in Zimbabwe. The fact that most of the medicine is found within the vicinity of the urban environs makes it very attractive, user friendly as well as it being cost effective and flexible in adapting to the dynamics of modern trends, thus becoming a darling to many people. This paper examines how traditional healers have exploit people in the use of traditional medicine in Harare, Zimbabwe in the face of rapid socio-economic and political decline and deteriorating health and well-being of the people. The paper will first do a reappraisal of traditional medicine in Zimbabwe. Then it will explain the phenomenon of roving traditional healers and herbal medicine and its utilization in Harare before it assesses its efficacy.

Zimbabwe's economy has shrunk significantly after the 2000's land reform, resulting in severe hardships for the people. By the beginning of 2009, Zimbabwe's annual inflation had plummeted to 231 million percent (ZIMSTAT 2009). The macro-economic conditions in the country created untold hardships for the population. The most acute problems were shortages of basic commodities such as fuel, foreign currency, electricity, etc. Basic amenities were equally affected, resulting in the outbreak of diseases such as cholera that killed approximately 1 700 people, and anthrax that saw the loss of livestock (*Zimbabwe Situation* 30 June 2016). The source of problems has been a subject of controversy in local and international circles. Whilst the Zimbabwe government attributed the problems to economic sanctions imposed upon the country after the 2000 land reform programme, the international critics accused Zimbabwe's government of engineering chaotic land reform and poor governance. After brief economic relief coming from a government of unity in 2013, today the country is plunged into another economic chaos due to disputed 30 July elections. The economic plunge has been due to extortionate taxes, unchecked price escalations and shortages of foreign currency, fuel and food. However, it is outside the purview of this paper to track all details pertaining to the debates over the political and economic crisis. It suffices to say that the health sector has not been spared the economic turbulence.

The escalating cost of living and shortages of medicines in hospitals have left the common person vulnerable to diseases and death. On average, the

lifespan of Zimbabweans has been reduced from 65 to 35 (*The Insider* 5 September 2018). Caught in this Catch 22 situation, three medical options have emerged that try to address the health needs of the people. These are bio-medicine, faith healing practised by independent and Pentecostal churches, and traditional medicine. Whilst bio-medicine was introduced by Western medical practitioners at hospitals in the 1890s during times of colonization, faith healing was a by-product of the amalgamation of mainline Christianity propagated by missionaries and traditional culture. Traditional medicine has had a long history of existence prior to modernity, but has been widely practised in rural areas in Zimbabwe. The shortfalls of biomedicine due to spiralling costs and exorbitant consultation fees charged by some faith healers have seen the multiplication of traditional medicine in cities like Harare in Zimbabwe. This trend has seen the emergence of traditional healers commonly referred to as 'street doctors' especially at public places. Several factors account for this development, namely economic challenges, availability of natural resources, and the user-friendly nature and efficacy of traditional medicine.

Perceptions about Traditional Medicine

In pre-colonial Zimbabwe, the status of traditional medicine was highly regarded by a symbiotic relationship between the chief and the *n'anga* (traditional healer). However, the advent of colonial administrators and European Christian missionaries inverted the wheel. The colonial administrators were determined to eradicate the *n'anga* from the Shona society, considering them as representatives of 'heathen', 'pagan' 'savage' beliefs (Bourdillon 1977: 15). Some prominent scholars, Peresuh and Nhundu (1999) observe that traditional medicine is not talked about openly because of sociological labelling by colonial governments and missionaries, as they attempted to blindly discredit it and replace it with Western medical systems. Waane (1990) states that the processing of traditional medicines is considered unhygienic and unscientific because people are biased against the methods of grinding, pounding, chewing and boiling. Now it seems a large number of families in cities consult traditional healers for their healthcare needs because these practitioners are regarded as accessible, affordable, culturally appropriate and acceptable. They explain illness in terms that are familiar because they are part of the local belief systems (Satima, McBride & Leppard 1998: 2).

In our study in Harare it was determined that the traditional healthcare system has maintained its role that is intended to serve the majority of the population of underprivileged people, but has largely been manipulated by unscrupulous and gullible healers swindling people of their savings.

Re-appraisal of Traditional Medicine

The attainment of independence in Zimbabwe in 1980 saw the government's adoption of a 'generous religious policy' (ter Haar, Moyo & Nondo 1992: 29) which promoted religious liberty in the country. In line with this policy, Parliament passed the Traditional Medical Practitioners Act in 1981 that saw the reappraisal of traditional medicine in Zimbabwe. As a result, the first Cabinet Minister of Health, Dr Chris Ushewokunze, himself a medical doctor, approved within the medical fraternity, the introduction of a body of traditional medical practitioners called the Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers Association (ZINATHA) on 13 July. Prof Gordon Chavunduka, then Dean of University of Zimbabwe's Faculty of Social Science and later the university Vice-Chancellor, was appointed the first President of ZINATHA. The late Dr Peter Sibanda was then Secretary-General (Shoko 2010: 85). The association sets its aims to unite traditional healers into one body, which would seek to do several things. The first aim would be to promote traditional medicine and practice. Secondly, the association would promote research into traditional medicines and methods of healing as well as promoting training in the art of traditional medicine and spiritual healing. Thirdly, the practice of traditional medicine would be supervised to prevent abuse and quackery and to cooperate with the Ministry of Health and other Ministries and organisations that are involved in the field of public health in this regard. The fourth aim is to preserve and promote beneficial aspects of African culture, and lastly, to cooperate with the Traditional Medical Practitioners Council (Chavunduka 1994: 23). Traditional medical practitioners in Zimbabwe are expected to register and after payment of registration fees obtain certificates and badges as in bio-scientific medicine. This encouragement saw the mushrooming of traditional healing practices in the city (Shoko 2010: 86). As a result, Zimbabwe undertook a major step towards a full recognition of the system of traditional healthcare, first by professionalisation in the form of ZINATHA, a move that facilitated collaboration between the traditional and modern healthcare.

Traditional Healers

There are some 'traditional healers' and herbalists who have sprouted at a number of places such as street corners, pavements, side roads and big high-ways such as Harare's First Street, Julius Nyerere Way, Samora Machel Avenue and Sam Nujoma Streets. Most 'practitioners' of this nature are shrewd and cunning businesspersons who, according to Sekuryu Chitsuwi Banda, 'understand the basic premise of capitalism: supply and demand' (*Sunday Mail* 9 December 2018).

In their desperate bid to lure clients by pretending to be genuine service providers, some unscrupulous healers wake up early in the morning and go to a nearby wetland and swamps to collect frogs and small tortoise.

> He takes these animals home, cleans himself up and takes his catch to his 'factory' at Machipisa Shopping Centre in Highfield suburb. There he gets down to the task of tying colourful beads around frogs and tortoises. He adds rubber bands, horns or chicken nails to the accessories (*Sunday Mail* 9 December 2018).

By this he imitates a 'goblin', which he supplies to some prophets and self-professed witch hunters (*tsikamutanda*), who in turn lure their clients on the basis that they would yield immense power to discover and exorcise evil spirits for exorbitant fees. That way the traditional healers attain fake, but brisk business.

Traditional herbs come in various forms such as powder, tree bark soaked in water, or even thick concoctions, which the patient is supposed to drink. Some are root tubers or leaves, such as *tsangamidzi*. The most popular one is known as *guchu,* which is believed to be the cure for all ailments, especially sexually transmitted diseases. These herbs come in liquid form. To obtain these, clients sometimes part with a substantial amount of money.

Marketing Strategy

Among their marketing stunts, the traditional healers allude to the outrageous medical fees being charged by the bio-medical doctors as well as the scaling down of operations at some hospitals. Herbal business is not unique to Harare alone. The trend is reportedly on the rise in dormitory towns such as Chitungwiza, Norton, Bindura and Marondera. Strange as this may sound, a number of people are now familiar with the phenomenon.

The traditional healer's most common symbol of trade are containers full of concoctions, which they usually wield in their hands and tout as panacea. They utilise all the space they see fit for business and start explaining their herbs. *'Kuruma-ruma kwemudumbu* (stomach pains), ulcers, *kutema kwemusoro* (head-aches), *kuzvimba kwetsinga,* high blood pressure and diabetes are hammered by the medicine', chanted the herbalist (*Sunday Lite Metro* 16-22 November 2018).

Some healers post conspicuous adverts on buildings and streets with inscriptions, 'ZINATHA Pharmacy Styles Building: Room S6' or 'We Supply Drugs for: HIV-related Symptoms; Blood Purification; Sugar Diabetes; Malaria; Tuberculosis (TB); Cancer; Asthma; *Jeko* (Menstrual Problems); *Kugeza Munyama* (Cleansing Misfortune); *Mamhepo* (Fever)*; Mhepo yeMudumbu* (Constipation)*; Chomusoro* (Headaches); Blood Pressure (BP); Medicine for Luck; Albino Cream; *Vuka-Vuka* (Sexual stimulants); Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs): Syphilis, Herpes and Gonorrhoea' (*ZINATHA* 2002:-10). Through observation, I noticed that numerous state-of-the art traditional healing shrines had sprouted at the nearby Mukuvisi woodlands close to the city centre. Home surgeries are a common sight in the residential suburbs, especially in the high-density suburbs in the city. In some cases noticeboards with words written on them such as *Chiremba Pano* (Practitioner is here) appear at doors and gate entrances of houses in the suburbs (Shoko 2010: 95)

The healers' marketing gimmick is *'Vachada'* (Those who want). They shout, *'Tinawo womusoro, mudumbu'* (We have medicines for stomach, headaches, teeth ache). Others shout, *'Uzere pano womutengo wakaderedzwa.'* (Medicine is available at reduced prices). At times, they specify the diseases and remedy, *'Vanofufutigwa mudumbu, mamhepo, kugeza munyama isharaude'* (Those suffering from constipation, winds, and we cleanse all misfortune). Such traditional healers are very popular and make a large profit by charging reasonable prices for their medicines, and have become known as 'bush doctors' (Shoko 2010: 96).

Favourite hunting grounds for patients are bottle stores, braai places, public toilets and even redundant council beerhalls. Imbibing males are coincidentally the major consumers of the herbs. They are also found at intersections and shop verandas such as TM Hyper and OK supermarkets in Harare, or some frequent places of entertainment such as nightclubs and film theatres. Others mill around flee market areas such as Mupedzanhamo near the Mbare and Avondale shops. Traditional healers have also established markets

outside hotels. Restaurants and takeaway shops are not spared street doctors' business. They have also established selling points at bus stations. Both Copacabana and Fourth Street have become harbingers for black-market trade in foreign currency. Yet others spread their herbs at flyovers over and above bridges such as along Chitungwiza and Beatrice Roads. Above all, they have also established bases at the Mbare Musika and Highfields Machipisa marketplaces (Shoko 2010: 96).

Recently ZINATHA has been portrayed in a bad light with some of its charlatan members charging exorbitant fees or conning desperate people seeking medication. Olga Muchadura testified that some ZINATHA members deceived people by raising fatal myths such as 'sleeping with a virgin' as cure for AIDS. On 26 January 2006, the association shocked the people in Harare when they lobbied for the phasing out of condoms because they are 'un-African'. However, the government, through the Ministry of Health, spurned the request as ridiculous, 'This is really madness, how can a group masquerading as healers call for the phasing out of protection measures' (*Zim Daily* 19 February 2016).

Many people have been conned and lost valuable property, money and their lives through the machinations of traditional healers. In a recent case in Murehwa, some 79 km from Harare, a 7-year-old boy was killed in a ritual murder by his own uncle in connivance with a *n'anga*. This was based on the false belief that human body parts can boost his uncle's business. The culprits have since been arrested by police (*The Herald* 1 October 2020).

Herbal Gardens

The HIV and AIDS scourge has wrought unprecedented negative effects on the health of many Zimbabweans, with many failing to cope with the costs of Western drugs, which are out of reach for many. This has led some traditional healers to be innovative, and in the quest for 'struggle of the fittest', introduced herbal gardens in the city suburbs such as Highfields, Kuwadzana, Budiriro, Glen View, Glen Norah, Mbare, Sunningdale, Dvivarasekwa, Tafara and Mabvuku. The Harare avenue areas have not been spared herbal gardens. People who own herbal gardens, for instance, inhabit flats, such as Trafalgar Court in the middle of the city. Most of these herbs are used to fulfil the role of conventional anti-retroviral drugs. A local gardener reported that 30 people living with HIV and AIDS had graduated with certificates in homebased care

and herbal gardening (Mutshumayeli Dube 5 December 2018). The trend in Harare is that people who have limited access to anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) tend to access herbal medicines from traditional healers.

Also faced by skyrocketing prices of life-prolonging ARV drugs, people living with HIV and AIDS and others with chronic diseases such as cancer have turned to the excessive use of traditional medicine under the hands of unscrupulous healers. The uptake of traditional herbal medicine has been compounded by the government's legalizing of *mbanje* (dagga) farming (*The Herald* 25 April 2018). Health and Child Care Minister Obadiah Moyo, said the government would not stop any cancer patient from turning to traditional medicine to complement any clinical treatment they were receiving from public health institutions. This buoyed the uptake of herbal medicines. However, the public have abused dagga for smoking for social and entertainment purposes. All this herbal abuse happens despite the government's insistence that it has legalized *mbanje* or cannabis for medicinal and scientific purposes only.

A rush for herbal medicine in Harare has also been experienced with the introduction of a drug called *Gundamiti*. This is a herbal concoction produced by the late scientist, Dr Mashava, a University of Zimbabwe lecturer in the Department of Chemistry (*The Standard* 30 September 2016). The late scientist claimed the drug was sanctioned by the WHO and it could reverse the symptoms of AIDS. As a result, he worked in liaison with Parerenyatwa Hospital to conduct a viral load and CD4 count for his patients. Although his drugs used to be confined to the university campus in Mt Pleasant, many have found their way into the open market in Harare. However, since the death of the practitioner, the drug has become extinct, and thus its efficacy has been questioned. In addition, many other people used to seek help from other traditional medical surgeries such as the one operated by the late Dr Duri, a University of Zimbabwe Chemist who runs his surgery in Harare. In fact, the demise of the traditional medical practitioners-cum scientists has put to question the authenticity of traditional medicine. Other people infected with HIV and AIDS seek help from practitioners at Benjamin Burombo AIDS Clinic, a traditional healer from Kuwadzana suburb, who claims he can cure AIDS. People in need of therapy also access Richard Ngwenya's Immunity Health Centre (IHC) in Harare's avenues. There are several herbal drug stores also found along Simon Mazorodze Road, as well as in many residential suburbs. Gullible Zimbabweans frequent all these traditional medical facilities.

Another herb, which comes in the form of a powder, is marketed as a

super 'multi-purpose' herb. This herb is popular among *chibuku* (opaque beer) drinkers, who mix the herb with beer. It is also claimed that the herb boosts men's sexual drive. As soon as one of the guzzlers shouts *'chiremba'* (doctor), the herbal vendor immediately responds, 'multi-purpose'. The herbal vendor then explains how his herbs work, 'Any ailment, be it sexually transmitted disease or not, my medicine can cure that. No wonder it is called multi-purpose' (Magaisa 12 April 2017). One of the female herbalists had her special types of herbs, which she said enhanced pleasure in bed (Vaida Mlambo 29 June 2017). This is referred to as *vhalasheka*. Though the herbalist said she did not know the name of the herb, she said it was intended for married people, since it boosted sex drive.

Spiritual Healer

One of the most interesting cases about gullibility in the health sector involved a religious leader, Walter Magaya, a prophet from Prophetic Healing and Deliverance Ministries, who uses traditional healing methods. He claimed he had found the cure for HIV through a certain tree (called Aguma). He attracted a huge following in the guise of healing (*The Herald* 30 October 2018). Nevertheless, he has since been arrested for contravening the Medicines and Allied Substances Act, which criminalizes the distribution and advertisement of medicines. All this occurred amidst condemnation by the Ministry of Health and WHO, who have spoken out clearly that so far there is no known cure for the virus. However, despite this retraction, some followers at the service said they paid as much as R200 a month for healing. This kind of leader has managed to sway huge numbers of people in search of healing. Whatever the case, the Magaya's HIV and AIDS cure claims demonstrate the level of gullibility that characterizes Zimbabwe religious and medical landscapes.

Alternate Traditional Medicine

The city of Harare has also encountered a spiralling wave of alternative medicine, as well as Chinese and Indian medicine, alongside traditional herbal medicine. Perhaps the incursion of Asian medicine has been due to Zimbabwe government's Look-East policy that has been applied subsequent to the Land Reform programme in 2000. There are practitioners of Chinese origin who have established surgeries and medical warehouses that sell traditional medi-

cine from abroad. Some Chinese shops advertise immunity enhancement programs through drug taking and aromatherapy. They also recruit people to their medical business by organizing membership to medical associations. In addition, they promote aggressive marketing through sales, rewards, and bonuses for best sellers.

Apart from Chinese traditional medicine, the Zimbabwean health market has also been swamped with Indian medicine. In fact, many sick Zimbabwean people are referred to some Indian doctors or specialists in India for treatment. Because of this increasing reliance on the use of traditional medicine in Zimbabwe, the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Zimbabwe is considering opening a school of traditional medicine in Harare that will offer training for medical students and supply traditional medicines in their hospitals for treatment. In addition, Zimbabwe has opened a clinic for traditional Chinese medicine in Harare (*The Herald* 25 September 2020). ZINATHA also offers a certificate on traditional medicine in Harare. All these factors, though with noble intention, tend to influence some gullible Zimbabweans to fall prey to charlatans in traditional medicine. Nevertheless, what is important is to sift the good from the bad operations of traditional healers.

Negative Attributes of Traditional Healers

The negative portrayal of traditional healers dates back to Western stereotypes of Africa and its people, in particular missionaries, who viewed traditional healers as 'witchdoctors', who reside on the 'dark continent'. With such a colonial and Christian-centric mindset, traditional healers are largely viewed by Harare residents as bad economic opportunists bent on exploiting the public. In an interview some people told us that traditional healers had abused them. A community leader explained that 'a traditional healer will try to beat a patient, because always they associate any kind of ailment, like demon possession, and sometimes like a spirit has gotten into you' (Vaida Mlambo, Harare 15 March 2017).

Traditional herbalists, particularly those that ply their trade in the streets in Harare, are often viewed as leading a life that resembles that of 'street kids'. Swart (1990: 92) sums up the work of 'street kids' as limited to four categories; begging, theft, scavenging and odd-jobbing. For most healers of this type, medicines are stuffed in tins, bottles or wrapped around plastic bags or pieces of cloth. They do this in order to avoid arrest for illegal vending by

law enforcement agents. Nevertheless, the Zimbabwe government sees them as an embarrassment and sweeping arrests are mounted by the police. Likewise, healers complain of police harassment as exemplified by someone, 'It is very bad. We are arrested for no reason. People were rounded up and sentenced to three years for no offence' (Bourdillon 1991: 28).

Maclean and Fyfe (1986:11) note that some traditional practices are clearly beneficial and harmless, but others are injurious and could imperil an acutely ill person or child. A Harare man is said to have gone mad a week after drinking a concoction called *mudzepete.* A traditional healer in Mufakose administered the concoction in an attempt to intervene on behalf of a man whose wife was involved in infidelity (*The Daily Mirror* 4 June 2016). Tsitsi Matope, a woman who resided in Dzivarasekwa in Harare died a few months after a traditional healer from Mbare suburb administered a lethal injection. The healer was attempting to treat some sexually transmitted disease. A post-mortem revealed that Tsitsi had died of anaphylactic shock and drug reaction (*The Herald* 4 November 2017).

In our study, we noted that people are also more inclined to try a more traditional approach to medicine, especially when some practices are supported by their culture or religion. This is prevalent in communities riddled with poverty, corruption, and violence such as the context of Harare. This is especially the case when dealing with sexual ailments. However, one bio-medical specialist pointed out, 'Herbal medicines can cause kidney failure and liver damage in some consumers because they contain toxic chemicals or heavy metals, or react harmfully with other drugs' (Magaisa, Harare 14 July 2018). For some HIV-infected patients on ARV treatment, the use of traditional medicine can reverse the positive gains of the drugs.

According to one Medical Research Journal, the very nature of it being unregulated is already a big red flag for would-be buyers, as nobody can really tell the components of these herbal medicines or the extent of its effects. It isn't supported by sufficient clinical trials and studies that can ease our worries over potential side effects or adverse reactions (*The Guardian* 2018). Those are just some of the valid reasons raised by medical experts regarding the challenges of supporting traditional medicine.

In this light, many Zimbabwean healers have caused untold suffering and death amongst their gullible clients of traditional medicine. However, it will be unjustified to depict the traditional healers and medicine as solely negative; there are some other positive aspects associated with this medical facility.

Some Positive Aspects of Herbal Medicine

Although traditional healers and their clients are gullible pertaining to the use of traditional medicine, there are some positive aspects about the use of traditional medicine. One thing that makes traditional medical specialists attractive is the fact that they are able to give more personal attention to patients than is possible at larger and busy bio-medical hospitals. In that respect, traditional medicine has become a popular means of improving health for the majority of the people in Harare. Our study has found that bio-medicine could not meet the health needs of the people in Harare and that available funds were not adequate to provide healthcare for all. Because of this, many people have become interested in traditional medicine as a way to strengthen their health. A traditional healer, Moven Kalindawaro, concurs, 'Herbs are effective and usually provide food in itself. Remember our forefathers used to eat wild plants or herbs' (Kalindawaro2017). This stance shows that herbs are effective in the lives of some people.

The fact is that the Shona depended upon traditional medicine for their health long before the introduction of bio-medicine prolonged their lifespan. This makes it valid that the herbs are effective, and besides, people who use them believe that the herbs are affordable. In addition, the fact that traditional medical practitioners who use traditional medicine attend to many people who approach them makes the medicine user-friendly. As a result, people easily turn to traditional herbs whenever they encounter problems or sickness.

Dr David Parirenyatwa, Zimbabwe's former Minister of Health, said in an endeavour to promote the use of traditional medicine, the Assembly of the Organization of African Union) (OAU) now the African Union Authority (AUA) heads of state and government summit in July 2001 declared the period 2001 – 2010 as the decade for African traditional medicine (*The Herald* 24 September 2017). They also agreed to commemorate the African Traditional Medicine Day on 31 August every year as strategy to promote the use of traditional medicine. All this suffices to say traditional medicine has some value that is recognised internationally.

Conclusions

This paper has shown that the attainment of Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 has ushered in the reappraisal of traditional medicine. As a result, there has a swing towards the use of traditional medicine to support people's health. The

hyper-inflationary whirlwind that has reached Zimbabwe has recently seen a number of hospitals scaling down operations. Coupled with this is the people's general desire to seek alternative health services from other providers in the wake of exorbitant medical fees that some bio-medical doctors demand. Against this backdrop, some unscrupulous traditional healers have emerged who deceive people out of their hard savings in an effort to seek healthcare. The paper has argued that some traditional healers are misleading gullible members by claiming they have the capacity to cure complex diseases such as cancer and AIDS. Moreover, they employ all sorts of marketing strategies to attract people to their healing facility. Of late, Chinese and Indian medicines entered the market, thereby increasing the gullibility of people. Nevertheless, traditional medicine has some positive and negative effects. The First Lady, *amai* Auxillia Mnangagwa, hammers the point home by urging pharmaceutical industry regulators to tighten their surveillance and monitoring systems to protect gullible patients from fake medicines.

References

Bourdillon, M.F.C. (ed.). 1977. *Christianity South of the Zambezi*. Volume 2. Gweru: Mambo Press.

Chavunduka, G. 1994. *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe.* Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications.

Maclean, U. & C. Fyfe 1986. *African Medicine in the Modern World.* Edinburgh: Centre for African Studies.

Peresuh, M. & T. Nhundu 1999. *Foundations of Education for Africa.* Harare: College Press Publishers.

Satima, F.T, S.R. McBride B. & Leppard 1998. Prevalence of Disease in Rural Tanzania and Factors influencing the Choice of Health Care, Modern or Traditional. *ARCH Dermato* 134: 10–25. https://doi.org/10.1001/archderm.134.11.1363

Shoko, T. 2010. Traditional Healing in Harare: Continuity and Change. In Togarasei, L. & E. Chitando (eds.): *Faith in the City: The Role and Place of Religion in Harare*. Uppsala: Swedish Science Press.

Swart, J. 1990. *Malunde: Street Children of Hillbrow*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

Ter Haar, G., A. Moyo & S.J. Nondo 1992. *African Traditional Religion in Religious Education.* Utrecht: Utrecht University.

Waane S.A.C. 1990. *The Use of Traditional Medical Plants: The Cultural Context. Proceedings of International Conference on Traditional Plants.* Arusha: Dar Es Salaam University Press, Ministry of Health, Tanzania.

Interviews

Dube, M. Interview 5 December 2018.
Magaisa, B. Interview 12 April 2017.
Kalindawaro, M. Interview 15 January 2017.
Mlambo, V. Interview 29 June 2017.

Newspapers

Sunday Lite Metro, 16 - 22 November 2018.
Sunday Mail, 9 December 2018.
The Daily Mirror, 4 June 2016.
The Guardian, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/feb/06/herbal-medicines-can-have-dangerous-side-effects-research-reveals (Accessed on 3 December 2018.)
The Herald, 24 September 2017
The Herald, 4 November, 2017.
The Herald, 25 April 2018.
The Herald, 30 October 2018
The Herald, 25 September 2020.
The Herald, 1 October 2020.
The Insider, 5 September 2018
The Standard, 30 September 2016.
Zimbabwe Situation, 30 June 2016.
Zim Daily, 19 February 2016.
Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, (ZIMSTAT), 2009, https://www.bing.com/search?q=ZIMSTAT+2009+land+reform

Prof. Tabona Shoko
Department of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy
University of Zimbabwe
Harare
shokotab@yahoo.com

The Concept of *Shiringoma* among the Manyika People of Mutasa – Navigating the Misty Horizon between Reality and Gullibility

Canisius Mwandayi

Abstract

The study is a phenomenological navigation of the indeterminate but much talked about concept of Shiringoma among the Manyika people. The paper begins by defining who the Manyika are and then moves on to look at the practice of *kuromba* 'acquisition of special powers' at Shiringoma done by some of the Manyika people. While an outsider may easily dismiss, for example, the idea of a dead person restarting a new existence somewhere as a hoax or something gullible, there are some who really believe it is possible. *Kuromba* is such a complex phenomenon which makes it difficult, if not almost impossible, to tell realistic appearances from those which are not unless one wasc schooled into the art of performing it or once saw it really happen in one's life experience. Pieces of data were collected through interviews and especially through snowballing, as the practices at Shiringoma were largely secretive. This paper argues that although *kuromba* appears unrealistic to the ordinary Zimbabwean, there is evidence that there are some Manyika people who have been initiated into the cult. Therefore, stories about the practice are not products of people who are gullible enough to believe in superstition.

Keywords: Gullibility, *Kuromba*, Phenomenology, Manyika People

Introduction

The study is a navigation of the indeterminate but much talked about concept of Shiringoma among the Manyika people. The paper begins by defining who the Manyika are and then moves on to look at the practice of *kuromba*, 'acquisition of special powers' of Shiringoma amongst some of the Manyika people.

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a10

Given that it is not easy to understand this phenomenon if one is an outsider, the underlying methodological approach used in this study is phenomenology. The main methods of data collection used therein are participant observation and interviews. Some of the conversations emanating from the interviews were recorded verbatim, whereafter an analysis is made of the data collected.

Manyika People

The term 'Manyika' has a long-recorded history. Back in the 16th century, the Portuguese reported the existence of a territory called Manyika. They thus called the large region around the Manyika Chieftaincy, Manicaland (Ranger 1989: 122). When the British came in the 19th century, they also picked up this historic term and applied it to almost all the inhabitants of that area. However, most people living in this region never thought of themselves as related in any way to the Manyika Chieftaincy.

Prior to the existence of this extended Manyika identity, the concept 'Manyika' can be said to have had at least different meanings. H.H.K. Bhila (1982) tells us that the original historical meaning of Manyika is the people of Chief or King Mutasa. This territory lies to the north and the northwest of the modern-day city of Mutare. Bordering the western side of Chief Mutasa's kingdom was his long-time enemy and competitor for land, cattle, women and slaves: Chief Makoni, who headed the Maungwe kingdom. As a result of the wars between these rivals, the boundaries of the two kingdoms often shifted, thus the best definition of traditional Manyika, according to Bhila, was political rather than geographical. Manyika in this case encompassed all those who at any one time acknowledged the authority of Mutasa and nobody else (Bhila cited in Ranger 1989: 123).

Moving to the second sense in which the term 'Manyika' was used, in the later 19th century, the Portuguese developed and propagated this concept for themselves. They claimed that the then reigning Mutasa chief had made a voluntary submission to them in 1876. As noted by Bourdillon (1998), soon after their arrival on the East African Coast, the Portuguese had heard tales of a very powerful Mutapa ruler who reigned from the Kalahari Desert in the west to the Indian Ocean in the east. Though these tales did not tally exactly with what they found there, it remained true that Mutapa was an influential figure, such that both Muslim and Portuguese traders, missionaries and administrators continued to have dealings with him.

More significant for the Portuguese was the Barwe State, whose rulers held the dynastic title Makombe. The Barwe actually occupied the country through which the main trade routes from the port to the Sena in the interior passed, thus making it difficult for the Portuguese not to have dealings with the Makombe. After brief missionary activity in this Makombe area, a new Makombe ruler is said to have asked for 'baptismal water', obtained from the Portuguese at Sena, to be used for the accession rituals. Such a gesture was interpreted by the Portuguese as a sign of his subjection to them. The reality, however, is that there was nothing remotely like a religious submission on the part of the Makombe; this 'baptismal water' referred to here was in fact drunk by the new ruler after it had been medicated by a senior spirit medium. The Makombe simply sought to align themselves with the Portuguese against powerful neighbouring chiefs. The readiness of the Makombe to attack Portuguese outposts and block trade routes each time when there was conflict between the two camps shows that the Makombe retained their autonomy. When the Portuguese tried to exercise their supposed authority over the Makombe in the late 19th century, the latter showed their resentment to this interference by coming out in full force against the Portuguese in two wars, finally suffering defeat only in 1917. They thus utilised this as a basis to expand the area of Manyika on their maps. Eventually they had an enormous territory under their influence. As evidenced from the writings of H.H.K. Bhila (cited in Ranger 1989: 123):

> On a Portuguese map of 1887 […] its boundaries extended along the Zambezi from Shupanga to near Tete, then South-west along the Mazoe and South by the Sabi river valley to its junction with the OdziRiver, then along the Musapa and Buzi Rivers to the mouth of the Pungwe. This enormous size of Manyika was evidently fixed by political and commercial considerations. The Mazoe river valley was included because of rumours of abundant alluvial gold. The kingdom of Manyika over which the Manyika rulers […] exercised authority […] was a much smaller area.

The Maungwe kingdom, which had once been outside the Manyika territory, also came to be encompassed on this Portuguese map. This was, however, a merely notional and paper definition, for the Makoni chiefs continued to exercise their autonomous sovereignty. To avoid clashes, as noted by Ranger

(1989), the Portuguese entered into treaties with these Makoni chiefs.

The arrival of the British, as noted earlier, ushered in another sense of Manyikahood. The BSAC, in its effort to gain control of the Pungwe River route, the main waterway to and from Beira, imposed a treaty on Mutasa on 14 September 1890 (Ranger 1989). As is evidently clear, this move was a countermeasure to the Portuguese claims and the condition of the treaty was that no-one could possess land in Manyika without the consent of the BSAC. With the signing of this treaty, the BSAC created its own 'Greater Manyika', the Western boundaries lying deep inside Portuguese territory. However, areas like Maungwe and Mazoe were left out of this new draft of the BSAC.

Having ensured that the Company's frontiers had been fixed, the BSAC went on to break up the Old Manyika kingdom into two administrative districts of Umtali and Inyanga. The colonial administration took upon itself the task of developing a minimalist definition of Manyikahood. Only Mutasa's people and those in his territory were defined as Manyika. Language also became a special characterisation of these people, for the Manyika have a dialect different from other Mashona. The Umtali Native Commissioner Hulley, in pursuit of the same minimalist understanding of Manyikahood, argued that the three Chiefs in the district, Mutasa, Marange and Zimunya, were of quite distinct origins, even though there was a popular tendency to refer to this district as Manicaland (Ranger 1989: 124).

In the case of the Maungwe, the Native Department was concerned to emphasize the distinction between people of that region and Manyikaland. One thing quite certain was that tribally, linguistically and culturally, the people of Maungwe could not in any way be seen as one with the Manyika of Mutasa. It was only much later, in the 1930s, that a diffused sense of Manyikahood was reached and the Maungwe too have generally come to accept being labelled as members of the wide Manyika identity. Some, however, still vehemently deny any links with this Manyika identity.

In my research, however, when I make reference to the Manyika it would be the old sense of Manyikahood I would employ, namely Mutasa's people. Mainly on the basis of dialect and some other cultural traits, I argue that the Manyika of Mutasa are still, up to this day, quite distinct from other tribes found in Manicaland. This, however, is not to say that Manyika as a dialect is only spoken by Mutasa's people, but it is a dialect commonly used by at least around one million people in eastern Zimbabwe and western Mozambique (Bax & Diercks 2012; Lewis 2009).

The Search for Survival and Longevity of Life

Just like the rest of humanity, the Manyika people have since time immemorial been preoccupied with the search for survival and longevity of life in a world full of evil forces that threaten their existence. This search for existence and preservation of their close family members have seen them embark on various initiatives and often breath-taking adventures to ensure that their aspirations are realised. Among the various ways to secure the precious gift of life is the visit by some *kundoromba* (acquire special powers) at Shiringoma. *Kuromba* as defined by Kudzai Biri (2012), denotes the act of visiting a traditional healer in order to get medicine (*muti*), to be feared, to be wealthy, or in any way noteworthy in society.

Shiringoma

Shiringoma, which is often spelt Cheringoma, is one of the twelve districts found within Sofala, a province located within the central region of Mozambique. According to a report by Mangue and Oreste (1999), the Cheringoma Plateau is covered by miombo woodlands with dry forest and thicket along the lines of numerous contemplative and tall ravine forest trees growing along the ravine floors. In such a forest, as in many other parts of Mozambique, reports Mangue and Oreste (1999), numerous traditional healers (*curandeiros*) are found. The forest is highly valued as a source of medicinal plants for those traditional healers. Both rural and urban people are said to travel long distances in order to get treatment or to have all their spiritual problems resolved. Given the proximity of Cheringoma to the eastern boarder of Zimbabwe, it may not be surprising therefore to see Samanyika (a person belonging to the Manyika tribe) crossing over to Cheringoma to seek assistance when need arose.

Why Shiringoma?

Various factors and forces had a play in making people take the bold decision to visit Shiringoma. It is generally believed and accepted among the Manyika people that their elders lived in an era where there was so much competition in terms of *kuromba.* Each family had to compete for space and life; hence it forced family heads to see to it that they acquire the necessary *muti* (special powers) that kept their families going. What it meant was that a family that had

not gone *kundoromba* was destined for extinction.

While others went *kundoromba* to ensure the survival of their families, others simply went *kundoromba* because they did not want *kudhererwa* (being belittled) by anyone in the society. Their ego caused them not to want anyone to look down upon them. In their conception, other people in the society were supposed to fear them and should not *kuvanongedza* (point a finger at them). As a result, they would just want to get whatever they liked and force their way through in whatever errands they would be after without anyone standing in their way. According to one of my informants, Mr M.B. Humba (real name withheld), people did not go *kundoromba* at Shiringoma only, but some went to Zambia and some even as far as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Humba, Interview, Sadziwa Shops, 28/07/15). Among the Manyika people, however, Shiringoma remains a popular name, which may be an indicator that the Manyika people preferred this place, probably due to its proximity to their place of habitation, Manyikaland.

Others came to acquire the special powers not necessarily as a result of them going to hunt for them, but by virtue of staying among people who already practised these customs. Taking a cue from the information given by Sekuru Humba, it can be noted that it was not only the community found at Shiringoma that had people who practised *mashiripiti* (black magic), but it was also found among some communities in Zambia and DRC. As families wandered from one area to the other in the past, either in search of better pastures, land for agriculture or as a result of being displaced by war, at times they would come to settle among people of different cultures and hence tended to copy the life and culture of the autochthonous peoples. Often as the newcomers came to face the harsh reality of life in their newly settled communities, there were always friends who were willing to point them to famous traditional medicine men/women in the community where they could find help in acquiring powers in black magic also.

The Types of Hurombwa '**special powers**'

According to my informants: Gowera, Musombero and Humba (pseudonyms), there are different types of *hurombwa*:

1. Kuramba munhu achimuka (Return to life after death)

This kind of *kuromba* is whereby a *munhu akaromba* (a person who has acq-

uired special powers), has the capacity to come back to life. In the eyes of the community where he/she used to stay, one is considered dead and like any other dead person, he/she is buried. It is after burial that he/she is believed to come back to life, but then appears in a new community far away from the people who knew him/her. It is believed *munhu akaromba* of this kind may die in Zimbabwe, but acquires a new life either in Mozambique, Tanzania or Zambia. In the new community where he/she re-appears, life starts all over and he/she may get married and beget children until he/she dies again to start another existence in some new community. In this way life goes on and on for him/her. If, however, he/she meets a person from a previous community who knows him/her, then it is believed he/she passes on for forever and that would be the end of his/her *kuromba*. The informants testified about a known case that happened in Musodza village under Chief Mutasa. They said that there once lived a person by the name Mr Bonda (not his real name) who married into the Tsadotsa family (pseudonymous family name). He passed on and was buried but, on the day following his burial, when people went for *rumuko* 'inspection of the grave', people saw a big hole in the grave and there were no sign of his remains in the grave (Musombero, Gowera, Interview, Sadziwa Shops 28/07/15).

2. Upenyu Urefu (Long Life)

There are some people, according to my informants, who go *kundoromba* solely with the desire to live a long life beyond what other ordinary human beings live. I was privileged to get first-hand information from Sekuru M.B. Humba, whose father he said had introduced him to this kind of *kuromba*. Sekuru Humba said that he was born in 1927 and since then he has never known what an injection is nor has he been admitted to any hospital, let alone taken any drug or pill from any modern-day clinic or hospital. On asking whether he had ever been down with malaria or any other common illness he said, 'I stayed in Sagambe where there is malaria and in Kariba where there are tsetse flies but I never got ill' (Humba, Interview, Sadziwa Shops 28/07/15). Upon probing him further whether his children are also preserved like him, he said that none of them had ever gone to hospital, including even his grandchildren. He said he has a daughter married in Zindi area under Chief Mutasa and she had no worries about sending children to a hospital. To cap it all, Sekuru Humba, at 88 years of age, testified that his father was still alive. Sekuru Humba said he was the fifth-born in a family of six and all the siblings

of his family were also still alive (Humba, Interview, Sadziwa Shops 28/07/15).

3. Other Forms of Kuromba

There are various other kinds of *kuromba* that men go to seek at Shiringoma. These range from *muti* for luck, *mubobobo*, 'capacity to sleep with any woman and at any time', *mheni*, 'lightning', *divisi* 'magical power to yield bumper harvests', and various other forms. From the information supplied by my informants, it is solely men who go to Shiringoma, leaving their wives behind. Upon return, however, men narrate to their wives what they would have gone *kundoromba*. Apart from being a general briefing to their partners, this narration serves to let the women know the *muko* (the do's and don'ts associated with the *muti*) in case something goes wrong if the operating rules are not followed. In the end, the women become part and parcel of *yehurombwa*, even though they may not have visited Shiringoma themselves.

Initiation Rites at Shiringoma

At Shiringoma, those who had committed themselves to *kuromba* would be prepared *(kubikwa)* thoroughly so that their bodies became strong. As narrated by Sekuru Humba, *mbanda* 'a concoction of herbs' is prepared and boiled in a *mbiya* 'clay pan'. When the contents have cooled, an initiate is made to sit in the *mbiya* and suck the watery substance therein through the anus until all is finished. In the event that a friend of his comes by during the process, the initiate is covered with a blanket and he can chat with his friend without the latter even knowing that the initiate is undergoing such a rite. Upon completion of this first rite, the initiate is made to drink *furofuro remusiko*, 'foam prepared from a tree called *musiko*'. Its purpose is to strengthen the body and remove any bodily impurities so that the initiate would become fit and strong. This final rite marks the end of the initiation rite and the initiate is ready to go on his way (Humba, Interview, Sadziwa Shops 28/07/15).

In the event, however, that the initiate wants *kuromba* for luck, G. Musombero narrated that at times an initiate is asked to go and touch *mushonga/muti* in a nearby place and bring that with him to the medicine man. Upon going to the pointed place, the initiate can either see his naked sister or a terrifying cobra waiting to strike. If the initiate has the courage to touch it, the snake is said to turn into a simple stick. This touching process is how the

kuromba initiation is achieved and accomplished (Musombero, Interview, Sadziwa Shops 28/07/15). What would then follow is *muko,* which the initiate is expected to adhere to strictly in case some terrifying misfortune may happen to him or his family. In their research on how mental illness is associated with *kuromba*, Muchinako, Mabvurira and Chinyenze (2013) aver the same when they note that magic charms got through *kuromba* come with instructions for use, which have to be adhered to strictly so that they can work as intended. Failure or laxness in adhering to the strict operational instructions (*muko*) may result in dire consequences, such as illness, for the non-adhering person.

Once initiated and given the *mhiko* to adhere to, the initiate returns to normal life just like everyone else in the society. While in the eyes of the people he may look ordinary, he now possesses powers and defences that are beyond the ordinary people. Sekuru Humba narrated an ordeal he once faced when someone tried to poison him at a *chenura*,'bringing home spirit ceremony' of the Nhanhanu family (pseudonym). He recalled that someone became jealous of him because he was good at beating drums and so decided to kill him with poisoned beer. When Sekuru Humba unknowingly received the beer, the moment it came in contact with his lips, he straightaway vomited and he lost two front teeth in the process. When he pointed out that someone had tried to poison him, the culprit ran away (Humba, Interview, Sadziwa Shops 28/07/15).

Analysing the Phenomenon of *Kuromba*

When one takes a look at today's society, one realizes that the issue of *kuromba* is a phenomenon now less talked about, let alone going to Shiringoma. In the past, apparently there was nothing secretive in talking about *kuromba,* as almost all families engaged in the practice. With the advent of churches, education and the general exodus of the younger generations from rural communities to towns, the issue of *kuromba* appears to be losing ground. More and more are beginning to view that practice as archaic and diabolic; hence a great number shun it, let alone even talk about it. The reduced popularity of Shiringoma in particular also appears to be the death of *vanagodobori* (medicine men) who knew the science of *mashiripiti* (works of wonder) well. With their passing on, those who need their services have to seek that in places other than Shiringoma.

While that may be as it is, the practice of *kuromba* has not completely faded in today's society and its end does not even promise to be nigh. From time immemorial, and even today, it is part and parcel of human society. No

matter how churches may disapprove of it as something gullible and diabolic, or how education tries to downgrade it, or even how the younger generations try to cut ties with their rural roots and identify themselves more with towns, it persists. Due to life's challenges, there is a growing trend among the younger generations to go as far as South African *kunoromba*. Many are known to return from South Africa with different *zvikwambos* (goblins). This finds echo from Shoko who said *zvikwambos* originate from South Africa, brought by labour migrants in search of economic survival (Shoko 2012). The identification of South Africa as the source where most of these goblins are bought from was also confirmed by Dube (2011), who noted that 'enterprising vendors' are reportedly 'importing' the super 'dirty' money-making and fortune-bringing goblins from neighbouring South Africa. Most of those lazy to work find it a shortcut to become rich by going *kunoromba* and they are believed to become rich in an instant. Some people, as nicely captured by Dube (2011), increasingly have the guts to dine with the devil and are prepared to eat from the poisoned bowl for only a few riches, a big house and a nice fleet of cars obtained not from their sweat. Thus, while Shiringoma has become less popular among the Manyika people, for some, nothing much has changed in terms of the human desire to acquire special powers to aid them in their daily lives.

Be that as it may, a few things about this concept of *kuromba*, however, leave an outsider with a lot of questions. It may appear easy to dismiss the idea of a dead person restarting a new existence as a hoax, but how certain could one be that it is not realistic? How real could it be that an 88-year-old man and who happens to be the fifth-born in his family has a father who is still alive up to this day? Are we possibly seeing a re-invention of the days of the Methuselahs who are said to have lived 969 years (Genesis 5: 27)? To those whose hearts are engrossed in the art of *kuromba* it may appear to be a real world, but how real is this world to an ordinary person not given to this art? Given the complexity of the world of *kuromba*, one finds that approaching this world is like entering a misty horizon where it is difficult, if not almost impossible, to tell realistic appearances from those which are not. Possibly only those given to the art may be able to give an answer to this complexity.

A number of Africans, however, believe that *kuromba* is real. People usually take their cue for this from either the long experience of life or at times from the suffering they once encountered as a result of *kuromba*. This is evidenced even from the responses to a question once raised on the discussion panel of Mugango Radio Station. The presenter posed the question: *Kuromba*

kuriko here, munoziva sei, zvinogadziriswa sei ...? 'Is *kuromba* real, how do you know it and how can it be rectified? (Mugango 2013). To this ques-tion came a lot of affirming answers. Naboth Mukwada, for example, respond-ed: '*Tingarambe sei kuti kuromba hakuna iko kuroiwa kuriko?*' (How can we deny the reality of *kuromba* when there is witchcraft?) (Mukwada cited in Mugango 2013). A more detailed response was given by George Makoni, who said:

> *kuriko kuromba, kuromba kunoreva kutsvaka mashiripiti anoita kuti ukwanise kuita zvaunoda uchishandisa mishonga inowanzobva kun'anga. Zvinoti huroyi, raki, zvikwambo – kungopa mienzaniso mishoma. Zvinogadziriswa nekutodzidzisa vanhu kuti hazvina pundutso, kuitira kuti vanhu vagare varega kutamba nemoto, tinofanira kudzidzisa rudo kuvanhu, nekuti izvi zvinokonzera matambudziko kune vamwene kuda zvinhu kwako iwe Kune vakatopindawo mazviri, ropa raJesu ndiro rega rinokwanisa kusuka jambwa iri.* (*kuromba* is a reality, *kuromba* means obtaining magical powers which make one able to what he/she wants using charms which one would have obtained from a traditional healer. The few examples of *kuromba* are witchcraft, lucky, *zvikwambo* (goblins), etc. This can be rectified through teaching people that having such powers has no value, so that people do not play with fire. We should teach love to people because this causes unnecessary suffering to others. To those in it already, only the blood of Jesus can wash away this bad misfortune) (Makoni cited in Mugango 2013).

Echoing similar sentiments but veiled in a bit of slang, Takunda Adriano Gushure affirmed, '*ehe kritii bt hazvisi bho*' (Yes, it is fully real, but it is not good) (Gushure cited in Mugango 2013). Though not directly responding to the question, but implicitly acknowledging that *kuromba* is real, Morris Dube commented, '*Vanhu ngavadzidze kuti aromba mangwana rinova dambudzo kuvana vake*'. (People need to learn that a person who goes *kunoromba* will leave behind a problem for his family in the future) (Dube cited in Mugango 2013).

Not everyone, however, would agree that *kuromba* will be a time bomb for his family. Sekuru Humba, for example, on being asked whether what he did would not spell danger for his family, argued that he had not gone *kunoromba* to endanger anyone; he had simply done it in order to live long; hence his move meant nothing disastrous at all for his family (Humba,

Interview, Sadziwa Shops 28/07/15). While Sekuru Humba, on his part, might be genuine, it is still a grey area not to regard *kuromba* as a time bomb. Cases whereby either some elderly people or the family members of the deceased man demand that they be buried with their 'special suitcases' are not uncommon. Be that as it may, the phenomenon of *kuromba* remains a misty area to venture into and one can hardly be absolutely certain about it.

Conclusion

Using first-hand information obtained through some interviews, the discussion has basically centred on the practice of going *kunoromba* at Shiringoma. As noted in the discussion, while the information about the practice is very scanty and hazy, it is an often talked about phenomenon among the Manyika people. Such discussions about the practice confirm that it used to be done but the *how* part is what remains vague to many, given that it was practised secretly. The researcher was quite fortunate, in the sense that in his search for information about the practice, he met an informant who happened to have undergone such a practice and was willing to share his experience and knowledge. It was quite enlightening indeed to have a first-hand account of what transpires at such rituals. However, since the Manyika people are popularly known for *kusvitsa*, 'not letting the cat out of the bag when it comes to essential information', one may not regard the information supplied by my informants as all that has to do with *kundoromba* at Shiringoma. There may thus be a need to investigate this phenomenon further.

References

Primary Sources

Humba, Interview, Sadziwa Shops, 28/07/15.
Musombero, Gowera, Interview, Sadziwa Shops 28/07/15.
(Musombero, Interview, Sadziwa Shops 28/07/15.

Secondary Sources

Adogame, A., E. Chitando & B. Bateye 2012. *African Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa: Emerging Trends, Indigenous Spirituality and the*

Interface with Other World Religions. Essays in honour of Jacob Kehinde Olupona. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company.

Bax, A. & M. Diercks 2012. Information Structure Constrains on Object Marking in Manyika. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2989/16073614.2012.737596 (Accessed on 30 July 2015.)

Bhila, H.H.K. 1982. *Trade and Politics in a Shona Kingdom. The Manyika and their Portuguese and African Neighbours, 1575 – 1902.* London.

Biri, K. 2012. The Silent Echoing Voice: Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe and the Quest for Power, Healing and Miracles. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 38: 37–55.

Bourdillon, M.F.C.1998. *The Shona Peoples: An Ethnography of the Contemporary Shona, with Special Reference to their Religion.* Gweru: Mambo Press.

Dube, L. 2011. Goblins Demand Outstrip Demand. *The Herald.* Available at: http://www.herald.co.zw/goblins-demand-outstrip-suppl/ (Accessed on 5 August 2015.)

Lewis, M.P. (ed.). 2009. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World.* Sixteenth Edition. SIL International, Dallas, Online Version. http://www.ethnologue.com (Accessed 6 August 2015.)

Mangue, P.D. & M.N. Oreste 1999. Non-Wood Forest Products in Mozambique. EC-FAO Partnership Programme (1998-2000) – Project GCP/INT/679/EC Data Collection and Analysis for Sustainable Forest Management in ACP Countries – Linking National and International Efforts. Available at: http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/x6693e/x6693e02.htm (Accessed on 7 August 2015.)

Muchinako, G., V. Mabvurira & P. Chinyenze 2013. Mental Illness and the Shona People of Zimbabwe: Some Key Issues. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences* 2, 3. Available at: http://www.garph.co.uk/ijarmss/mar2013/13.pdf (Accessed on 10 August 15.)

Mugango, Radio Station. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Mugango/368341639945778 (Accessed on 7 August 2015.)

Ranger, T. 1989. Missionaries, Migrants and the Manyika: The Invention of Ethnicity in Zimbabwe. In *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa.*

Available at: http://ark.cdlib.org:/13030/ft158004rs/
(Accessed on 10 August 2015).

Shoko, T. 2012. Teaching African Traditional Religions at the University of Zimbabwe. In Adogame A., E. Chitando & B. Bayeteye (eds.): *African Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa: Emerging Trends, Indigenous Spirituality and the Interface with other World Religions. Essays in honour of Jacob Kehinde Olupona.* Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company.

Dr. Canisius Mwandayi
Department of Religious Studies
Midlands State University
Zimbabwe

Academic Associate/ Research Fellow
Research Institute for Theology and Religion (RITR)
College of Human Sciences
University of South Africa (UNISA)
Pretoria
canisiusm@gmail.com
mwandayic@staff.msu.ac.zw

Religion, Gullibility, Health and Well-being: The Paradox of Faith Healing in Zimbabwe with Insights from the Levitical Priestly Code

Milcah Mudewairi
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4968-0206

Abstract

The health sector has proved to be one of the breeding grounds for religious gullibility. The purpose of this study emanated from the problems associated with faith healing in Zimbabwe in which faith healers state that they can treat any type of illness; yet their clients are seldom healed, unless they are treated by certified medical practitioners as well. The study determined that many people are handing out huge sums of money and are losing valuables seeking faith healing. The most disturbing factor is that there is evidence that some people have died upon termination of bio-medical treatment in favour of faith healing. The study was a hermeneutical exposition of healing in the Old Testament in a bid to provide a comparative model to contemporary faith healing in Zimbabwe. The study concludes that although the Levitical priests were active in terms of faith healing within religious circles, they had some bio-medical means to 'certify' patients who claimed to have been healed through faith healing. The study recommends that diseases like cancer, HIV, diabetes, blood pressure, epilepsy and mental illnesses require a lifetime intake of medication and any claims to have been healed through faith healing need to be referred for bio-medical tests for a clean bill of health.

Keywords: faith healing, Levitical Priestly Code, Hebrew Bible, certificate of cleansing

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a11

Introduction

Gullible activities are at a peak in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. Mbiti (1978:78) states that religion permeates all aspects of life. With views from Mbiti, religion has also not been spared in terms of gullibility. Elements of cheating, dishonest dealings, capitalistic mindsets and corrupt activities have been the order of the day among the faith healers in Zimbabwe. This article traced the problems associated with faith healing in Zimbabwe, drawing intuitions from the Levitical priests as a form of mitigating measures.

The work starts by analysing the existing research on gullibility, to build a case for the work at hand. In doing so, interviews were conducted; document analysis and in-depth research on faith healing in Zimbabwe were undertaken. The results gathered from the triangulation approach were analysed with the view to getting information from the victims, the affected as well as the faith healers themselves. After the presentation and analysis of the research results, conclusions were drawn and possible recommendations are given.

Background

Religious gullibility is not a virgin territory in the academic arena. Much academic information and research have been published from different angles, over many years, if not centuries. It is though, of paramount importance to trace the path of a sample of prior research to locate the problem under investigation. The following subsections are an engagement of the scholarly literature on gullibility in faith healing.

Definition of Gullibility

Teunisse (2015: 5) argues that gullibility can be understood in the context of exposure to being manipulated whereby the targeted people usually fall prey to cheating, all in the name of trust, pressing social situations, persuasiveness and even unsuspecting circumstances. In line with this definition, the elements of cheating are the basis of gullible activities and usually the affected realise their mistakes when it is too late to turn back the clock. Even if the victims lodged a complaint, it is difficult, if not impossible, to recover the lost goods. This definition is in line with the issue under discussion, since there is ample evidence of elements of cheating among the faith healers in Zimbabwe.

Cialdini (2000) also purports that trust and being insensitive to detecting signals of dishonesty are some of the major factors that influence compliancy with gullible activities. It is along this definition that it is of help to trace how the faith healers are cheating seekers of faith healing.

The Oxford Dictionary of Current English (2015) also defines the term 'gullibility' with reference to being easily persuaded to believe something. The element of cheating is the central aspect of gullible behaviour from this dictionary definition. It appears that in gullible situations there is no intention of helping people in need, but only fooling and cheating by taking advantage of the desperate situations of the clients. This kind of behaviour is also prevalent in love affairs, business circles and health institutions. This dictionary definition provides insights into the general definition of gullibility. The task of this paper was to provide an in-depth study of the extent to which the health section is at 'war' with the faith-healing practitioners.

The Levitical Priestly Code

The Biblical book of Leviticus got that title because its typical institutions were committed to the care of the priests of the tribe of Levi through the formulation of laws (Bonar 2004: 5). The book is difficult to comprehend, because many modern readers lack first-hand experience of ancient rituals and the legal codes. If not carefully studied, readers may succumb to the potential pitfall of anachronism, thereby formulating concepts that are foreign to the biblical period. The Priestly Code is one of the four main documents of the book of Leviticus that forms part of the Pentateuch and is legalistic in character (Robertson 1942: 369). The priests were mandated to intercede in prayers as well as officiating ritual and offering activities. One of the main duties of the High Priests was to certify the people cleansed from different illnesses. Most of these illnesses were associated with skin diseases; hence, it was a matter of examining the part that was affected with ordinary eyes to see if the skin was cured. Modern medical studies reveal that most of these contagious diseases referred to in the Old Testament makes someone unclean during the biblical period. The bottom line concerning the Levitical priests is that they had the ability to examine the healing of the once sick people by merely looking at the skin in order for them to be admitted back into society once they were fully healed. However, this is not the case with modern faith healers who just claim to, but are not capable of certifying the healing of their clients.

Prophets and Profits

Biri and Togarasei (2013: 79) propound that in Zimbabwe, the Hebrew Bible continues to play a central role in the socio-political economic and religious circles. Gone are the days when the Bible used to be consulted in religious circles only. In support of the above argument, Zimbabwe has witnessed an increasing number of prophetic activities during the period since 2008, when the nation was its peak of economic hardships, evidenced by the closing of public facilities like hospitals and schools (Biri & Togarasei 2013: 79). This was a bitter pill to swallow for most Zimbabweans, who could not afford the high cost of living. As a result, this was fertile soil for the rise of the prophetic voices claiming to provide divine guidance amidst the socio-economic and political meltdown.

However, despite the increase in the number of prophets, the struggle in Zimbabwe continues unto this day.

The former Head of State of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe, at one time interrogated the authenticity of these mushrooming prophets when he stated that *maporofita awanda kupfuura vanhu* (there are more prophets than ordinary people) (Biri & Togarasei 2013: 81). The statement by the former President articulates the need to be aware of the prophets who are not genuine messengers of God but who are only after personal gain. These prophets were associated with gullible behaviour by falsely using the power of the Divine. Due to the prevalent of gullible activities, usually, salvation is not the sole reason considering the prophets who arose to offer solutions on economic hardships in Zimbabwe. This association of prophets with profits in Zimbabwe is on the increase every day. In the Old Testament, some of the prophets arose in response to the crisis in the divinely elected community. The mission of the Prophet Moses was to respond to the crisis of the Egyptian bondage, which was an uphill task that required the mouthpiece of Yahweh. Similarly, Prophet Elijah arose to address the problem of Baalism in the Yahwistic community. Prophet Hosea responded to apostasy in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Surely all the above prophetic calls were very clear and they all responded to the tasks commissioned by Yahweh. However, the prophets who arose to address the challenges in Zimbabwe shifted their attention to personal prosperity by milking the poor to the bone. This is a very disturbing situation. Apart from unethical profiteering, these prophets engage in unethical activities like raping, cheating and murdering

clients seeking faith healing from the messenger of God.

The section of prophets and profits is closely associated with the 'gospel of prosperity'. Ocran (2013: 27) studied the challenges of the prosperity gospel and the church leaders' misuse of money. This author noted the difference between the prosperity gospel and the good news of Jesus as proclaimed in the gospels. Instead of bringing the good news to the poor, the pastors and the church leaders enrich themselves. Even in the Old Testament the prophets were the voice of the voiceless; they were down to earth and always sided with the vulnerable members of society. In other words, this literature points out that the prosperity gospel is bad news for the poor, as it robs them of the last coin in their pockets without any tangible results. Although this observation focused on the prosperity gospel in general, it is important in tracing the extent to which it can also be causing problems in faith-healing circles.

The literature on prophets and profits has shed more light on the topic under investigation. The profits in faith healing are accrued by unjust means, pointing to gullible activities, all in the name of Jehovah, the great healer. The expression 'profits' itself is an indication that the term is associated with business dealings. This probably indicates that in the circles of faith healing, the sick are the customers and the prophets the shopkeepers. Faith healing is not a problem in itself, but the problem arises when people are not healed after paying huge sums of money or any other goods of high monetary value. The Levitical priests are an example of how the sick should be treated. However, this is not always the case with our contemporary faith healers, given the cases of their clients who report to have been cheated and not healed at all.

Egoism in the House of God

The prophets and other religious people who claim to be gifted with the power of healing divert from the core business of interceding for the ill. People who usually seek medical help from faith healers are often desperate, to the extent of thinking that these faith healers can solve all their health problems, despite the cause. Kammampoal (2013: 5) also adds that the increasing number of prophets appearing on the scene is causing havoc instead of bringing more peace. It is surprising that eggs are the same in terms of taste yet prophets are different in purpose. This then means that the prophets are supposed to be uniform in their prophetic activities of being the messengers of Yahweh, but

this is not the case at all in Zimbabwe. It is in this context that this literature indicates the differences among the prophets, which is also becoming an obstacle in nation building. There is no uniformity, even in the concept of faith healing. Kammampoal provides a lot of valuable information on the state of current prophets of whom the majority have 'forgotten' the good news of Jesus as they are busy robbing their followers of their last penny. It can also be inferred that there is no value in gaining popularity by prophesying the future instead of helping people to have bread on the table. This paper is aimed at revolutionary change by the church followers as there is need to take heed of the genuine word of God when it comes to faith healing.

The Emphasis on Giving at the Expense of Receiving

Another section that is worth consideration is the notion of 'giving' in the church. This issue is the locus of the many prophetic ministry churches. Maurice (2001: 326) postulates that even the poor are expected to give to the church leaders. Even faith healing is not free. Most prophets claim to be able to heal every kind of illness. This disturbing issue calls for serious attention to those seeking faith healing. The faith healers are not able to deal with all kinds of diseases. It is hard to believe, hearing that faith healers are parading that they can heal illnesses like HIV and AIDS, cancer and diabetes; yet the medical practitioners are yet to get a cure for these diseases. However, there has been controversy from many clients who paid for faith healing and were never healed. Usually the same clients are accused of little or lack of faith by these faith healers. The work at hand is then tracing the extent to which the Levitical Priestly Code can be of help in the need to check if the illness has been totally healed.

Faith Healing on Social Media

Maurice (2001: 326) also comments on the issue of advertising miracles and faith healing on different social platforms. His argument is based on the definition of miracles as events that violate the laws of nature and that do not happen in a uniform way. As a result, once miraculous activities are advertised the whole issue becomes questionable. This can lead to the notion of the healing miracles being stage managed in order to attract more clients; yet in reality, no healing will take place. Maurice presents an illustration of prophets

being dragged to courts naked after engaging in sexual activities with women, all in the name of faith healing, to overcome infertility or bad luck preventing the women from conceiving. On the same issue, Onyina and Gyamfi (2015: 3) also question the churches that advertise income-generating activities on huge billboards in the guise of religion. The rich congregants and those seeking health solutions will attend in large numbers, giving the false impression that the church is winning souls, yet in reality it will be after profits thereby exploiting the innocent people of God. The work is calling for the verification of the practising prophets of faith healing, since most of them are cheating their clients, all in the name of God the healer.

The Disabled in the Faith Healing Churches

Mutswanga (2017: 6) argues that it is touching and shameful to hear that some churches lure blind people to their churches by promising them instant healing of their sight. The argument raised is that these disabled people are used as sources of income for the benefit of the church leaders. This is a clear indication of gullible behaviour through the misuse of the powers of Yahweh towards disadvantaged members of society. This argument by Mutswanga is vital, as it will provide information on the consequences of promising sight to the blind that will not happen.

Religious Hypocrisy: God's Services Auctioned to the Highest Bidder

Kallin (2007: 16) submits that religious pretence has become the order of the day for most congregants. For a long time, evil people have abused the Bible. They have used it to rubberstamp their inhuman practices in the form of dubious faith-healing practices. Hypocrisy and gullibility are found on the same side of one coin. There is an element of cheating innocent people by swearing falsely in the name of God. There is a need to guard against this kind of behaviour as it is an injustice towards those who seek healing in the name of God. Scholars like Chabalala (2017), the founder of the Young Men Movement, observed that people seeking faith healing are charged in order to access services from the prophets and other church leaders. These days it is very rare to discuss one's problems with the faith healers or even to have the prophet praying or prophesying for a person free of charge. There is no service

inside the walls of the church building that is free of charge today. This brings to memory one time when Jesus drove out the people who were engaging in business transactions in the temple of God. It seems the same phenomenon has resurfaced in the contemporary churches. People are paying huge sums of money for the prophet to intercede for them. It is worth pointing out that although medical facilities also require monetary payments, most of the patients get treated once a diagnosis has been made. Therefore the whole issue on faith healing is not about payment for the services, but the elements associated with gullibility. A closer relook at the Levitical Priestly Code indicates that prayers, healing and anything that comes from God are free.

Faith Healing

Village (2005: 97) argues that the notion of faith healing has been popular throughout the history of humankind. He defines faith healing as a form of medical woe that attempts to cure a wide range of diseases and injuries without the use of medicine or herbs but with divine intervention. The advocates for faith healing usually depend on the scripture from the book of James 5: 4, which reads: 'If anyone among you is sick, call for the elders of the church, let them pray for them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord'. It is also important to note that in biblical times, seeking faith healing was usually the last resort after fruitless efforts consulting physicians. The reference case is of the woman with haemorrhage who was healed by Jesus after trying all medical routes. There is a need to exegete the scripture from James thoroughly to derive the interpretation that tallies with the original life setting of the story, as well as to come up with the contemporary application. There is also a need to discuss faith healing in the context of the real world, using the everyday life experiences of people who completely abandon conventional medication in favour of faith healing.

Statement of the Problem

There is a lot of concrete evidence about gullible behaviour by faith healers. The facts about cheating and death cases and the many other negative effects of faith healing are well-known in Zimbabwe. The problem to be addressed by this study is whether any help could be found in ancient texts of the Levitical Priestly Code that protest against false faith healing. The text in question is the

certificate of healing offered by these Levitical Priests as a rubberstamp that one was totally healed. Although the idea of the Levitical Priests being qualified physicians who practised some form of diagnosis might be disqualified in modern medical terminology, the question is whether there are some ancient values in the text that could be of value today in eradicating gullible behaviour strongly rooted in faith healing. The problem is also partly to understand the context of the text from James 5: 4, which reads 'If anyone is sick, call for the elders of the church, let them pray over him and anoint them with oil in the name of God'. In light of this biblical quotation from James, a further question would be whether the ancient elders can be equally equated to the modern-day elders of the church. This creates further tension if one is to closely examine Exodus 15: 26b, which reads, 'I the Lord your healer'.

Aim and Objectives

The study traced the relevance of the Levitical Priestly Code and other related texts in the formulation of a biblically based approach to faith healing on the basis of which the Zimbabweans may minimise the problems of deceitful reports emanating from seeking solutions to health problems from the contemporary prophets in Zimbabwe. The study aim was achieved by the following objectives;

- To provide an overview on the background study concerning the notion of faith healing in Zimbabwe.
- To present an analysis of the Levitical Priestly code with a view to understanding the *sitz im Leben* of the code.
- To engage in the larger debate of gullible behaviour of faith healing in contemporary Zimbabwe.

Methodology

This work is a product of integrative techniques. The author applied the methodology of critical discourse analysis, coupled with the historical criticism of biblical texts as well as the phenomenological approach. These methods have been selected to be applied simultaneously, since they complement one another when it comes to in-depth critical studies. All the methods traced the historical background and problems associated with faith healing as practised

by contemporary faith healers, with special reference to Zimbabwe. Historical criticism was mainly an interpretive tool for the Levitical Priestly Code. The phenomenological investigation was of much use in collecting data from the believers' perspective since it allows the researcher to suspend any judgement.

By definition, critical discourse analysis entails a comprehensive study of any given phenomenon or subject matter with a view to establish concretely based results. Applied to faith healing as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible, as well as contemporary Zimbabwe, the methodology implies a critical investigation into the notion of faith healing as it is utilised by contemporary prophets. The health sector in Zimbabwe is clear that there are certain types of diseases that require the continuous, lifetime intake of medication; yet faith healers claim that they can treat these kinds of illnesses entirely by means of the word of God without modern medical prescriptions. The critical discourse analysis can provide illustrations to embrace or discard certain kind of activities, practices or behaviour and gullibility is the case in point.

Historical critical study of the selected biblical texts entails an exegetical study of the world behind the text. The historical critical method also hinges on the notion that there is a need to understand the original life setting of the text in order to relate it to the contemporary reader in addressing modern problems. Bray (1992: 221) postulates the importance of the original meaning of the biblical texts if one is to deduce the modern meaning using the academic tools of interpretation. This research traced the original meaning of the examination by the Levitical priests as public testimony that one has been cleansed in order to re-read the texts amidst the gullible behaviour of faith healing in Zimbabwe. Barton (1967: 14) alludes that scripture has one meaning that is given by the author to the intended hearers, but it is also possible for the text to have an afterlife for it to be meaningful to new generations.

Phenomenological Method

Amedeo Giorgi (2007: 64) postulates that Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) were the two pioneers to popularise the phenomenological philosophy during the 20th century. Phenomenological investigations are associated with studying phenomena focusing on the point of view of the believer. This is the method that was utilised in the study for the sole purpose of getting information from those practising faith healing and those who have engaged in faith healing. This kind of investigation was very

important as it allowed the researcher to interact directly with the respondents other than relying on secondary data. The method was vital as it enabled the investigator to set aside preconceived ideas as well as value judgements through utilising the bracketing procedure throughout her study.

In-depth Interviews

The interview sessions were of much help as the researcher managed to get data through face-to-face interactions. Forty-five respondents were interviewed by utilising group and personal, in-depth discussions.

Interpretation of Findings

Proof of Faith Healing

The author interviewed different age groups of people as well as engaging in a literature review to gather in-depth information of those healed through divine intervention, with special reference to the illnesses that need medical help. In this discussion, diagnosis by a medical practitioner was a prerequisite so that the same practitioner would then be able to prove that the disease, once diagnosed, was treated without any medical intervention but through faith healing. During an interview with Chipo (26 years) she pointed out that one of the faith healers whom she approached seeking supernatural healing as she is suffering from HIV and AIDS never asked for her medical records. Chipo narrated that the prophet prayed for her and she was assured that she had been healed through the power of the Holy Spirit. Through the power of the prayer the prophet claimed that she had received new blood in her body system and there was no need for her to continue taking any medication. Chipo paid 1 500.00 RTGS dollars for the services rendered by the prophet. From that moment, Chipo abandoned her conventional medication and after six months Chipo was severely ill. Her relatives took her to a medical doctor where they were informed that she had deferred her conventional medication. This was a clear indication that Chipo had not been healed through faith healing.

Further inquiry into faith healing, according to Mpofu, aged 41years (medical doctor), indicates that the faith healers neither follow up on the clients' health, nor do they keep a record of the treated clients for reference purposes. Mpofu added that instead, those who seek faith healing keep on seeking for another faith healer in the hope that one day they will be healed.

Mr Myambo, a police officer based at Chiwaridzo police station in Bindura, pointed out that faith healers never compiled data or any form of statistics that would be of help in the event that the clients filed a police case associated with cheating, all in the name of faith healing. In terms of record keeping, medical practitioners keep a clear record of all patients and they can be availed for verification in case of investigations. This kind of response from the police officer prompted the investigator to inquire further from the faith healers themselves. It is upon this investigation that the researcher managed to get the voice of the eight faith healers who, on separate occasions, all concurred that all issues to do with faith are controlled by God who is a perfect record keeper. The faith healers also added that there was a need for patience in terms of faith, since God responds at different times and usually in different ways. Four of the respondents who were also faith healers responded that faith healing usually complements medical prescriptions. It is upon this discussion that one of the faith healers stated that, at times, medical doctors might fail to diagnose an illness; yet the patient will be ill. It is in these kinds of situations that prayer is important for God the great healer to diagnose the illness so that the person can get the right medication. 'In most cases my clients will provide me with feedback with the good news that their illness has been diagnosed only after prayer intervention', explained one of the faith healers, who is a pastor at a local church in Aerodrome, Bindura. Conclusively, if these faith healers are doing a genuine job, there is a need for statistical records for all the clients, as this is of paramount importance in case of a follow-up visit. Unfortunately none of the healers agree to do so, as they usually state that there is no need of track records in terms of the activities of God, as they are always perfect.

Cases of Death after Faith Healing

The writer also gathered that there is evidence of death upon termination of medication after 'receiving' faith healing. Twenty-seven cases of death cases were revealed through document analysis, interviews, a literature review, newspaper reports and discussions. Most of the death cases ranged from people diagnosed with cancer, HIV and AIDS, skin disorders, mental problems, paralysis, diabetics, blood pressure, headaches, loss of weight, toothaches, acidic problems, continuous vomiting, stomach pains and injuries.

Among the cases of death there was evidence from Lucia, a young mother aged twenty-three, who pathetically narrated how her three children all

died in infancy due to severe pneumonia. She belonged to one of the apostolic churches that believe in faith healing. It was after a post mortem on the last child that it was discovered that the three children could have survived if there had been some medical intervention. However, it is due to the doctrine of the church that bars members from using conventional medication that she failed to convince her husband that they should seek medical treatment, as she was always accused of lacking faith.

In an open discussion with Mr Mutowo and the other four respondents, it came to light that that his son, together with his wife and their baby, passed on in the same year after their health had deteriorated severely. Mr Mutowo pointed out that he decided to go for faith healing as he had attended one of the healing crusades during which the faith healer proclaimed that he was able to heal any kind of illness by means of prayer. In addition, there were lots of testimonies by people who had been healed by that healer. Unfortunately, upon examination it was then established that the couple had abandoned HIV and AIDS medication in favour of faith healing. This was a sad experience as this family could have survived if they had not dismissed the treatment. Mr Mutowo resumed with the medication, and he was now feeling much better.

Faith Healing in the Scientific World

Ateeq, Jehan and Mehmood (2014: 298) postulate that the scientific evidence presented does not support the premise that faith healing can actually cure physical illnesses. A 1998 publication on 172 cases of death among children treated by faith healing instead of conventional methods revealed that the chances of survival through medication was estimated to be about 90 percent. It is against this background that this work concurs with the American Medical Association which argues that prayer as a therapy can only complement medical treatment. In line with faith healing and science, Elder Hlabiso of ZAOGA FIF in Bindura commented that it was high time that Christians applied reason in matters of faith. He gave an illustration of a boy injured in an accident; it is logical to get medical help, rather than only to kneel down and pray for God to intervene. It is justified then to ask God to sanctify the healing with the help of the medication. It is the duty of the believers to provide medical help to any people who are ill and then pray to God to bless the process. It has been determined that in cases of physical injuries like snake bites, injuries, birth complications and many more, faith healing alone cannot

work. The recent controversial case on Aguma by Prophet W. Magaya is evidence enough that there are some illnesses that require conventional medicine other than relying on faith alone. Prophet Magaya recently claimed to have discovered medication to cure HIV and AIDS[1].

Delayed Treatment Due to Faith Healing

The study also observed that people who relied on faith healing alone will eventually seek medical treatment, usually when the illness is at an advanced stage. In an interview, Mrs Jim said that she used to rely very much on faith healing when her son was ill. The faith healer diagnosed the boy to have bad spirit that needed to be exorcised. The mother paid huge sums of money to the faith healer in the hope that the boy would eventually be healed. Only after

[1] The Prophet who claims to have found a cure for HIV considers leaving Zimbabwe as police raid his offices (News24 30 October). Police in Zimbabwe have reportedly also raided the offices of prominent prophet, Walter Magaya, who made headlines this week after he claimed that he had discovered the cure for HIV and Aids. The Prophetic Healing and Deliverance ministry founder said the cure was a herb called Aguma and would destroy the HIV virus within 14 days. According to New Zimbabwe.com, police on Wednesday raided the preacher's offices in Harare to collect samples of his alleged cure for HIV and Aids. Magaya announced after a church service on Sunday in Harare that the drug was a supplement that could boost immunity and cure HIV, according to the state-run *Herald*. 'I have tested Aguma fully on human beings and in 14 days they have been cured', Magaya was quoted as saying. 'I was offered $56 million by an American company for me to show them the Aguma plant, I turned them down', he added. Magaya said he was working with the government which was 'taking his 'cure' through some laboratory tests to see if his claims were feasible'. But Zimbabwe's health ministry said it *had not approved the herbal drug.*

In a statement on Monday the health ministry said: 'Herbal medicines now require approval by the Medicines Control Authority of Zimbabwe and the product has not yet been submitted for review and assessment'. According to a *Herald* report on Thursday, highly placed sources at the church said the prophet was planning to 'launch outside, as many countries seemed to be offering a good deal and ease of doing business'. He plans to leave the country.

three years of the illness without any signs of healing, the mother sought medical help. The boy was diagnosed with Tuberculosis, which had spread to the bones by then. The correct medication was administered, but it was too late to save the patient and the boy passed on within two weeks after starting with treatment. Even Mr. Smart, a medical practitioner, insisted that diseases associated with cancer need to be treated at a very early stage, since they will reach an incurable stage after being delayed with faith healing.

Commercialisation of the Word of God

The research also showed that the majority of prophets who claim to be faith healers in Zimbabwe charge for their services, especially in monetary value (Group discussions: Bindura). Gone are the days when the 'man of God' used to offer free services with the notion that they are the mouthpiece of Yahweh and whose reward is in heaven. These days there is need to book an appointment, and money is charged to have a 'one-on-one' session with the prophet (Phone interview: anonymous). It is like in the days of the biblical prophet Amos, when justice and religion was auctioned to the highest bidder and it was amidst this crisis that Amos arose to be a prophet of social justice (Siyawamwaya, interview). In contemporary Zimbabwe the church is now a business entity whose key duties of saving the soul has been pushed to the periphery and regarded as a tertiary issue. Every prophet is now a healing prophet, which is not the case if one is to trace the duties of the biblical prophets. Remuneration in prophetic circles is now the order of the day. No money, no healing services from the prophets!! The poor have a difficult time raising the required amount of money needed by the prophet when it comes to faith healing. The church is supposed to help the poor, but the opposite is happening today in Zimbabwe, whereby the poor are robbed of the last cent in their pockets. Jesus and the biblical prophets never received payment when they healed people during their ministries, though some of the prophets like Samuel and other court prophets received tokens of appreciation. What then is the meaning of the good news of Jesus Christ in a nation where faith healers charge exorbitant prices to just pray for the sick? (Mgovo, interview). The bottom line of the story is the issue of prophets who do not possess any faith healing qualities, as evidenced by their clients who are never healed.

An analysis of the findings on the 'selling' of the word of God yields that the clients are promised healing that never becomes a reality since the faith

healers are engaged in a money-making project in the guise of religion. This is serious cheating, as the clients are robbed of most of their valuables, all in the name of faith healing. In most cases, the clients are cheated on the basis of trust and the view that the faith healers can even treat diseases that has no cure from a medical perspective. Someone who is diagnosed with cancer of the blood will be expected to be treated by the prophet in the name of God. At this stage, a prophet's duty is to comfort the patient, providing all the spiritual help, but not claiming that the patient can be treated only through faith healing. The patients are usually troubled more once the prophetic word of healing and deliverance do not come to pass. It will be too late when seekers of faith healing realise that they have been cheated, all in the name of faith healing. There are countless cases reported in courts about prophets who cheated people in healing services. For instance, according to the *Zimbabwean Newsday* dated 25 March 2019, a traditional healer from Gweru was involved in a court case on charges of fraud, after claiming clients that he could make them rich and cure HIV.

Filthy Rich Prophets

Religion has become a profitable business that is currently satisfying most, if not all, the material needs of the prophets. Most of the practising prophets possess excess riches compared to their followers (anonymous cheated client). They (faith healers) live in excellent and well-furnished mansions. In terms of vehicles, most of these prophets have the latest expensive models of cars (Sithole – not his real name – phone interview). One wonders where these prophets get the money from since their core business should be the salvation of their followers. A close analysis reveals that the faith healing prophets are maximising their charges; hence they are getting richer and richer every day, whilst their followers are swimming in the pool of poverty. It is unfair of the prophets to charge those who seek faith healing, since these prophets by definition are just a mouthpiece of God. Every power comes from God, so it is the duty of the prophets to intercede for the people (ZEGU level 2.2 Theology and Religious Studies students: group discussions). These prophets should also encourage people who seek faith healing to consider the prescription of medical doctors as of prime concern (medical doctor, discussion). However due to the fact that there are now a lot of fake prophets in Zimbabwe, the primary purpose of faith healing now revolves around generating income for the prophet. This is unfair in the eyes of God, as this has diverted the core

mission of the prophets as spelt out in the Hebrew Bible. The end result of seeking faith healing is disaster and elements of cheating.

Court Cases for Gullible Prophets

Data were collected citing prophets being dragged naked to courts for immoral activities. Gorski (2000: 28) discusses the notion of religion and spiritual concerns amidst faith healers. In African culture and Zimbabwe in particular, children, particularly male children, are regarded as the prime reason for marriage. It is against this background that some prophets offer intercessory prayers for the women to conceive male children. The case in point is the valuing of the children in marriage. Usually the couple are restless until they have a child. The couple usually seek help from all sections of society, be it medical, traditional and even religious. It has been observed that there are religious leaders and also prophets who are involved in adulterous activities with clients seeking faith healing in order to conceive. A handful of prophets have been dragged to court after the society discovered that one was pregnant not through faith healing, but through sexual relations with the faith healer. These adulterous activities are a pointer that faith healing is abused by prophets who have no intention of helping people but to engage in immoral activities, thereby destroying the families of many people, as well as spreading sexually transmitted infections. It is not good in the eyes of the Lord to exploit desperate people. Mr Mpofu recommended that the government introduce a mechanism to vet the authenticity of faith healing prophets and only those with good intentions should be allowed to operate.

The Gospel of Prosperity: A Phenomenological Investigation

The phenomenological method was utilised in data collection and the researcher observes that in some situations, the gospel of prosperity attracts mainly the poor rather than the rich. However on a sad note, these poor are also to contribute for them to be blessed, yet in reality they struggle to make ends meet. The church should take care of the disadvantaged members of the society. It is sad to hear that the poor are contributing money and material things to pastors and other church leaders. The gospel of prosperity is now contrary to the kingdom of God in which the poor are expected to receive. This then becomes negative prosperity, given that most of the faith healers are con-

cerned with wealth and not the plight of the poor. It appears that two gospels are propagated in the same community, as the rich church leaders acquiring more riches and the poor struggle amidst the gospel of prosperity. Those who seek faith healing are encouraged by the prophets to respect the gospel of prosperity. It then follows that the poor who need prayers from the messengers of God are forced to empty their pockets to pay for the gospel of prosperity and to receive faith healing. In the end, one wonders what type of prophets really exist these days who show no mercy towards the poor. The elements of gullibility cannot be avoided in such circumstances, given that the word of God is known to be free of any charge. It is clear the faith healers are misusing the holy word of God for the advantage of their evil and sinful activities.

Dangers of Faith Healing

Faith healing in the world at large and Zimbabwe in particular is deadly, since the research gathered revealed that most of the victims abandon conventional medicine and doctors' prescriptions and rely on faith healing alone. This is also supported in the *Journal of Social Science and Medicine* in which it is also pointed out that spiritual beliefs hinder the timely administration of medical prescriptions (King, Spek & Thomas 1999). There are also the danger of misdiagnosis. Mrs Mutema (not her real name) argued that she had lost two daughters to faith healing as medical care was exempted on the grounds that the children, on different occasions, were ill because of a bad omen from people who hated the family's riches. She insisted that it was possible that the children could have survived with medical intervention, since later it was discovered that the children were suffering from dehydration. The woman further insisted that faith healing is not bad, as long as one receives it from a genuine faith healer, accompanied by modern medicines. It is a reality that some diseases have no cure yet; hence prayer alone without taking any medication is costing the lives of many people in this era of faith healing because of fake prophets. Chirau commented that prophets and religious leaders who insisted on faith healing seek medical help themselves using back doors, yet they insisted on faith healing for their clients.

Conclusion

Faith healing is very common in Zimbabwean societies, yet it makes clients

prone to gullible behaviour. Spiritual healing has been regarded as one of the major stumbling blocks in the health sector as far as the early diagnosis and treatment of diseases are concerned. Science has also proved that faith alone is not enough when it comes to physical illnesses. Christians should encourage one another to ask for God to bless the treatment administered by the medical practitioner and should desist from relying on faith healers alone, as this can result in disability and deaths that could have been avoided with conventional medicine. The Levitical priests were in a position to prove the treatment of diseases and the contemporary faith healers are not in the position to do so.

Recommendations

The work concurs with the publication by Kabelo Chabalala (2017), the founder of the Young Men Movement, when he analysed the dubious activities of contemporary prophets who are mainly after profits:

- Religious studies scholars are recommended to publish a lot of awareness literature on faith healing and medical treatment. It is only through this kind of knowledge that it would be of help in seeking medical treatment when diseases are still in their early stages.
- Christians should be aware that it does not need any money for one to receive faith healing or even to have a proper relationship with God.
- There is no biblical verse that supports the payment for faith healing.
- People should not be too desperate for miracles.
- Money does not grow at church; we must learn to work for it, hence the gospel of prosperity should be applied with caution.
- Desperation and ignorance of Christians are the beginning of all the evil.

References

Ateeq, M., S. Jehan & R. Mehmood 2014. Faith Healing: Modern Health Care. *Journal of Professional Medicine* 2,2: 295–301.

Barton, J. 1967. Historical Criticism and Literary Interpretation: Is there Any Common Ground? In Orton, D.E. (ed.): *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder.* (Biblical Interpretation Series 8, 3–16.) Leiden: Brill.

Biri, K. & L. Togarasei 2013. '... but the one who prophesies, Builds the Church': Nation Building and Transformation Discourse as True Prophecy: The Case of Zimbabwean Pentecostal Women. In Chitando C., R. Masiiwa, R. Gunda & J. Kügler (eds.): *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe*. Bamberg, University of Bamberg: Bamberg Press.

Bonar, A. 2004. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*. Collace: James Nisbert and Company.

Bray, G. 1992. *Biblical Interpretation Past and Present*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press.

Chabalala, K. 2017. Religious Gullibility Transforms into Galability. *Opinion* 20 December 08:55. Johannesburg.

Cialdini, R.B. 2001. *Influence: Science and Practice.* 4th Edition. Boston: Allyn and Baconhey.

Giorgi, A. 2007. Concerning the Phenomenological Methods of Husserl and Heidegger. *Collection du Cirp* 1: 63–78.

Gorski, T. 2000. Should Religion and Spiritual Concerns be more Influential in Health Care? No. *Journal of Priorities* 12,1: 23–46.

Kallin, F. 2007. *Racial and Religious Hypocrisy in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. ENL 60*. Kristianstad, Kristianstad University: Jane Mattisson.

Kammampoal, B. 2013. The Transformative Vision of Modern Society in Wole Soyinke's *The Trials of Brother Jero*. *International Journal of Education and Research* 1,10: 319–328.

King, M., P. Speck & A. Thomas 1999. The Effect of Spiritual Beliefs on the Outcome from Illness. *Journal of Social and Medicine* 48: 1291–1299. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536(98)00452-3

Maurice, O. 2000. *The Challenges Facing Religion in the Contemporary World: The Kenyan Situation.* Kenya: Catholic University of East Africa, Kisumu Campus.

Mbiti, J.S. 1978. *Prayer and Spirituality in African Religion*. Kenya.

Mutswanga, P. 2017. Effects of Religion and Traditional African Cultures on Gullibility towards People who are Deaf's Marriage Rights. Case of Harare, Zimbabwe. *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion* 27: 1–10.

News24, 30 October 2018. Zim Prophet Walter Magaya Claims he has Found Cure for HIV/Aids – Reports. Available at: https://www.news24.com/news24/Africa/Zimbabwe/zim-prophet-walter-magaya-claims-he-has-found-cure-for-hivaids-reports-20181030 (Accessed on 30 October 2018.)

Ocran, D.S. 2013. *Jesus' Kingdom Message and Shona's New Christianity: A Contextual Approach to the Praxis of the Kingdom of God*. Norway: Spring.

Onyina, O. & D.A. Gyamfi 2016. *Comminique*. Accra: Christian Council of Ghana and the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council.

Oxford English Dictionary (online) 2015. Available at: www.oxfordecurrentenglishdictionary.com (Accessed on 01 August 2018).

Robertson, E. 1942. *The Priestly Code: The Legislation of the Old Testament and Graf-Wellhausen.* A lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library on 11 March. University of Manchester. https://doi.org/10.7227/BJRL.26.2.7

Teunisse, E. 2015. *Running Head: Gullibility: A Review and a Scale Gullibility: A Review of the Literature and Devising a Self-report Measure*. London: Macquarie University.

Village, A. 2005. Dimensions about Miraculous Healing. *Journal of Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 8, 2: 97–102. https://doi.org/10.1080/1367467042000240374

Zimbabwean Newsday dated 25 March 2019.

Interviews

Anonymous	05 June 2018.
Chipo	05 June 2018.
Chirau	05 June 2018.
Hlabiso	10 June 2018.
Lucia	10 June 2018.
Mgovo	13 June 2018.
Mpofu	20 July 2018.
Mpofu	20 July 2018.
Munetsi	20 July 2018.
Mutema	22 July 2018.
Mutowa	22 July 2018.
Myambo	22 July 2018.
Richard	22 July 2018.
Sithole	24 July 2018.
Siyawamwaya	25 July 2018.

Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti level 2:2, Theology and Religious Studies Student 10 June 2018.

Milcah Mudewairi
Old Testament Studies
Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University (ZEGU)
PhD Student at University of Pretoria in Religion and Environment
samude35@gmail.com

Spiritual Gullibility in Search of Health: Tragedies of Scarcity and Sanctity in African Contexts

Peter Maiko Mageto

Abstract

The premise of this article is that health faces tragedies nowadays that are more economic and social rather than medical. Sanctity provides an understanding that all human beings, no matter the condition of their bodies, are created in the image of God. Hence, the value of each life makes us all, equal. In this article, I use the term 'tragedies', because sanctity and scarcity are defined with a collaborative thought as people tell sad stories of their bodies, as they are unable to attend to them economically or socially. In this article, Faith Healing Ethics reminds us that when sanctity and scarcity collaborate, what is at stake is the issue of identity, character and virtue in the search for health. Indeed, the sanctity of ensuring holistic health of our bodies (which this article focuses on), is undermined by the gullibility of economic and social scarcity of our time that the search for health demands. Gullibility then sways human beings who seek health with regard to sanctity of their being and the scarcity of their resources. Yet, scarcity remains a tragedy, as gullible spiritualists exploit the poor whose financial capability is so limited that many succumb to their illness. Faith healing ethics reminds us that we must hold the two tragedies (sanctity and scarcity) together to ensure that gullibility regarding health within an African context does not undermine those seeking faith healing.

Keywords: Gullibility, health, scarcity, sanctity, faith healing

Introduction

African contexts are multifaceted with tremendous opportunities and disasters at the same time. Whether it is such experiences as the Seven Wonders of the

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a12

World like the Victoria Falls of Zimbabwe, or Kenya's Maasai Mara Reserve, or natural disasters like Cyclone Idai or the global COVID-19 pandemic, one thing is clear: to be poor is to be preyed upon by those in power, and often the poor lack choices. However, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to reveal to us that spiritual gullibility is being played upon many innocent people due to two striking tragedies in Africa, namely scarcity and sanctity. The majority of the African people continue to present with myriad challenges, some indeed stemming from colonial and post-colonial tendencies. Mageto (2006) argues,

> Colonial and missionary scrambles made sure that conquering for Christ was perpetuated through the introduction of new languages, science, geography and history by ensuring that everything related to healing, whether it is the use of herbs and roots were demonized and eliminated from the African worldview.

This conquering seems to set a pattern, as the post-colonial and neo-colonial missionary seems to be perpetuating spiritual gullibility largely. Unfortunately, those in search of health, who are the poor majority, face quite dehumanizing and belittling conditions that are enhanced by structural and inhumane systems that have locked them out of any meaningful health services. Those in search of health often feel exhausted, disgusted, and worthless when services are not easily accessible and as spiritual gullibility becomes an easy option. All people created in the image of God must be protected from any infuriating intolerance and indifference. There is a need to listen keenly to both verbal and non-verbal communication as we seek to engage every person to ensure that in their search for health services, they are not preyed upon between structural systems and spiritual gullibility.

Terms Defined

One way to understand every context is to appreciate the use of terms. In this article, different terms are defined to provide the foundation for the argument developed. *Health* is defined by the World Health Organization (1998:1) as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'. However, there have been recent criticisms over this definition regarding its limitations, as it negates the 'spiritual' dimension of well-being. Hence the need to understand health holistically as

derived from God the creator of life/humanity. Therefore, ill-health is anything that hinders humanity from attaining its full potential. Consequently, for the purpose of this article, I argue that health can be understood from the various languages that our people in the continent use to speak of health. For many communities health may mean no injury. In other words, it may be that if disaster occurs, whether natural, it does not touch a person's well-being when understood holistically. Secondly, health may mean a person's capacity to cope with relations, and herein may be relations amongst human beings, or relations with their belongings. In other words, how well a person's relations are nurtured, and how well the person has nurtured those of his or her household, and such belongings as land, animals, etc. Thirdly, health in some communities refers to one's relationship with God or gods, as manifested in the manner in which an individual balances daily living within society, the environment, and all that pertains to his or her well-being. Such a person is understood to being almost in agreement with everything provided he or she does not foresee evidence of negative disturbance. This kind of understanding of health surpasses the confinement of health definitions to the physical state which all in healthcare and in spiritual circles aim to achieve.

While health may encompass different definitions, *tragedy* is understood to mean causing suffering, distress, loss or failure. Keep in mind that in traditional settings, ailment or misfortune was dealt with through the role of medicine-men, soothsayers, traditional healers, and other divinities. Mageto (2006: 20) argues that the aim was 'to subjugate disease and restore the well-being of the individual and community'. However, it is also important to note that Africans also held the belief that there was a power in witchcraft. Kunhiyop (2008: 378) argues that, 'belief in witchcraft thus serves a very practical purpose in explaining events and the causes behind them'. In search of things that compliment health, we think of such belief as the practice of witchcraft, a belief endorsed by some people even in the 21st century. In African societies witchcraft is 'a family logical device' (Bohannan 1964: 232); 'a mysterious power' (Haule 1969: 21); or 'part of the mystery of the human person' (Magesa 1997: 181). Tragedy as a basis of worry in spiritual gullibility is underscored for the reader to see the struggle that individuals face in making decisions while faced with spiritual gullibility. In essence, tragedy in this article is developed to show that those who engage in spiritual gullibility create stress to heighten the suffering of the poor in order to compel them to worry about loss or failure to engage in spiritual gullibility.

Another term utilized in this article is *sanctity. Sanctity,* derived from the Latin term *sanctum*, points to a state of being sacred, goodness or quality of being holy. Sanctity then means that we have to consider it from two angles: *bios* (biological life) or *zoê* (spiritual life). The essence of sanctity is when both *bios* and *zoe* are seamlessly embraced, otherwise the agents of spiritual gullibility will be playing one against the other. In health, sanctity generally almost speaks to what we, as the African people, have come to embrace as Ubuntuism, which is the essence of treating life as sacred, which requires honour, respect, and sacrifice to keep it so. In Christianity, it is treating human life as an image of God. Sanctity via Ubuntuism demands that everything must be done to ensure that the health and well-being of each individual in the family or community is protected from any tragedies of life, no matter his or her status or condition. Yet, the tragedy of sanctity refers to all the moral problems that human beings face pertaining to protecting, defending and respecting human life.

Finally, *scarcity is* understood to mean the pressure that demand in the market places on human beings over the availability of a given commodity or service. In many African communities, this is embraced as shortage or poverty. However, it is critical to keep in mind that in some situations scarcity can be real; it can be engineered; it can be imagined; and it can inculcated. This is a danger when spiritual gullibility is played on the innocent. It can also be pressed down to the weak in society through corruption and other practices that deny justice and mercy as a means of grace and service. In this article, by scarcity I do not mean the given or natural limits, resources or shortages wrought by excessive consumption of those resources.

Contextualizing 'In search of Health'

All people desire to be in good health. In everything they do or imagine, their main pointer is to be and remain in good health. Yet, within the African context as we know it today, with the presence of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the malaria menace, and the HIV and AIDS burden, the people on the continent have not stopped searching for health and well-being in whatever form this may be attained. In contextualizing 'In search of health' we cherish all peoples who join their efforts, even in their scarcity, to support one another in ensuring that the sanctity of life is sustained. Within an African traditional setting, Omonzejele (2008: 120) has set the context 'in search of health' by putting it this way,

> For the traditional African, health is not just about the proper functioning of bodily organs. Good health for the African consists of mental, physical, spiritual and emotional stability (of) oneself, family members, and community. Good health for an African is not a subjective affair). Good health is usually understood in terms of relationship with one's ancestors, and therefore not just confined on how the living are affected, but also the ancestors. It also entails appropriate behavior that is enshrined in the values and norms of society.

In other words, the health of an African is the health of everyone. If a parent is unwell, everyone in that household is unwell. Good health is divinely and humanely linked. It is the familiar web that ensures the sharing of the sanctity of life while thwarting all the tragedies of life. This is why John Mbiti (1969: 108-109), writes,

> Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to (the) whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.

Matters of health are not an exception to this philosophy, as 'the spirit of solidarity and interdependence gave Africans a sense of the family, community, solidarity and participation, for life is celebrated as the most valued of relationships among God's creation' (Mageto 2006: 4). However, spiritual gullibility has made some individuals to negate the Ubuntu values and only seek to enrich themselves. Indeed, Mbiti and Mageto's observations above affirm the fact that for an African, scarcity and sanctity should be noted, but not be allowed to destroy a life or the well-being of any member of society. Therefore, spiritual gullibility would be understood as a misnomer and a foreign entrant to exploit the innocent.

The social fabric that ensures and assures an Africa's 'we are' is made stronger in the words of the World Health Organization in acknowledging the importance of indigenous healthcare by observing 'the total combination of knowledge and practice, whether explicable or not used in diagnosing, preventing or eliminating physically, mental and social diseases' (WHO 2001: 1). In an African setting of COVID-19 and other health-related challenges, healthcare, as intertwined with cultural and religious beliefs, is considered

holistic by nature. Its focus is beyond the physical condition ,as it includes psychological, spiritual and social aspects of individuals, families and communities. The well-being of each individual's well-being is so critical that nothing or no-one can be separated from another. This is why celebrating indigenous knowledge and practices within the realm of health, does not negate the spiritual connotations that are likely to arise from such contexts at all, since indigenous healing may take place; hence, the need to engage the contexts from which potential spiritual gullibility may stem.

Often, we feel healthy, but that does not mean that medical professionals will not declare the presence of disease tomorrow. We can only be guard, because the absence of disease today does not guarantee a clean bill of health tomorrow. It is for this reason that even those who face no disease today, also fall into the spiritual gullibility trap, because the inner conviction is that one must guard one's health against tomorrow's hazardous attacks on our health. For this reason, the presence of symptoms of illness may also provide avenues for spiritual gullibility. However, more challenging is whether individuals have created a circle of relational equilibrium to ensure their well-being is not manipulated, exploited or negated.

From the above discussions, spiritual gullibility is a potential that occurs a lot in healthcare settings. The aim is not providing a permanent solution to the health of the person, but that the conditions of scarcity and scarcity propel the perpetrators and the victim to participate in such undertakings. More often, the aim is material or a financial gain and not necessarily to alleviate the disease. Those engaged in spiritual gullibility have no time to explore various alternatives that professional medics would undertake based on the tragedies of scarcity and scarcity.

Karl Barth (1998: 155) argued that,

> What matters is not something but someone, the real man before God and among his fellows, his individual psycho/physical existence, his movement in time, his freedom, his orientation to God and solidarity with others.

Situating the Tragedy of Sanctity

Advances in medical science and technology are serving the good of life, depending on various factors. These advances have confronted us with new

alternatives of choice between life and death. Such alternatives include, but are not limited to choosing to save a potentially defective foetus; choosing to keep the terminally ill alive through technology; innovating new technologies to offer services to those who can afford it, while the poor remain relegated to more suffering; investing in research on those diseases that the rich suffer from, while little is done to address systemic structural traps that continue to trap the vulnerable in our countries. Take note that these developments, through globalization, have also opened an avenue for other avenues for expressing spiritual gullibility explicitly However, these questions have also opened an avenue for alternative healing through which spiritual gullibility is practised. When people attempt to take that responsibility seriously, they are faced with choices of life or death; hence the question on the sanctity of life.

All people are created in the image of God. Therefore, at every given stage, from birth to natural death, the sanctity of life, whether the unborn children or the elderly, no-one should be exploited marginalized or exploited. All measures must be taken to defend, protect and value the sanctity of life. Life is God's gift to humanity, thus ill-health does not diminish the value of any life. For this reason, those who engage in spiritual gullibility must be stopped! This is why I call sanctity a tragedy, since among us we have those who have engineered spiritual gullibility to exploit others and we are unable to defend protect and value all human life. Sanctity demands that we conceptualize all human beings in any and every state be viewed and treated as God's image. While spiritual gullibility will exploit classism, social status, economic gain, gender, religions and even ethnicity or race, we must remain focused in order not to allow the sanctity of life to be diminished.

There are two biblical texts that indeed help us to see sanctity as a call to defend, protect and respect human life. In Genesis 1: 17, the text establishes that human life is sacred, for to be created in the likeness (image) of God, meaning that each human being bears His image. This is a privileged status reserved only to humankind. Then, we have Psalm 139: 14, which establishes that we are 'fearfully and wonderfully made', some kind of creative work from womb to the regeneration of cells and tissue for the body's healing; we can only testify to the evidence of God's own work. However, the tragedy of sanctity comes at the forefront, because it is the original intent of sanctity to ensure the dignity of human life that has not been established or kept and this should drive our understanding of national healthcare; not capitalist or socialist approaches.

Sanctity surpasses ethnicity, gender, race, age or location. Sanctity surpasses the local congregations where most of the spiritual gullibility activities take place. Sanctity sends an alarm where humanity may be going wrong in treating others with impunity or exploitation. Sanctity demands that all people, men and women, young and old be treated with dignity, regardless of their physical, social or economic status in society.

Sanctity calls us to care for and bear one another. In search of health, sanctity becomes a tragedy, as the sick, the disabled, and the vulnerable are a burden to those who have to care for them. The tragedy of sanctity stares us at the face in times of dependence and need. This tragedy is made even worse when we remove God from the scene of our suffering, forgetting that He is sovereign over the affairs of our lives, including our frailty and infirmity. Those who hide in spirituality and prey upon their adherents with ignorance and misinformation regarding their health, fail to honour Proverbs 31: 8, 'Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute'. Sanctity demands that we value the life of the other as sacred and do whatever it takes to ensure that we become their mouthpieces in highlighting their rights and potential abuse that they face.

Often, many seeking spiritual refuge when they are in search of health. Many are knocking at the doors of sacred practitioners as they seek divine intervention. Unfortunately, it is such people who end up becoming trapped in spiritual gullibility, as often prayers for sale are pronounced, excessive spiritual activities engagements are demanded, or tithes are commanded to unleash spiritual blessings for healing and prosperity. Often, the person in search of health has no clue of the trap that has been laid for him or her. Rather than speaking for the weak; rather than fighting for their rights to get full healthcare services, the spiritual leaders play around with their innocence through spiritual gullibility.

The tragedy of sanctity is well exhibited in how we weaken sanctity through various systems and polices that various countries have embraced by the way we treat the weaker, the enemy, the disabled, the strange, the unborn, the poor, the ex-friend, that racial other, the ethnic other, or whomever else we find difficult to include within the community of the true human. Since countries have spelt out their given constitutions and policies (often skewed towards the rich) that scorn at these groups, the spiritual real realm is full of spiritual gullibility as, to some individuals, this is the only avenue to seek solace for their troubled souls.

With spiritual gullibility in such times as presented by the COVID-19 pandemic or other healthcare crises, sanctity can no longer be only the defending, protecting and respecting the dignity of human life, it should also be about those things that done in the name of God, in the name of spirituality and how they undermine one person's health. Spiritual gullibility is now a game that if one is not careful, it is perpetrated by individual religious leaders, institutions and even governments. Worse, spiritual gullibility is manifested also through individual decisions regarding lifestyles people choose, eating habits, sexual preferences one has, all of these tragedies of sanctity.

At times, some moral arguments are presented to contend the notion that sanctity is just a free ticket to defending, protecting and respecting human life. On the other hand, it is important to note that the tragedy of sanctity is now as a result of personal responsibility for health. For example, an individuals' lifestyle, eating habits, whether or not they smoke, the dangerous pastimes or sports they indulge in, the danger of not indulging in any sports; hence becoming unfit and obese, the sexual preferences one has and the frequency with which one indulges them and with whom and with what care, are all arguably reasonable bases for the tragedy of sanctity.

Spiritual gullibility threatens the sanctity of life, as those who engage in it only aim at what they are likely to get. They are not interested to know where their adherents live. Some live in informal settlements or in very dangerous, overcrowded and polluted areas; yet their religious leaders establish tent ministries or temporary religious shelters for spiritual gullibility activities. These adherents have to travel long distances to attend spiritual activities proposed to them. Unfortunately, some in search of health in the form of prayers and miracles face difficulties to make little income that is required by their spiritual leaders. This is where spiritual gullibility threatens the sanctity of life, because many who practise it are driven by selfish ambitions, selfish desires and self-gain. These undermine the sanctity of life, especially when in search of health.

While in many African countries the health of its people is often determined by how governments structure healthcare services, spiritual healers continue to take centre stage. So, while professional medics exist, indigenous and spiritual healers are on the increase. Almost every Christian church holds healing services. Spiritual gullibility is elaborated by Paul Gifford (1998: 335), observing that the Church's teachings on faith and lately emphasis on prosperity theology, which 'is preached at length in the newer churches, and

these beliefs are ritually enacted with collections and offerings. They are reinforced by countless testimonies'. He continues to argue that 'for church leaders this faith teaching is obviously very functional for it brings revenues that enable them to survive and flourish in a very competitive field'. But the conditions of the poor, as well as low incomes, the worsening climate change and the increasing numbers of the unemployed, and now the effects of COVID-19 pandemics, all increase the desire for faith healings; hence the avenues for spiritual gullibility being exercised. The greatest injustices in respect of health are reflections of unjust social inequalities in accessing healthcare for all, as espoused in the social policy on health.

Situating the Tragedy of Scarcity

We live in a generation that is faced at the same time with tremendous opportunities and risks. We note that COVID-19 has exposed the weaknesses of spiritual gullibility, as many sacred places were forced into lockdowns and religious activities got limited to individuals' respective homes. However, more importantly, we must face scarcity and address its ugly face. Are we in the era where scarcity literally poses a danger to all of those in search of health? Is it possible that doctors, healthcare institutions and spiritual healers literally have an opportunity to practise unethical decisions by choosing patients? Spiritual gullibility is practised among our peoples by the indigenous and spiritual healers as they seek those who can pay for the service. We are pretty sure indeed that where scarcity prevails, those who lack and, or, seek treatment are likely to miss out, while others are likely to be condemned to an early death. Scarcity may also be comparative, where patients have to be prioritized based on their income, ethnicity, religious affiliation or insurance coverage.

For some, scarcity of resources for healthcare is a permanent and inescapable condition. At times, spiritual gullibility surfaces whenever patients are unable to raise funds for healthcare. In most cases, the family and communities pull together to raise medical funds, or at most, seek indigenous and faith healings, even though the latter is taken as the last resort. Indeed, scarcity is a curse for some, and only a push to spiritual gullibility. At times, healthcare conditions push the victims to consider spiritual gullibility as an option for eliminating suffering that is effected by scarcity.

Many people faced with the tragedy of scarcity have been haunted by most health systems that have increased costs, making the poor more vulne-

rable. Most government ministries or departments of health in African countries lack the necessary equipment or personnel to offer quality services. Therefore this sends the poor to spiritual alternatives. Many hospitals continue to struggle with structural systems and diminishing equipment; medical professionals are more often on strike or in private practice, which are not accessible to the poor. This kind of scarcity allows spiritual gullibility to prey on many innocent people.

Often, whether in urban or rural areas, those whose claim of well-being is attributed to some kind of indigenous or spiritual healing are used as mouthpieces to market their leaders. One will find their denominations or ministries are swelling with adherents from one week or month to another. Hence, many people driven to the tragedy of scarcity tend to keep moving from one practitioner to another, making spiritual gullibility a continuum for the perpetrator and the victims.

Does the notion or suggestion that the best we can do is to increase supply and make scarcity a nil to those in search of health? Does supply increase or reduce spiritual gullibility? During the HIV and AIDS crisis, and now the COVID-19 global pandemic, we have heard the calls to produce more personal protective equipment, or the rush for vaccine development. What else can we manufacture? How many more calls for blood donations can we make? Should we invest in training more medical professionals, and does this in any way reduce the cost of medical care in any way? Not necessarily. In fact, medical care is costly, and is becoming costlier still; hence making it almost an illusion to all those in search of health. In essence then, even if we increase the supply of all that counts to health, it does not eliminate all factors that enhance scarcity. Consequently, resource provision in circumstances of scarcity in healthcare creates hard choices for individuals, families, and societies; a platform for spiritual gullibility to take place.

Attending to the Tragedies of Sanctity and Scarcity

Spiritual gullibility is a crisis that confronts medicine with such tragic choices in different ways as people make uninformed decisions. In decision making, there are two strategies for denying the conjoined tragedies of sanctity and scarcity: One is to deny sanctity; the other is to deny scarcity. Spiritual gullibility argues that sanctity is the basis of operations and scarcity is what it will provide. However, spiritual gullibility chooses the patients to be attended

to with clear plans to finance them, whether in the form of money or in kind. Spiritual gullibility demands healing tithes, offerings or even animals or food. The victim is compelled to value his or her life from understanding that he or she is responsible for his/her well-being. Hence life is valued on the basis of one's contribution. While society seems to push the idea that suffering from ill-health can only be treated by health financing, even spiritual gullibility seems to offer the same fate. This is why it is important to rethink ways and means to ensure that all the needy members of our society are supported in their search for health. As Verhey (1998: 976) argues,

> to provide ordinary healthcare to the wealthy because they can pay or to the nice because we like them or to the promising because of their social utility while we withhold it from the poor, the outcast, and the handicapped is not only tragic but unjust.

I wish to add that to celebrate the conspiracy of silence in many of our African contexts while spiritual gullibility undermines the poor and exploits the innocent is not only a denial to love one another as created in the image of God, but it is a perpetuation of injustice in the name of spirituality. The imbalance this creates in society must be denounced in the strongest terms possible, as new strategies are laid to uplift the poor and the vulnerable among God's people.

During COVID-19, we now note the true reality where in some contexts scarcity has come to the fore. Since sanctity demands that each patient is created in the image of God, we have come to see what Verhey (1998: 975) proposes, namely that 'we must limit what we would for at least some patients' to becoming a reality as pressure amounts on who should access ICUs or HDUs during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is even made worse, as some areas on the African continent do not have even such facilities. No wonder spiritual gullibility reigns in such circumstances, as people tend to incline towards that which they can access easily, and for many, spirituality is an easy avenue to address ill-health.

Spiritual gullibility has played out that it is a divine activity; yet it is taking advantage of the poor and innocent, because government ministries have not allocated enough resources to ensure the enhancement of the well-being of all people. There are no free medicine or free medical camps. But spiritual gullibility offers morning glory services for healing: midweek health

restoration services; deliverance special prayers; weekend-long exhortation healing journeys; or mountain-top healing adventures. Then the argument advanced here is correct, namely that,

> if it is sanctity which makes allocation decisions necessary, it is scarcity which makes them tragic. For when the goods or services to be allocated are good or services on which life or health may depend and when the unbounded love for God for each one requires that we regard each life as equal value, then the necessary allocation decision ins necessarily tragic (Verhey 1998: 975).

Spiritual gullibility will remain with us for many years to come, because, in search of health, we have chosen to offer our souls to the highest bidder! If scarcity of resources cannot allow one to stop at the pharmacy to get some basic medicines, spiritual gullibility will pull one towards prayers for sale as payments for sale (as payments can be made later or in kind). We must stop and resist the use of classism in search of health. We must fight to ensure that all people on the continent have access to good healthcare services and that the indigenous and indigenous and spiritual healing practices are not hijacked by spiritual gullibility. We must fight all the barriers that may make access to health services impossible, whether those barriers are corruption, nepotism, economics, geographical, political affiliation, gender, creed or social status.

Spiritual gullibility is extended each day, because the practitioners argue that their services are in high demand. In other words, both tragedies of sanctity and scarcity are epitomes of spirituality, because the practitioners are governed by the desire for power and profit. For sure, the imbalance between sanctity and scarcity is made worse when one keeps in mind that those who have the resources will access the services (even though the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us otherwise), or those who have medical insurance can easily access services, while poorer people are increasingly faced with weakness and poverty.

We must understand that the conjoined twins of sanctity and scarcity tragedies have presented a humanitarian crisis in healthcare, since it has created an identity crisis. Consequently, healthcare must be seen beyond finances. Healthcare must remain centred on caring, consequently, those in authority whether in government, church or non-governmental organizations must embrace the values of integrity and character that accompany their activities

and avoid the commodification of healthcare services. The services must not be based on who can afford to pay. Otherwise the search for health will remain the domain of the rich, the powerful and the spiritually gullible, while the poor watch, lament and pray. Unfortunately, this has become a continuum in many contexts in various African countries.

Piety must call the health practitioners and church leaders, and those with reason must engage in a discourse aimed at removing in search of health for the marketplace. We should not allow human lives to be on sale for the highest bidder in search of health. It is evil to watch and see spiritual gullibility being played among those who cannot afford to pay for health services. Efforts must be made to secure the sanctity of such lives. The Church must stand up and be counted on the side of life and not in solidarity with forces that enhance evil and death in the form of spiritual gullibility. The Church must seek to proclaim the message of freedom in Luke 4: 18, the poor, the sick, the oppressed and the blind. Whether these people are in the church already or in the society, Jesus came for such people!

In order for us to overcome spiritual gullibility, there has to be intentional public policy that moves healthcare away from profit. As long as healthcare is considered a revenue-generating service, human beings will continue to suffer. The church-related and -run hospitals are now mostly accessible by the rich only, the poor cannot access them. Most of these hospitals - both government and church-related – lack medicines, but the expensive and private, individually owned hospitals have their expensive pharmacies stocked with all kinds of medicines. This imbalance must be addressed urgently. The profit motif in healthcare must be brought to the fore as a burden for the majority poor and continues to undermine the sanctity of life, as the poor are pushed to the periphery of spiritual gullibility.

The Church must embrace the spirit of caring for one another.

> No matter the consequences, African peoples in their cultures continue to resist extreme individualism, which degrades and fragments African values of well-being and undermines the essence of a humane setting (Mageto 2006: 5).

It is important for the Church to be aware that governments are discriminating against its own people, and the open space is an avenue for spiritual gullibility which undermines its members.

Spiritual gullibility seems to suggest that scarcity is a necessity, as the sick must be attended to. Scarcity also demands that a Godly image must be projected by all means necessary. We must be reminded by John Wesley's demand, 'Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can', which is a true sign of loving God and loving one another.

Every life is necessary. Every life must be treated with the dignity it deserves, whether we place a financial value it or not. Going back to our Ubuntu values, spiritual gullibility is a capitalistic practice that must not be intertwined in the continent of Africa. We must cherish relationships of trust and truthfulness. This can only be achieved if we embrace Oden's (2007: 29) call that 'it remains the task of a generation of future scholars, many of them from Africa, to study the flow of ideas from Africa to Europe and to better describe their impact'.

If alternative healthcare services are to be provided in the community, then the church must be at the forefront to condemn unjustified exploitative, expensive and unreachable healthcare services governments have put in place. At the same, the Church must condemn those among them and outside the church who utilize spiritual gullibility to offer prayers for sale as the sick seek faith-healing services. In essence then, the Church must look for ways to embrace less health-costly ways to help many others access health services and, at the same time, sensitize communities to attend to the threats to human life emanating from the kinds of lifestyles we choose in this generation.

Conclusion

It is unfortunate that from East to West, from the North to the South of the continent of Africa, many in the populace are in search of health. In their search, they are faced with the two tragedies, scarcity and sanctity, which will remain with us forever. Even with the latest health technological advances, the majority poor who are unable to access healthcare services cannot remain vulnerable and be preyed upon by those who engage in spiritual gullibility.

We must overcome spiritual gullibility in healthcare. This can only become possible through concerted efforts, especially among faith-based communities. Commodifying healthcare services provides opportunities to evildoers driven by spiritual gullibility to continue to prey upon the vulnerable. The body of Christ, the Church, must be at the forefront to denounce their own

who are now driven by individual capitalistic tendencies to exploit the sick poor. God demands that since human beings are created in the image of God, we must embrace strategies to coalesce resources and human efforts to ensure the well-being of all people. And as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us, no matter the kind of resources or wealth accessible to you, integrity demands that we must value human life more than anything else. Integrity demands that we must embrace ways and means to balance the conjoined tragedies of sanctity and scarcity for the well-being of the young and the old. We must change the spiritual paradigms that perpetuate and exploit the sick poor in the name of spiritual healing through manipulative spiritual gullibility as prayers for sale are on the increase and more people become vulnerable each month or year. So, let us act with integrity!

References

Barth, K. 1998. The Will to be Healthy. In Lammers, S.E. & A. Verhey (eds.): *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Bohannan, P. 1964. *Africa and Africans.* Garden City, NY: The Natural History Press.

Gifford, P. 1998. *African Christianity: Its Public Role.* Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press.

Haule, C. 1969. *Bantu 'Witchcraft' and Christian Morality: The Encounter of Bantu Uchawi wth Christian Morality – An Anthropological and Theological Study*. Schonek-Beckenried: Nouvelle Revue de Science Missionnaire.

Kunhiyop, S.W. 2008. *African Christian Ethics*. Nairobi, Kenya: Hippobooks.

Magesa, L. 1997. *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

Mageto, P. 2006. *Victim Theology: A Critical Look at the Church's Response to AIDS.* Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse.

Mbiti, S.J. 1969. *African Religions and Philosophy.* London: Heinemann.

Oden, T.C. 2007. *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books.

Omonzejele, F. Peter 2008. African Concepts of Health, Disease, and Treat-

ment: An Ethical Inquiry. *EXPLORE: The Journal of Science and Healing* 4,2: 120 – 126. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.explore.2007.12.001

Verhey, A. 2012. Sanctity and Scarcity: The Making of Tragedy. In Lammers S.E. & A. Verhey (eds.): *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

World Health Organisation 1998. *Health Promotion Glossary.* Geneva: World Health Organisation.

Professor Peter Maiko Mageto
Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Africa University
magetop@africau.edu

Religious Gullibility, Health and Wellbeing among Epilepsy Patients in Zimbabwe

Vincent Mabvurira
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0960-230X

Jabulani Calvin Makhubele
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0192-573X

Abstract

With the advent of the new millennium, Zimbabwe has witnessed a mushrooming and a boost in the 'church industry'. Indications are that congregants blindly and sheepishly follow their leaders, despite questionable holiness and relationships with the Most-High God. Religious gullibility seems to have reached unprecedented levels amidst the economic crises and poor state service delivery in Zimbabwe. Religion and spirituality are believed to be sources of strengths and resilience during tough times in human life. They help people to cope with life's adversities. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to explore the health and wellbeing of epileptic members of Christian churches in Zimbabwe. The study adopted an ethnographic design in which data were collected over a period of one year through participant observations and unstructured interviews. Purposive and convenience sampling were used to identify churches and participants of the study. The study found that the participants had high commitment to their churches and they expected miraculous healing of their epileptic condition. They all believed that leaders of their churches were sent by God. Various healing methods such as anointing oil/water, tangible material and laying on of hands were used. Generally, their church membership and spirituality provided them with a sense of meaning in their lives.

Keywords: spiritual wellbeing, Pentecostal/ism, resilience, spiritual healing, religious gullibility, epilepsy

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a13

Introduction

Recent days have seen a boost in the emergency and proliferation of Pentecostal and apostolic churches in Zimbabwe. Religious gullibility has taken Zimbabwe by storm. This observation is corroborated by Mandizadza and Chidarikire (2016: 148,) who notes that,

> Generally, Zimbabwe is a predominantly Christian country and anecdotally it is apparent that since 2000 there has been an upsurge in Pentecostal activities centred on young charismatic pastors and prophets from spirit-type, African initiated churches.

The new phenomenon of religious outburst, which includes Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, is often referred to as the new face of Africa. Unlike the traditional orthodox churches, the new breed of churches is characterised by prophecy, spiritual healing, miracle working and the gospel of prosperity. Bible stories are selectively used to buttress the message of prosperity.

These modern churches place emphasis on success, emphasising material prosperity. The churches develop confidence and self-pride among worshippers. Despite the controversy around them and their business, many Zimbabweans have flocked to them for various reasons. One explanation might be that Africans are naturally very religious compared to other races (Mbiti 1979). For them religion is life and life is religion. Another explanation may be the inaccessibility of allopathic medicine due to the economic stagnation haunting the country (Mabvurira 2016). Many Zimbabweans with health and related social problems may not be able to afford social services; hence they turn to spiritual healing (Mabvurira, Makhubele & Shirindi 2015). Africans are a cure-seeking people and consequently illness attracts a spiritual intervention among most of them. Spiritual healing has assumed a centre stage in the lives of many Zimbabweans. Some of the practices and healing methods used in these churches have remained strange and it remains unclear how members and patrons of such churches are deceived to believe anything alleged to be said by the spirit (Mabvurira *et al.* 2015).

Spiritual healing is also common among members of Apostolic and Zionist churches in Zimbabwe. Mabvurira *et al.* (2015) studied healing practices at the Johanne Masowee Chishanu Church and found the use of tangible

objects such as stones, clay pots, tree leaves and cloths. Of late, the use of materials such as anointing oil and wrist bands has become popular in Pentecostal churches. In extreme cases, the prophets use objects or materials that were never used in the Holy Bible which they claim to follow. These prophets are required by law to register with the Traditional Medical Practitioners Council as provided by the Traditional Medical Practitioners Act (Chapter 27: 14), but in most circumstances they have been defiant, as they associate the council with African traditional religion.

Spiritual healing is subjective, dogmatic speculation, based on faith rather than empirical evidence (Newsdze Zimbabwe 12 August 2017). Most people afflicted by diseases classified by medical science as beyond cure turn to God for healing. Mapamhidze (2013) confirms unbelievable incidences of healing at some prayer meetings. People report healing of diseases such as HIV and AIDS, cancer, and healing of natural impairments as well success in their businesses. Prophets seem to offer some certitude in the everyday lives of people haunted by incurable diseases (Chitando 2009).

This qualitative study sought to examine the impact of religious gullibility in Zimbabwe on the health and wellbeing of sufferers of epilepsy. Its specific objectives were to assess the level of religious commitment among epileptic patients, examine factors promoting gullibility among congregants and evaluate the impact of religious gullibility on the health and wellbeing of epileptic patients.

The study was guided by the transpersonal theory. The word 'transpersonal' refers to transcending the limits of the ego (Cheon 2010). In the words of Robbins *et al*. (2006: 386), transpersonal theories concern our highest aspirations and potentials and our need for love, meaning, creativity and communion with other people. The focus on the experiential and cognitive dimensions of spirituality is one of the main factors that distinguish transpersonal theory from other scientific and humanistic disciplines. Since its inception, transpersonal theory has given spirituality a central place in the understanding of human nature.

Background Information on Epilepsy

Epilepsy is triggered by abnormal electrical activity in the brain, resulting in an involuntary change in body movement, function, sensation, awareness and behaviour (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention n.d.). The condition is

characterised by repeated seizures (WHO 2004). Epilepsy affects more than 50 million people globally and more than 10 million people in Africa (WHO 2004). It is a highly stigmatised disease associated with witchcraft, revenge from aggrieved spirits and visitation by the devil (Adamolekun & Mundanda 1997). Consequently, the management of epilepsy is assumed to be the domain of spiritual healers. Epileptic patients face numerous challenges, which range from expulsion from school, job loss, stigmatisation and discrimination in society. People with epilepsy in Zimbabwe have numerous challenges, including poor understanding of the disease, impaired access to treatment, and a predisposition to burns and injuries. In a study by Mugumbate and Nyanguru (2013: 30), epileptic patients reported numerous challenges, such as psycho-social (75%), lifestyle (91%), economic (64%), physical (45%) and health (21%) challenges.

Apart from being a medical condition, epilepsy also has sociological, economic and cultural dimensions. According to the WHO (2004), secondary causes of symptomatic epilepsy in Africa are related to the cerebral complications of endemic, parasitic and infectious diseases, head trauma and poor perinatal care for both the mother and the child. With modern medicine, epilepsy can be controlled, but not cured. This is probably the major reason people seek spiritual healing where they are promised total cure. Epilepsy in Zimbabwe has attracted several derogatory names: *zvipusha* (a condition that is infectious), *pfari* (jerking) and *kugwinha* (fitting).

People with chronic conditions in Zimbabwe, including epilepsy, have not been spared religious gullibility. Gullibility is a situation where powerful people use some guile to make people believe seamlessly impossible issues/facts (Mutswanga 2017). According to Thomas Reid (cited in Mutswanga 2017), humans have a natural propensity to be trusting, even things they have not seen or touched, and they end up being victims of gullibility. The Bible as a moral teaching tool contains many stories in which the trust of unsuspecting individuals is violated by those who use deception, dishonesty and manipulation (Mutswanga 2017).

Health, Religious and Spiritual Wellbeing

The spiritual needs of people with chronic conditions are well researched in a number of countries (Moadel *et al.* 1999; Hampton *et al.* 2007; Yong *et al.* 2008; Bussing, Balzat & Heusser 2010). Many patients who are confronted

with chronic conditions rely on spirituality and religion to cope (Bussing & Koenig 2010). Spirituality and religion are beneficial in that these help to maintain self-esteem, providing a sense of meaning and giving emotional comfort. They are also gaining attention in healthcare because they play a vital role in the lives of patients who are recovering from life-threatening illnesses and those who are in palliative or end-of-life care (Bernard *et al.* 2014).

A number of scholars argue that participation in religious activities is strongly associated with a reduction in mortality (Seyed, Nooshin & Hassan 2016; Moadel *et al.* 2010; Cascio 2012). According to UNICEF (2003), churches have strengths; they have credibility, and they are grounded in communities. This offers them opportunities to make a real difference in combating chronic conditions such as HIV and AIDS. A number of people with chronic conditions receive encouragement from their pastoral staff.

According to Vance *et al.* (2011), spirituality and religion can serve as a buffer to the stress of life by allowing people to interpret their life experiences in the context of their beliefs, which provide purpose and meaning in life. Generally, chronic disease literature shows the benefits of spirituality and religion in buffering one from stressors of such diseases. In a study by Lorenz *et al.* (2005) among HIV-infected Americans, 80% of the participants reported that their religion and spirituality were important in their lives. Often, the spirituality of people can increase after being diagnosed with a life-threatening condition (Vance *et al.* 2011).

The comfort of spirituality reduces the distress of life-threatening illnesses. The study by Peterson, Johnson and Tenzek (2010) among HIV-positive women in the USA, shows that respondents believed God had a purpose for their lives and that connecting spiritually to God as a higher power, provided them with a way to make sense of and make changes to their lives.

Resilience and Religious Coping

There is a growing interest in recognising spirituality as a source of strength and resilience. In a study of African American women in Kansas in the USA, Banerjee and Pyles (2004) found that the women reported that their spirituality helped them to manage their difficult situations by reassuring them that a higher power is looking after them. The women also argued that spirituality helped to lessen the impact of problems on them, to find inner peace, and to build self-esteem. It also helps to nurture hope, despite the challenges of life.

Resilience may result in an individual bouncing back to a previously normal functioning, or not showing any negative effect. According to Martin and Martin (2002), spirituality can give people the strength to go where there is a threat and it also provides courage and encouragement amidst suffering and death. Religion can provide a world-view that helps give purpose and meaning to suffering.

Crawford, Brown and Bonham (2006) note that spirituality facilitates resilience in four major ways: by helping build attachment relationships; by opening access to social support; by guiding conduct and moral values; and by offering opportunities for personal growth and development. Apart from improving resilience, spirituality has also been found to improve self-confidence and life purpose among youths in stressful situations. Writing in the context of America, Corrigan, McCorkle, Schell and Kidder (2003) argue that research has it that those members of the general population who define themselves as religious and spiritual have less psychological distress, more life satisfaction and greater achievements of life goals.

Several studies have shown that many people cope with traumatic or stressor events on the basis of their religious beliefs. Religious frameworks and practices may have an important influence on how people interpret and cope with traumatic events. People are better able to get through difficult times if they have faith and hope. No one experiences God in the same way. Some people express their faith emotionally, while others do so quietly and contemplatively.

Religion and spirituality are some of the significant means of coping with crises and problems in everyday life. According to Pargament (1997), religious coping involves drawing on religious beliefs and practices to understand and deal with life stressors. Religious coping can be divided into two categories: positive and negative strategies. Rosmarin, Pargament, Krumrei and Flannelly (2009) note that positive religious coping includes benevolent religious approaches, active religious surrender, seeking spiritual support and spiritual connection, while negative strategies include a reappraisal of God's power, passive religious deferral, and interpersonal religious discontentment. They further indicate that positive religious coping is beneficial to individuals undergoing stressful life events. According to Openshaw and Harr (2005), many clients draw support from their faith group, which is useful in that it assists with healing and rebuilding hope. People engulfed by social problems such as ill-health, death and other existential

challenges have been found to seek refuge in spirituality.

People reflect on their spirituality after being diagnosed with a chronic illness by incorporating their understanding of God as part of their coping repertoire (Tarakeshwar, Khann & Sikkema 2006). Higher levels of spirituality have been associated with less pain and increased energy (Ramer, Johnson, Chan & Barret 2006). According to Parsons, Cruise, Davenport and Jones (2006), the negative aspects of spirituality such as spiritual struggle and anger at God have been associated with poor medical compliance. Types of spiritual beliefs and practices determine whether or not spirituality will be a protective or risk factor in the lives of people with chronic illnesses. Cicirelli (2002) concludes that religiousness is negatively associated with fear of death. Healthcare professionals should be able to accommodate spiritual issues in the helping process and where they cannot handle such issues, they can refer clients for clinical and pastoral counselling.

It also assists in alleviating the adverse effects of stress caused by life's challenges. Spiritual concerns such as hope, meaning, inner strength and doubt are relevant in the lives of many clients (Gotterer 2001).

Chronic conditions present exceptional existential challenges to people when they are confronted with issues of hope, death, grief, meaning/purpose, and loss. People with HIV and AIDS incorporate spirituality as a way to cope, to help reframe their lives, and to bring a sense of meaning and purpose to their lives in the face of an often devastating situation. According to Harrington (2010), four claims have been confirmed in relation to religion and health. These are:

(1) church attendance increases longevity and resistance to disease;
(2) Spiritual practices (like meditation) reduce stress and enhance health;
(3) Faith in God can facilitate recovery from serious illness; and
(4) Prayer for another can change the outcome of disease.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach. Engel and Schutt (2009) note that data that are treated as qualitative are mostly written or spoken words or observation that do not have a direct numerical interpretation. According to Padgett (2008), qualitative design is the best fit when explaining a topic that

little is known about, especially from an insider's perspective and where an in-depth understanding is sought. Qualitative research is also suitable when one pursues a topic of sensitivity and emotional depth (Padgett 2008). According to Padgett (2008), in qualitative research, the focus is on flexibility and depth, rather than on mathematical probabilities and external validity.

The current study targeted people living with epilepsy who thronged Pentecostal churches in the Harare Metropolitan Province. The sample for the study comprised nine participants (eight females and one male) drawn from three churches. Purposive sampling was used to select churches that were visited while convenience sampling was used to select participants. Data were collected through non formal unstructured interviews and participant observations. The data were gathered between August 2017 and July 2018. Data were analysed using thematic content analysis.

Presentation and Discussion of Results

Description of Participants

Data were collected from nine sufferers of epilepsy. Of these, eight were females while one was male. The participants ranged in age from 15 to 42 years. The average number of years with epilepsy was 19 years. All the participants were not formally employed. Of the eight women, three were young girls below the age of 18 years; four were single mothers; while one was married. The only male participant was single and 33 years old. Five of the participants were under allopathic medication, while four relied solely on spiritual healing. All the churches had Sunday as their main day of worship, though they held midweek services.

Motivation for Church Membership

The participants were committed members of their respective churches. They reported rarely missing church activities. They reported various reasons as motives for church membership. One respondent reported that she was a member of her church because she was born a Christian and her family attended the same church. Of interest was a participant who reported that her family joined the church because of her illness. Probed further, she reported that:

> We heard testimonies from this church through a television channel and my family was convinced that my condition will be cured …

On the same note, another participant reported,

> … I stay with my auntie and she told me about the miracles that occur in this church so we were convinced to come.

The nine participants all reported that they continued going to their churches because of healing powers. Three participants confirmed that since they had joined their respective churches they were totally healed. They confirmed this verbatim as follows,

> I was healed in this church so I love it, I can't leave it.

> My prophet told me that if I backslide the devil will take advantage and the illness will resurface.

> I come here because that's where I received my miracle …

The male participant reiterated that:

> The God of this church is so great, I would fit, become unconscious and urinate, it was so embarrassing especially in the public but since I started using holy water from this church everything is now okay.

Three participants reported getting material support from the churches. The material support came in the form of food items, clothes, blankets and money. As seen in this study, people join Pentecostal churches for various reasons, chief among them the expectation of good things like healing. In these modern-day charismatic churches, people are promised total healing. Whether they actually receive the healing or not is debatable. Results of the study have shown that both those who have been healed and those expected to be healed remain loyal to their churches. A gospel of hope, healing and wealth is preached, such that members continue in expectation. In some instances, other congregants are alleged to connive with pastors to pretend to be sick and to have been healed. This makes fellow congregants believe that healing takes place in the church

when actually there is none. In modern-day Zimbabwe, it is common for pastors to advertise their healing services on television and radio stations, internet platforms and through pastors. This may draw people in need of help to their churches. Relatives play a critical role in influencing the gullibility of Christians in Zimbabwe. As shown by this study it is possible for an entire family to join a particular church in expectation of a member's healing.

Healing Methods

Some of the modern-day Pentecostal churches use astonishing healing methods. Cases of congregants asked to drink jik detergent have been reported in Zambia (Ndlovu 2019). An extreme case in Zimbabwe was when congregants were reported to have been asked to drink raw sewage as a way of demonstrating the power in their prophet by not falling sick (Charamba 2016). The participants reported using various healing methods:

Anointing Oil and Water

All the participants reported using either anointing oil and/or anointing water. This is bottled anointing oil/water sold to congregants. It is usually packaged in small bottles smaller than 100 ml. Quite often the church founders renew the anointing oil/water to more powerful levels. The researchers observed differences in bottle shape and labels on the containers as the anointing oil/water was improved. Whether it is a mere change of container remains unknown to ordinary people. Participants were very convinced that new oil/water was always more powerful than the previous one. One participant had to say,

> Apostle told us that the new oil is so powerful. He spent many days in the prayer mountain praying for it. I tell you with it my condition will disappear …

The oil or water was used in various forms. The pastors would spray it on congregants for healing purposes or driving away demons. The congregants would also buy it and use it in their homes for protective reasons. One participant reported using it daily in the morning as a face lotion. She reported that it has the power to deter demons and other evil things.

The use of anointing oil or water has become popular in Zimbabwe. Anointing oil is used by prominent prophets like Walter Magaya of Zimbabwe, while anointing water is used by renowned church leaders like T.B Joshua of Nigeria (Mabvurira 2016). Emerging prophets in Zimbabwe have adopted the use of anointing oil/water. As seen by the results of this study, congregants are very confident that they may be healed by the oil/water. There are even testimonies of healing from the oil and/or water. However, spiritual healing is difficult to prove, as there are allegations of people who fake illness and healing. As supported by Newsdze Zimbabwe (2017), it is dogmatic and based on speculation rather than on empirical evidence.

Healing and Prophesy Sessions

All three the churches from which participants were drawn conducted healing sessions. These sessions usually occurred at the end of Sunday services or whenever the prophet claimed to have been instructed by the Spirit to do so. During such sessions, the prophet would either call sick people to come for healing or would just pick a person from the crowd and administer healing. In some cases, the prophet would ask other ordained church leaders to help with praying for the sick. The researchers observed that healing sessions rarely occurred in the absence of the church founder. Healing and prophecy were observed to be centred around particular individuals. A 42-year-old participant reported that at her church, only the prophet and his wife were authorized to conduct healing or prophesy. Asked why this was the situation she reported,

> The prophet told us that a student cannot be above his teacher, if my student feels he is now a teacher, he is free to start his own ministry.

Healing was also administered through the laying of hands by the prophet or other senior church members. All the participants reported that they preferred being prayed for by the prophet rather than by any other person. Having personal contact with the prophet therefore meant a lot for the congregants. This was confirmed by one participant who said,

> … I have been in this church for the past three years and the man of God has never laid his hand on me nor has he prophesied about me. I

> long to have him lay his hands on me but the opportunity has not arisen. I am confident that one day he will pick me from the crowd ….

It was also corroborated by another participant who said,

> Our church is so large that talking to Papa is a blessing in itself. The day he picks you from the crowd you will know that the floodgates of heaven have opened for you. We all desire such an opportunity.

It was also common for church leaders and elders to pray for various problems that haunted congregants. These problems included poverty, unemployment, homelessness and sickness. The praying person would make strong proclamations and congregants would be heard shouting 'Amen', 'Hallelujah', 'Prophesy Papa', and many other words. After the prayer, people would usually clap hands, thanking God for meeting them at their point of need. At one church service attended by the researchers, the prophet ordered people to shout the following words after his prayer,

> I am rich, I am not poor, I am healed, I am not sick, I am a landlord, I am not a tenant, I drive, I am not a pedestrian ….

The congregants would joyously repeat these words, ululating, clapping hands and whistling. There was joy whenever a preacher or someone praying mentioned something to do with prosperity. This seemed to energize the congregants and instil positive thinking among them.

Africans are generally a cure-seeking people (Mabvurira 2016). For them, diseases do not just occur without a spiritual causation. This is one reason why they seek the help of a spiritual body whenever illness confronts them. The nine epileptic patients in this study were all found to value healing and prophecy. In a similar observation, Chitando (2009) argues that prophets seem to offer some certitude in the lives of people affected by incurable diseases. Epilepsy in Zimbabwe is marred by myths and misconceptions; hence, people have faith in spiritual healing. The gullibility of the participants can also be supported by Bussing and Koenig (2010), who found that many patients with chronic conditions use religious and spiritual coping mechanisms.

Demon of Exorcism

Among most Africans, spiritual forces are still considered to be the obstacle to success. Closely linked to healing was exorcism of demons. This is a situation whereby an anointed person drives out a demon/evil spirit believed to be causing problems in one's life. All the participants believed that epilepsy was caused by evil spirits. Exorcism was confirmed by the following statements from the respondents,

> Whenever I am prayed for, I collapse and people tell me that I manifest a spirit of a snake ….
>
> I have a demon tormenting me, I was captured by a church camera rolling on the ground saying things that I don't even know. I am so embarrassed that people have that video clip but the good thing is that my situation is improving.
>
> Here we have a holy circle where we chase away demons, they manifest and we instruct them to go. That is why this place is always busy, people throng it for healing and cleansing of various troubles ….
>
> There is a God in this place, demons just manifest even during praise and worship time ….
>
> I manifest a demon saying I will not achieve anything in life hence this epilepsy ….

Mabvurira (2016) found that most Shona people in Zimbabwe believed in demons as being responsible for mishaps in their lives. The same was found in the current study where a number of the participants believed that the evil spirit was responsible for their illnesses. As such, they valued demon exorcism. Exorcism of demons provides a clear avenue for the healing process where people see an evil spirit manifesting and going away. Modern-day pastors take advantage of this attribute in most Zimbabweans and they do all they can to prove that somebody is possessed by a spirit and that they can drive away the spirit. In a related study, Mabvurira *et al.* (2015) found that exorcism among sick members of the Johanne Masowe Chishanu Church gave congregants confidence that their situations may be corrected. This is so

because most Zimbabweans have the propensity to love miracles.

Church Material

Almost all the participants (eight) reported wearing or possessing church-branded and anointed materials. The materials ranged from church flags, t-shirts, wristbands, pens, etc. They were either branded with the church logo, or the church's name or the pastor's name in writing. All the participants believed that these had a protective factor. They all reported buying the materials from the church. The use of church material was confirmed by the following,

> I will wear this wrist band until Papa tells me to remove it ….
>
> The church logo on my t-shirt make demons flee and I feel protected whenever I put on this t-shirt ….
>
> I have a church calendar in my house with my spiritual father's picture …. and that is my anchor of protection ….

The participants were observed wearing wristbands and t-shirts, especially during church services.

The use of tangible material has been present since Biblical times and in traditional African healing ceremonies. However, as seen by the results of the current study, the participants reported that prophets now use sophisticated items like their pictures for healing purposes. It is not clear whether the prophet's picture represents God or not. It may be deduced that prophets may instil a sense of fear in congregants and allege that they have solutions to the people's problems. This may explain why congregants have so much faith in church materials for their success in life. Whether it is God or the prophet who does the healing is now questionable. There are even rumours that some of the prophets get powers from traditional healers.

Genuineness of Church Founder and Church Activities

Asked whether their pastor/prophet was genuine and called by God, all the participants reported that they believed their prophet was a Man of God. This

is attested by the following statements,

> This is a prophet of God … You hear newspaper people writing bad things about him, they should be careful as they may be fighting God himself.
>
> He is called, I do not doubt anything about him and his wife …
>
> Surely there is a prophet in our land, that's why you see people coming from all over the places to meet him …'

Eight of the participants reported that they did anything that the Pastor prescribed without asking questions. This was done in the name of faith, as shown by the quotes below,

> You don't have to doubt God or a Man of God, just believe and everything else will be sorted …
>
> If the spirit says do this I have to do it, I can't challenge God …
>
> The children of Israel spend many years in the wilderness because of doubting the man of God Moses …

Whether the modern-day prophets in Zimbabwe are genuine and sent by God is the biggest question of the moment. Gullible congregants believe they are, whilst non-gullible people believe they are not. The challenge is to disprove that they are not. Those who have tried to disprove them have been referring to the Bible, while the prophets also make reference to the same Bible when supporting their deeds. According to John 14:12 (KJV), 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do …' (KJV). Hence the prophets argue that they are doing the greater work promised by Jesus.

Music

Music was found to play a critical role in the lives of people with epilepsy. At all the churches that participated in the study, there were generally music

sessions, and praise and worship music. Praise was done to applause and thank God and worship songs were sung to connect the congregants with the Holy Spirit. Praise songs are associated with high pitch, dancing and playing music instruments, while worship songs have a low pitch and trigger a sense of divine connection with the Supreme Being. It was worship songs that triggered emotions among congregants. Some participants were seen shedding tears during worship time. Some would raise their hands shouting words like 'Come down, Holy Spirit', while others would kneel down clapping their hands. Some participants confirmed that some songs had bearing on their lives as epilepsy patients. This was confirmed by the following statements,

> There are certain songs which if sung I feel connected with my God.
>
> Whenever I am weak I sing the song Jehovah my healer …
>
> There are songs that really touch me and I feel energized and worthy despite people looking down upon me because of my illness.

Music plays a stupendous role in most religions across the globe. It is one way in which worshippers express their spirituality. In the current study it was found to be critical, as it gave congregants an avenue to connect with their Supreme Being. Particular songs were found to promote positive thinking among epileptic patients. Music promoted resilience of congregants.

Vigils

All the churches conducted vigils from time to time. Frequencies varied from quarterly to weekly. One of the churches had all-night prayers every Friday. Seven of the participants confirmed that they would not miss an all-night prayer without a valid excuse. The vigils were seen as an opportunity to spend time with God. Probed further, the participants confirmed that they used the vigils to communicate their problems to God, as well as to thank him for prayers answered. All the participants reported that they always prayed for their health, apart from other needs, as well as those of their relatives. In extreme circumstances, congregants would spend the whole night on a prayer mountain during cold nights. One participant reported that she fell ill after spending several Friday nights at prayer sessions in the mountain. She

indicated that their prophet had told them that God would not forsake those who chased after His face.

Participation in religious activities has been found to be important in the lives of people with chronic illnesses. When people spend the whole night at a church services, they feel they had enough time to communicate with the Supreme Being. These night vigils are present even in other religions like African indigenous religions and Islam.

Sermons

Preaching of the Word played an important function in the lives of epileptic patients. In the churches visited the Bible was selectively used to justify the prophets' actions. A classic example was John 5:1-15 (KJV). It talks of a man who was healed after 37 years at the Pool of Bethesda. This verse was interpreted by a preacher to mean that it may take long, but one day the congregants would meet Jesus Christ and be healed. Various sermons were preached to convey various messages to the congregants. However, there was a bias towards messages to do with healing and acquisition of material things. Rarely were messages of Salvation preached. The male participant would take turns to stand behind his prophet as he preached. Asked why it was necessary he indicated that it was the rule of the church that an 'Armour Bearer' stands behind the 'Man of God' during sermons. This was found to promote resilience in the participant. He believed that as long as he served in the Lord's house, the Lord was not going to forsake him.

Sermons were the main strategy used by prophets to instil patriotism among their congregants. They were twisted to motivate weary people in difficult circumstances. Almost every situation that a congregant found him/herself in was interpreted used the Bible. Quite often the epileptic patients were told that their sickness came so that the name of the Lord be glorified (John 9: 1-12 KJV).

Conclusion

Zimbabwe has not been spared from religious gullibility. Gullibility has been found to play an important role in the lives of people with epilepsy. Epileptic patients in Zimbabwe find comfort in religion. Some people participate in religious activities with the hope of getting healed while some claim they have

been healed. They use various religious materials to get protection as most of them claim that epilepsy is caused by evil spirits. Though viewed negatively by some, religious gullibility serves a purpose in promoting resilience and is used as a coping mechanism by people confronted with chronic conditions like epilepsy.

References

Adamolekun, M.J. & B.D. Mundanda 1997. Knowledge and Attitudes of Teachers towards Epilepsy in Zimbabwe. *ActaNeurolScandinavica* 96: 133–137. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0404.1997.tb00254.x

Banerjee, M.M. & L. Pyles 2004. Spirituality, a Source of Resilience for African American Women in the Era of Welfare Reform. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work* 13,2: 45–70. https://doi.org/10.1300/J051v13n02_03

Bernard, W.T., B.N. Maddalena, M. Njiwaji & D.M. Darrell 2014. The Role of Spirituality at the End of Life in Nova Scotia's Black Community. *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 33,3–4: 353–376. https://doi.org/10.1080/15426432.2014.930622

Bussing, A., H-J. Balzat & P. Heusser 2010. Spiritual Needs of Patients with Chronic Pain Diseases and Cancer-validation of the Spiritual Needs Questionnaire. *European Journal of Medical Research* 15,6: 266-273. https://doi.org/10.1186/2047-783X-15-6-266

Cascio, T. 2012. Understanding Spirituality as a Family Strength. Family in Society Newsletter. *Families in Society* 82,1: 35–48.

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention n.d. Epilepsy and Seizures. Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/toolstemplates/entertainmented/tips/Epilepsy.html (Accessed on 12 February 2019.)

Charamba, M. 2012. Pastor Offers Congregants Raw Sewage as Drinks. Available at: https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-100653.html (Accessed on 14/02/19).

Cheon, J.W. 2010. A Transpersonal Understanding of Youth Spirituality: Implications for an Expanded View of Social Work. *Currents: New Scholarship in Human Services* 9,1: 1-18.

Chitando, E. 2009. Deliverance and Sanctified Passports: Prophetic Activities

amidst Uncertainty in Harare. In Haram, L. & C.B. Yamba (eds.): *Dealing with Uncertainty in Contemporary African Lives*. Uppsala, Sweden: NordiskaAfrikainsitutet.

Cicirelli, V.G. 2002. Fear of Death in Older Adults: Predictions for Terror Management Theory. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences* 57B,4: 358–366. https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/57.4.P358

Corrigan, P., B. McCorkle, B. Schell & K. Kidder 2003. Religion and Spirituality in the Lives of People with Serious Mental Illness. *Community Mental Health Journal* 39,6: 487–499. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:COMH.0000003010.44413.37

Crawford, P., B. Brown & P. Bonham 2006. *Communication in Clinical Settings.* Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes.

Engel, R.J. & R.K. Scutt 2009. *Fundamentals of Social Work Research.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Gotterer, R. 2001. The Spiritual Dimension in Clinical Social Work Practice. *Journal of Scientific Study of Religion* 36: 549–564.

Government of Zimbabwe 1981. *Traditional Medical Practitioners Act (Chapter 27: 14).* Harare: Government Printers.

Hampton, D.M., D.E. Hollis, D.A. Lloyd, J. Taylor & S.C. McMillan 2007. Spiritual Needs of Patients with Advanced Cancer. *A Journal of Hospital Palliative Care* 24: 42–48. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049909106295773

Harrington, A. 2010. God and Health: What More is There to Say? In Harper Jr., C.L. (ed.): *Spiritual Information: 100 Perspectives on Science and Religion.* West Conshohocken: Templeton Foundation Press.

King James Bible 2017. King James Bible Online. https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/ (Accessed on 15 June 2019.)

Lorenz, K.A., R.D. Hays, M.F. Shapiro, P.D. Cleary, S.M. Asch & N.S. Wenger. 2005. Religiousness and Spirituality among HIV Infected Americans. *Journal of Palliative Medicine* 8,4: 774-781. https://doi.org/10.1089/jpm.2005.8.774

Mabvurira, V. 2016. *Influence of African Traditional Religion and Spirituality in Understanding Chronic Illnesses and its Implications for Social Work Practice: A Case of Chiweshe Communal Lands in Zimbabwe.* Unpublished doctoral Thesis submitted to the University of Limpopo.

Mabvurira, V., J.C. Makhubele & L. Shirindi 2015. Healing Practices in Johane Masowe Chishanu Church: Toward Afrocentric Social Work with

African Initiated Church Communities. *Studies on Ethno-medicine* 9,3: 425–434. https://doi.org/10.1080/09735070.2015.11905461

Mandizadza, E.J.R. & S. Chidarikire 2016. A Phenomenological Study into the Role of Spirituality and Religiousness in the Mental Health of People with Cancer in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 18,2: 14–161. https://doi.org/10.1080/19349637.2015.1100972

Mapamhidze, R. 2013. Miracle Healing, Is it Real? Available at: https://www.newsday.co.zw/2013/07/miracle-healing-is-it-real/ (Accessed on 10 February 2019.)

Martin, E.P. & J. Martin 2002. *Spirituality and the Black Helping Tradition in Social Work.* USA: NASW Press.

Moadel, A., C. Morgan, A. Fotone, J. Grennan, J. Carter, G. Laruffa, A. Skummy & J. Dutcher 1999. Seeking Meaning and Hope: Self-reported Spiritual and Existential Needs among an Ethnically Diverse Patient Population. *Psycho-oncology* 8: 378–385. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1611(199909/10)8:5<378::AID-PON406>3.0.CO;2-A

Mugumbate, J. & A. Nyanguru 2013. Measuring the Challenges of People with Epilepsy in Harare, Zimbabwe. *Neurology* Asia 18,1: 29-33.

Mutsvanga, P. 2017. Effects of Religion and Traditional African Culture on Gullibility towards People who are Deaf's Marriage Rights: A Case of Harare, Zimbabwe. *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion* 27: 13–22.

Newsdze Zimbabwe 2017. Miracle Prophets Face Ban. 12 August. Available at: http://www.newsdzezimbabwe.co.uk/2017/08/miracle-prophets-face-ban.html (Accessed on 17 February 2019.)

Ndlovu, M. 2019. 27 Dead; 18 Hospitalised after Pastor Makes them Drink Jik in Church. Available at: https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-161508.html (Accessed on 16 January 2020.)

Openshaw, L. & C. Harr 2005. Ethical Issues in the Spiritual. Paper presented at North American Association of Christians in Social Work, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Available at: https://www.nacsw.org/Publications/Proceedings2005/OpenshawHarrEthicsSpiritual%20Assessment.pdf (Accessed on 19 March 2019.)

Padgett, D.K. 2008. *Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research.* Los Angeles: Sage publications.

Pargament, K.I. 1997. *The Psychology of Religion and Coping: Theory,*

Research and Practice. New York: Guilford Press.

Parsons, S.K., P.L. Cruise, W.W. Davenport & V. Jones 2006. Religious Beliefs, Practices and Treatment Adherence among Individuals with HIV in the Southern United States. *AIDS Patient Care and STDs* 20: 97-111. https://doi.org/10.1089/apc.2006.20.97

Peterson, J.L., M.A. Johnson & K.E. Tenzek 2010. Spirituality as a Life Line: Women Living with HIV/AIDS and the Role of Spirituality in their Support System. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Feminist Thought* 4,1. Available at: http://digitalcommons.salve.edu/jift/vol4/iss1/3 (Accessed on 28 August 2018.)

Ramer, L., D. Johnson, L. Chan & M.T. Barrett 2006. The Effect of HIV/AIDS Progression on Spirituality and Self-transcendence in a Multicultural Population. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing* 17: 280–289. https://doi.org/10.1177/1043659606288373

Robbins, S.P., P. Chatterjee & E.R. Canda 2006. *Contemporary Human Behaviour Theory: A Critical Perspective in Social Work*. Boston: Pearson Education.

Rosmarin, D.H., K.I. Pargament, E.J. Krumrei & K.J. Flannelly 2009. Religious Coping among Jews: Development and Initial Validation of the JCOPE. *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 65,7: 670–683. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20574

Seyed, Z.B., Z. Nooshin & J. Hassan 2016. The Impact of Spirituality on Health. *Shiraz E-Med Journal* 17,6: e39053. Available at: http://emedicalj.com/en/articles/20465.html (Accessed on 19 March 2018.) https://doi.org/10.17795/semj39053

Tarakeshwar, N., N. Khan & K.J. Sikkema. 2006. A Relationship Based Framework of Spirituality for Individuals with HIV. *AIDS and Behaviour* 10: 59–70. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-005-9052-8

UNICEF 2003. *What Religious Leaders can do about HIV/AIDS Action for Children and Young People*. New York: UNICEF.

Vance, D.E., M. Brennan, C. Enah, G.L. Smith & J. Kaur 2011. Religion, Spirituality and Older Adults with HIV: Critical Personal and Social Resources for an Aging Epidemic. *Clinical Interventions in Aging* 6: 101–109. https://doi.org/10.2147/CIA.S16349

WHO 2004. *Epilepsy in the WHO African Region: Bridging the Gap*. Congo Brazzaville: WHO Regional Office for Africa.

Yong, J., J. Kim, S.S. Han & C.M. Puchalski 2008. Development and Validation of a Scale Assessing Spiritual Needs for Korean Patients with Cancer. *Journal of Palliative Care* 2008,24: 240–246. https://doi.org/10.1177/082585970802400403

Prof. Vincent Mabvurira
Department of Social Work
School of Psychosocial Health
Lifestyle Diseases Research Entity
North-West University
vinmabvurira@gmail.com

Prof. Jabulani Calvin Makhubele
Department of Social Work
University of Limpopo
Jabulani.Makhubele@ul.ac.za

The Bible and Gullibility

Sickness and Healing in the Old Testament and Pentecostalism: Then and Now

Fairchild Siyawamwaya

Abstract

Sickness and healing have been with humanity since time immemorial. Although there are few cases of healings in the Old Testament, the healings in the Old Testament correctly provides a mirror through which healings in Pentecostalism can be interrogated. The article therefore explored selective cases of sickness and cure in the Old Testament and juxtaposes the same phenomena in Pentecostalism today. The phenomenological approach, historical critical method, exegesis and typological comparative analysis were used to gather data for this qualitative research. The findings are that most cures in the Old Testament portray the undisputed role of the divine. On the contrary, cures in Pentecostalism have been viewed with mixed feelings stemming from the fraudulent behaviour of healing practitioners today. Nonetheless, most believers are still gullible enough to believe it. The article employs religious fundamentalism as a theoretical framework and argues that faith healing cannot be accepted at face value, as it has seen its sad manifestation in unwarranted behaviour.

Keywords: sickness, healing, Old Testament, Pentecostalism, gullible.

Introduction

The Pentecostal explosion in Zimbabwe has brought a lot of beleaguering phenomena that have been subject to scholarly permutations. A deluge of works has examined the salient features of Pentecostalism that include prosperity gospel, prophecy, healing and exorcism, among others. Biri (2012) examined the aspect of healing but did not manage to expound on the possible Old Testament influence on Pentecostals' understanding of healing. Similarly,

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a14

Taringa (2013) expounds on the influence of African Traditional Religion (ATR) on Pentecostals, but his study is devoid of the flair of the Old Testament Tradition.

The study sought to unravel the aspect of sickness and healing in Zimbabwean Pentecostalism, taking a cue from the Old Testament perspective. The article commences by unpacking the methodological considerations used. The article then looks at fundamentalism as a philosophy guiding it. The article proceeds from looking at sickness and healing in the Old Testament biblical culture. After that, the article examined the perceptions on sickness and healing in Pentecostalism today. It therefore analyses the methods of healing in Pentecostalism considering chronic illnesses. The article argues that while others have benefited from faith healing, this phenomenon cannot be eulogised, as it has unwittingly resulted in unwarranted deaths. The article concludes that faith healing devoid of medical verification is tantamount to dishonesty.

Methodology

The study employs a poly-methodical approach cognisant of Pummers' (1975) word of caution that no single methodology can lead to an all-encompassing understanding of religious phenomena. This stems from the fact that a single approach to the study of a beleaguered phenomenon like Pentecostalism will suffer from reductionism. Consequently, many aspects will escape attention. Therefore, the researcher found it prudent to understand the phenomenon of healing in Zimbabwean Pentecostalism through multiple lenses.

Firstly, the phenomenological approach was instrumental in this research. The article is aware of the complex nature of defining phenomenology, as it has been argued by scholars that there are many phenomenologists. However, to go into a lengthy discussion on the diversity of phenomenology would be beyond the scope of this discussion. As Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) notes, phenomenology of religion is centred on three concepts, namely *epoche*, empathy and eidetic intuition. Etymologically, *epoche* comes from the Greek word *epecho*, which means 'I hold back'. This entails that a scholar or researcher must undertake his or her research without preconceived ideas or notions on already known values of the subject under research. Eidetic intuition, which is also called eidetic vision, is a search for or a look into the essentials of religious phenomena. This includes describing relationships and processes. Such processes in Zimbabwean Pentecostalism include the concept

of healing, how it could have been borrowed from African spirituality and why it has even become one of the pull factors. Mapuranga, Chitando and Gunda (2013) argue that the phenomenological method seeks to undertake a balanced and unbiased research.

Pentecostalism as a movement also needs to be interrogated from a biblical studies perspective. The goal would be to understand the exegetical and hermeneutical considerations that inspire the use of the texts in these movements. This emanates from the fact that as scholars there is a need for an understanding of the readings used in these movements, as opposed to readings that scholars might use. In most instances, the reading of the Bible in these churches has been subject to scholarly permutations.

Historical-critical Method

According to Hayes and Holladay (2007), historical criticism of documents assumes that a text is historical in at least two senses: it may relate to history, as well as have its own history. For this reason, we can distinguish between 'the history in the text' and 'the history of the text'. In this sense the text may serve as a window through which we can peep into the historical period (Hayes & Holladay 2007). This method is very useful for the subject under investigation, since it deals with matters pertaining to the history in the text, or situates matters pertaining to the history in the text, or the situation the text describes. If the text contains references to places, persons and customs strange to the reader it will be necessary to become sufficiently acquainted with the historical period or the cultural setting described in the text in order to understand what is being said at the most elementary level (Hayes & Holladay 2007).

The historical critical method includes the presupposition that history is a unit in the sense of a closed continuum of effects in which an individual event is connected by a succession of causes and effects. This method involves careful analytical study and an evaluation of records and accounts of historical events and developments (Hayes & Holladay 2007). This article employs this method as it investigates the past to observe what is essential and mainstream, to the contemporary demanding interpretation. The biblical Old Testament sickness and healing stories have been interpreted through African eyes, taking into cognisance this method (Hayes & Holladay 2007).

The Comparative Method

The method generally strives to compare different tendencies or different aspects. The method identifies differences and similarities from among a mixed bag of variants. The two contexts here are to be compared and contrasted, and so are the causes and cure of diseases in the Old Testament bible culture and in Zimbabwean Pentecostalism. Thus, the essentiality of this method in this study cannot be trivialised.

Limitations of the Methods

There are limitations in the methodology that has been used. Reality is so rich and manifold that no single rationalisation is able to capture it. Hence, in order to minimise the limitations of using one approach, these approaches have been employed. Even though it is difficult to penetrate a historicised religious community, which one seeks to study, as from the Old Testament, this is exacerbated due to barriers of culture and language. Admittedly, the research findings are not free from presuppositions and value judgments, even though the methods used have reduced them to some degree.

Theoretical Framework

This article adopts religious fundamentalism as a working philosophy to underpin it. The study is aware of the ambiguous nature of the term 'religious fundamentalism', which has been understood from various perspectives. Nevertheless, this study is greatly indebted to Taringa (2013), who made an attempt to unpack the term both from a historical and ideological level. This is a testimony to the position that the term defies a single definition. Taringa (2013), citing Sacks (2000), argue that from a historical vantage point, 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 kind of common-sense defence of Orthodoxy in a highly secular age; a reaction against what is seen as liberal intelligentsia's subversion of established beliefs. Taringa also brings to the fore the manifestation of the philosophy of fundamentalism. Taringa (2013) cites Armstrong on the pattern of fundamentalists. They are embattled forms of spirituality that have emerged in response to perceived crisis. They are engaged in conflict with enemies whose secularist policies and beliefs seem inimical to religion. 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. It is against the backdrop of the proffered definition that the study argues that faith healers are fundamentalists.

Sickness and Healing in the Old Testament Biblical Culture

The Moral Causes of Illness

In the Old Testament tradition, some sicknesses were epitomised to be the result of divine punishment and this may be caused by various reasons. In Old Testament times, the general understanding was that God has given human beings a system or code of conduct, which he oversees through reward and punishment. The impression that is therefore created is that sickness is a result of divine punishment. The moment sickness is epitomised as divine punishment it means that it is tinged with an individual's morality.

In ancient Israel, it was thought that sickness was a divine instrument to punish a wayward, stubborn individual, or it was used to provide an example for faith as in the case of the biblical Job (Vess *et al.* 2009). The story of Job helps to bring to the fore the notion that in Hebraic thought immorality could cause sickness. Nevertheless, contemporary believers use the story of Job to provide an example of faith. Kinsley (1994) adds something very fundamental towards an understanding of sickness because of divine punishment, and this is inextricably embedded in the Deuteronomist philosophy.[1] It is the Deuteronomist philosophy that sin brings sickness, whilst righteousness is tantamount to prosperity and good health. It syllogistically follows that when the sickness is attributed to the divine, the individual would be responsible for that sickness.

It should be borne in mind that the Deuteronomist philosophy on sin has been a cause of disagreement in scholarly debate. This is buttressed by the fact that such an understanding of sickness as a curse was theologically and ideologically motivated. Considering ideological conception as seen in the works of Giovanni Garbinni (1988), this research would argue that the

[1] The Deuteronomist philosophy is part of a theology of legitimising philosophy that justifies the status quo as unwittingly, poverty was depicted as a result of a curse and riches and health as ramifications of blessings from Yahweh.

Deuteronomist philosophy is a scheme by the elites in ancient Israel who wanted to blind the ordinary people from reality. This was the result of an ideology clandestinely orchestrated in diabolical gusto as unwittingly, uncritical citizens accepted their sickness and suffering to be a result of God's discontentment of their deeds. This was a position that need not only be dismissed but also rather be dismissed with scorn.

Ritual Impurity as Cause of Illness

The Levitical legislation[2] reduces the fear of the unknown or hostile unclean power to a matter of God's law. Uncleanness is hateful to God and must be avoided by all who have to do with divinity. All the biblical views of purity and impurity represent a realisation of taboos by the attribution of such matters to the divine will. Here the decision about what is impure is entirely up to YHWH alone and subjective, divine judgment is not questioned. This view does not explain why something is to be considered taboo or not.

Jonathan Klawans (2000) in his book, *Impurity and Sin in ancient Judaism,* proffers insights on ritual impurity that has been perceived instructively in this study. His view is largely based on Jacob Milgrom (2004) and contends that ritual impurity is caused by a physical condition and contact with other impure objects such as a corpse (as contained in Lev 11-15; Numbers 19). In her book, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish identities: Intermarriage Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (2002), Christian Hayes advocates a similar view, but distinguishes three forms of impurity. She agrees with Klawans in the sense that cultic impurity is contact with dead animals, sexual fluids, certain skin diseases, and the like. It can normally be removed (through skin *turmah*) or can be permanent after a set of intervals through procedures also laid down in the text. Contact between the sacred and the *turmah* creates a profound taboo and could produce a terrible result for the guilty party in particular and the community as a whole.

Within the Israelite community, purity laws were largely applied to physical conditions seen as impeding the community with YHWH. Common examples are the non-admittance of disabled priests in the temple (Lev 21) and

[2] A rational system of theological thought expounded in the book of Leviticus, which contains moral precepts and some of the laws concerning the Temple ritual and construction.

the diagnosis of King Uzzah (1 Kings). He was to be isolated from the rest of the people, yet he was allowed to retain his kingship.

Ritual not permitted is distinguished by the following features: first, it is contagious, transferred from one person or object to another in a variety of way such as physical contact or sharing space within a covered area. Secondly, impurity emanating from a source of ritual impurity is impermanent and can be reduced and removed by some combinations of ablutions; time and/or performance of specified rituals. Thirdly, ritual impurity can defile sancta and must be kept separate from other persons. More severe forms of ritual impurity can also defile common objects and would thus require isolation.

Leprosy is a conventional, but erroneous rendering of the Hebrew *Zara' at*. The term covers a set of skin lesions in humans that feature scaling of the skin as well as fungal growth in clothes and residential buildings; these are detailed in Lev 13-14. Skin lesions of humans generate a most severe impurity (defiling of both sancta) and can be subdivided as follows: one type is immediately declared as impure; another as pure (including a case where even the symptom appears on the whole body). A third type requires isolation for a week or a fortnight and if there is no deterioration, the bearer is considered pure (Freilich 1982). It is against this backdrop that the scale-diseased person can defile even common objects and persons. Therefore, he is either restricted or excluded from the community (Lev 13: 46; Numbers 12: 14-15). The purification ritual is carried out by the priests after healing is complete (hence the ritual is not curative). It is more intricate and complicated unlike other impure persons and bears certain similarities to the *Hazazel* (scapegoat) ceremony on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16: 5). Impurity is removed by sprinkling the mixture of bird blood and water and the impurity is then carried away by the live bird. The person bathes, launders and shaves, waits a week, and then bathes, launders and shaves again before offering a special sacrifice at the sanctuary. Houses from which *Zara' at* has been removed are purified by sprinkling and dispatching of the bird. Fabrics are purified by washing.

Physical Causes of Illness

This section deals with the physical causes of illness and for the purpose of demonstration has deliberately chosen selective biblical characters to discuss their possible neurological diseases. Firstly, the article shall refer to Isaac. The first clear allusion to Isaac's infirmities is seen in Genesis 27: 1, 'and it comes

to pass that when Isaac was old and his eyes were dim that he could not see'. Further reading of the chapter brings to light the incident when Isaac could not distinguish between his sons, Jacob and Esau by the feel of their skin (although the former was disguised). This leads one to suspect that Isaac suffered from sensory neuropathy, as he was unable to feel the difference between human skin and animal skin. It has been speculated that Isaac was diabetic. Isaac and his father Abraham had the same plight of premature aging. Isaac needed a constant supply of water. Genesis 26 shows that his servants were constantly digging for water whenever they moved off. Isaac had noteworthy physical achievements noted in the Bible. He was fond of food, suffered visual loss and was impotent (he and his wife bore Jacob and Esau only after 20 years). It is possible that autonomic neurotherapy results from diabetes. All these points shed light to the premise that Isaac suffered from diabetes from the onset. He is one of the first recorded cases of diabetes in the Bible tradition.

Secondly, Genesis 32:25 provides a description of Jacob's duel with God (who appeared in the form of an angel). Jacob had camped overnight at a place that came to be known as Peniel after having sent his family and friends ahead of him, when the angel wrestled with Jacob till daybreak. The angel could not overpower Jacob and consequently. It is against this background that the angel had to take the hollow of his thighs. At that juncture the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint. This could have been a posterior dislocation severe enough to change the sciatic nerve. If such were the case, the disruption could have disrupted the blood supply.

Healing by Forgiveness of Sins

It is noteworthy that the relationship between YHWH and the Israelites was covenant based. It is against this backdrop that for the covenant people there was a direct link between sickness and ritual impurity. In most cases in the Old Testament tradition, a direct link is made between offenses and sickness (2 Kings 5). According to Deuteronomy (28: 15-20), sickness is connected to disobedience (Kinsley 1994). It is imperative for one to bear in mind that forgiveness is appropriate and effective in the case where the illness is caused by sins. It follows that if people believed that afflictions could result from sin, forgiveness was a necessity for healing. This tradition is even exposed in the New Testament, for example, in the Gospel of John 9: 2, the following question is posed. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents,

that he was born blind?' In a cultural system where sickness is expected to result from sin, absolution of forgiveness will be effective in bringing relief. The normal prescription for forgiveness includes a sacrifice for rectifying the disturbed relationship

Prayers for Healing

The Old Testament gives the impression that healing was meted out to certain individuals through prayer. The Old Testament makes it clear that God wants to accommodate the needs of humanity. Reference can be made to King Hezekiah who 'became ill and was at the point of death' (2 Kings 20: 1). He consulted with the prophet who bluntly told him, 'Put your house in order, because you are going to die, you will not recover'. In spite of that damning diagnosis, Hezekiah prayed for healing, 'Remember, O, Lord how I have walked before you faithfully and with whole-hearted devotion and have done good in your eyes' (2 Kings 20: 3). The answer was almost instantaneous, as Isaiah promptly returned with good news from God that Hezekiah will be healed and fifteen more years be added to his life.

Methods of Healing in Pentecostalism Considering Chronic Illnesses

Causes of Sickness in Pentecostalism Today

In Pentecostalism today, one could find Daneel's (1987) postulation satisfactory that healing prophecy and exorcism have been the major attraction to African Independent Churches (AICs). Although AICs and Pentecostal cannot be loosely referred to as synonyms, it cannot be ignored that most Pentecostals in Zimbabwe, like Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa, United Family International Church (UFIC) and Prophetic Healing and Deliverance (PHD) Ministries, also fall in the same bracket of AICs. It is not surprising to note that these churches, in terms of their understanding of the cause of illness, draw much from African spirituality. In separate works, Biri (2012) and Taringa (2013) show how much Pentecostals have borrowed from African Traditional Religion as far as the conception of illness is concerned. This explains the nexus between Pentecostalism and African Traditional religion in terms of understanding illness. Thus, Pentecostalism has become the haven of belonging for African Christians.

Witches and Sorcerers

Witchcraft and sorcery as cause of illness in Pentecostalism are closely related, since both are associated with the harm brought about through envy or malice by fellow human beings. The former involves the manipulation of psychic powers, usually through the medium of mystical powers. Witches in African culture are usually female. Anyone can be a witch, and the terrible thing is that they normally harm the nearest and the dearest. In other words, they are the unknown enemy within the gate (Kigunyi 2007).

It is alleged that witches make use of different agents. Some use a variety of animals such as a wolf; a human being who acquire the body of a wolf (due to shape shifting) that do their work. Common animals are hyenas, snakes, baboons and owls. Scholars are not in unison whether these animals are real, or whether they are a mirage. Also, mystical agents such as *zvidhoma a*nd *zvishiri* are seen as the assistants of witches. The *tokoloshi* is believed to be a little man with only one buttock and a huge penis which he carries over his shoulders or wraps around his waist. *Chidhoma* are those spirits of children who were killed and are now used by witches as messengers to kill or perform killing duties on their behalf, and these are believed to be merciless. Usually the witch who is angry inflicts the disease directly upon the victim, either through willpower or rituals, or through charms.

Sorcerers

A sorcerer is one of the most feared types of witches, who can perform his/her acts during daylight. This type of witch can make use of manipulation of lightning or poisoning and is the most feared, unlike the witch who devours human flesh from the graves and walks at night. The sorcerer is known for using *chipotsa* (object intrusion) which is invasion of a person by a foreign object. This object is often understood to have been shot into the victim by an enemy or a hostile spirit. The object then makes a person ill or kills the person if not removed. Sorcery in Zimbabwe manifests itself through the ability to shoot other people with objects. The objects also may be buried in the path of the one they intend to harm, or remote control can be used by casting spells on the person calling his/her name.

Devil and Evil Spirits

In the Pentecostal movements today, some illnesses are believed to be caused

by forces or spirits opposed to God. The devil and malevolent spirits are believed to cause illness out of sheer perverseness or to thwart the divine plan for humankind. Some of these spirits go to the extent of possessing an individual. The possession or invasion by an alien spirit, leads to uncontrollable or violent behaviour. This kind of sickness is attributed to draconian and inimical hostile malevolent forces, the sick person is often viewed (or understands him/herself) as a hapless, innocent victim. Healing involves mustering divine powers to resist a demonic invasion or to defeat malevolent forces.

Healing Methods in Pentecostalism

Faith healing is the overarching method of healing in the Pentecostal tradition. Loosely defined, 'faith' refers to trust or confidence that the prophet can heal. In this regard, the power of faith has a positive attitude or supportive companionship in healing is the one side of the mind-body, which says that the mind can affect the body positively and negatively. Stated more appropriately, the body and the mind are not two separate entities, but form a unity as mind-body. The one side of the coin can be demonstrated by the placebo effect. The placebo effect refers to the phenomenon that an inert substance or practice has a general effect. In other words, a drug can have an effect on a person because of the belief or the meaning attached to it and not because of its pharmacology. From the above view, it is too early to conclude that faith heals and that in an extreme case faith can kill. Belief in the ability of a healer has been one of the hallmarks of healing practitioners in the 21st century. Therefore, there is nothing sinister stating that a prophet can heal because believers put their trust in their ability and power to heal.

Touching or Laying of Hands

Contact with a sick person, especially through the hands, is very common in Pentecostalism. This resonates with the understanding replete in the ancient healing stories attributed to Apollonius. In the Greco-Roman world, the implicit assumption of touching or laying of hands was the widespread idea that power resides in individuals and objects.

Some Critical Reflections

Pentecostal churches' emphasis on the aspect of healing has been a major point

of attraction for membership. This emanates from the fact that believers have come to categorise sickness in into two groups. In this regard, Mwandayi (2013) is correct when he argues that there are those illnesses which people view as normal, like coughs, slight headaches, fevers or stomach aches, and then there are those sicknesses that are chronic by nature. As Mwandayi (2013) notes, people have no problem requesting conventional medicine for the former, but when it comes to the latter, people consult a traditional healer or a faith healer. Faith healers are consulted because the understanding is that there are certain illnesses that require one to be delivered from the dark world. This article does not intend to dispute Mwandayi's observation. However, it proceeds to add that most believers in Pentecostals today now seek the assistance of faith healers for all types of illnesses. The understanding is that the name of Jesus has the power to heal. Everything that has a name is said to be under the name of Jesus. It follows that since illnesses have a name, they are also cured by the name of Jesus.

In the Pentecostal movement today, there are multifarious testimonies of people who have been healed from a variety of diseases, including HIV and AIDS, diabetes and cancer, among others. In one of his articles, Allen Anderson (2002) gives a testimony of how he and his wife were healed in separate incidents by faith healers. This is synonymous to what is happening in Pentecostals today. One of the women interviewed in this article narrated how she was healed by Prophet John Moyounotsva. He is among the leading figures in Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa[3] and the Resident Father at Bindura Cathedral Prayer Mountains. This is one of the sacred sites in ZAOGA built at a place that is believed to be among the areas where the founder of ZAOGA, Ezekiel Guti, met God. The site is also near the gum tree where ZAOGA ministry started. Prophet Moyounotsva is renowned for holding monthly services where people get cured of various diseases. These services are called Nights of Miracles and they attract people from various walks of life in Zimbabwe and even abroad.

Although there is evidence of healing in the Pentecostal tradition, this concept has been subject to criticism. This stems from some of the alleged strange methods of healing like anointing oil and wrist bands. For instance, believers in Prophecy Healing and Deliverance (PHD) ministries are given

[3] ZAOGA is an African Independent Church in Zimbabwe with Pentecostal traits and it was established in the 1960s by apostle Ezekiel Guti.

anointing oil and wrist bands at a fee as methods of cure[4]. In defence of the use of anointing oil, believers in PHD quote scriptures like James 5: 14, which says, 'Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord'.

Another informant argues that the execution of faith healing in Pentecostalism leaves a lot to be desired. What is mindboggling and baffling is that they only want to cure people in crusades and church services; yet some people are critically ill in hospitals. Discussions have revealed that whilst it cannot be denied that some faith healers are genuine, most of these miracles are stage managed. One informant narrates how he had witnessed a man being lifted from a wheelchair in what appeared to be a miracle. He was shocked to see the same man again being lifted from the wheelchair at another crusade. This sheds light on the notion that some miracles are performed to hoodwink the people into believing the prophetic power. Some people are even paid to give fake testimonies of healing. Those who would not have met the prophet before also end up giving fake testimonies, because they would have been psychologically conditioned to believe that if they confess that they have not been healed they indicate that God is not able. Consequently, not wanting to belittle God, some people end up giving false testimonies. Where there is failure evident to the congregant that healing has not taken place, the blame is shifted to the victim, namely that he or she did not have enough faith.

A critical mind would therefore want to question why people would still go to these fraudsters in Pentecostal churches today, given that most of them are nothing than mere money-making charlatans. What has been observed is that there is a mind game which is buttressed by indoctrination. This is succinctly captured in a criticism of prophetic following circulating on WhatsApp, namely that it is a mammoth task to advise the follower of a prophet. When uncritical believers see the Men of God their mental faculties subside. This explains why there are increasing numbers of people who have been duped by the so-called men of God. Perhaps this might have been buttressed by the deification of faith healers. Thus, Gunda cogently argues that,

> the man of God is a specially set aside individual who is essentially a

[4] PHD is a Pentecostal church in Zimbabwe established by Prophet Walter Magaya and from the name of the church itself, prophecy, healing and deliverance are salient features of this establishment.

> manifestation of the divine hence protected by the divine and in instances where the divine is not respected, the divine reserves the right to avenge (Gunda & Machingura 2013).

Some believers have died in search of faith healing, especially those suffering from HIV and AIDS. The reason could have been the effect of sensational healing or hypnosis. Some people living with HIV and AIDS were told to stop their anti-retroviral medication after the exercise of faith healing. One informant poignantly narrates the story of her sister who died after she had stopped taking medication. He has this to say, 'My sister died after the prophet instructed her to stop taking medication. Taking drugs was regarded as lack of faith. It's so sad how my sister was gullible to believe the prophet'. What happened was that when his sister stopped taking medication her situation deteriorated but, in a bid to honour the prophet, she would not take medication. When she finally agreed to take the medication, the situation was out of control, leading to her death. This is one among the cases where the prophets' interventions have ostensibly led to the death of gullible believers. Faith healing has seen most members of the Pentecostal movement refraining from taking scientific medication.

The Way Forward

Faith healing, while it has managed to ameliorate the health of some people, should not be romanticised without further interrogation. Whilst it is true that some illnesses defy scientific explanation and would be better combated through faith healing, there is a danger of spiritualising all illnesses. What faith healers fail to recognise is that it is medical experts who diagnose their believers' illnesses like HIV and AIDS, cancer and diabetes etc. It means that after the diseases have been cured, they should be referred back to medical experts to be declared clear of their infirmities. This means that there is need for a nexus between scientific healing and faith healing. In Zimbabwe, there has been the rude awakening that faith healing is not the ultimate cure. This explains why ZAOGA has erected Mbuya Dorcas Hospital with both a medical wing and a spiritual wing. This is an attempt to deal with the two categories of illnesses, natural and spiritual. Similarly, Prophet Walter Magaya's controversial discovery of *aguma* is clear testimony that not every disease needs faith healing. Magaya has been renowned for faith healing, but he found it manda-

tory to find a scientific cure. The merits of *aguma*[5] are not what is interesting here; rather, the realisation that scientific methods of cure are also a necessity. Thus, faith healing was born out of necessity, like the woman with the flow of blood in the New Testament. She went to Jesus after medical practitioners of her time, had failed her.

Conclusion

The article has observed that the understanding of sickness and cure in Pentecostalism today is somewhat divorced from the Old Testament Tradition. This is probably because in the Old Testament the divine was the architect of healing through human agents. However, in Pentecostalism this is the work of some shrewd, self-acclaimed faith healers who survive on the gullible behaviour of believers. There are, however, some clergy who have genuinely performed cures. Nonetheless, it cannot be espoused that faith healing be regarded as a sine qua non, since many people have died whose lives could have been saved, had they accessed proper medical treatment. Thus, the article notes with regret that if faith healing is executed uncritically it can spell disaster.

References

Anderson, A. 2002. Pentecostal Approaches to Faith and Healing. *International Review of Mission* 91,363: 523 – 534. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6631.2002.tb00365.x

Biri, K. 2012. The Silent Echoing Voice: Aspects of Zimbabwean Pentecostalism and the Quest for Power, Healing and Miracles. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 33: 37–55.

Daneel, M.L. 1987. *Quest for Belonging: Introduction to a Study of African Independent Churches*. Gweru: Mambo Press.

Freilich, A.R.1982. Tzaraat Biblical Leprosy. Available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>pubmed

[5] *Aguma* is a drug that Prophet Walter Magaya purports to have discovered as cure for HIV and AIDS, but some critical voices say that the mixture used to make the drug contains anti-retroviral drugs.

(Accessed on 20 August 2018).
https://doi.org/10.1016/S0190-9622(82)70010-6

Garbinni, G. 1988. *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel.* Bowden, J. (transl.). New York: Crossroad.

Gunda, M.R. & F. Machingura 2013. 'The 'Man of God': Understanding Biblical Influence on Contemporary Mega-Church Prophets in Zimbabwe. In Kügler, J., E. Chitando & M.R. Gunda (eds.): *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe.* Bamberg: Bamberg University Press.

Hayes, C. 2002. *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud*. New York. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/0195151208.001.0001

Hayes, J.H. & C.R. Holladay 2007. *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook.* Atlanta: John Knox Press.

Kigunyi, E.L. 2007. *The Problem of Witchcraft. Term Paper*. Machakos: Kenya Scott Theological College.

Kinsley, D. 1994. *Health, Healing and Religion: A Cross-cultural Perspective*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Klawans, J. 2000. *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*. London: Oxford University Press.
https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195132908.001.0001

Mapuranga, T., E. Chitando & M.R. Gunda 2013. Studying the United Family International Church in Zimbabwe: The Case for Applying Multiple Approaches to the Study of Religion and Religious Phenomena. In Kügler J., E. Chitando & M.R. Gunda (eds.): *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe*. Bamberg: Bamberg University Press.

Milgrom, J. 2004. *Leviticus: A Handbook of Ritual and Ethics.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1hqdhw1

Mwandayi, C. 2013. Traversing the Thin Line between 'Chibhoyi' (Indigenous Spirituality) and Miracle Working. In Kügler, J., E. Chitando & M.R. Gunda (eds.): *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe*. Bamberg: Bamberg University Press.

Pummer, R. 1975. Recent Publications on the Methodology of the Science of Religion. *Numen* 22.3: 161–182.
https://doi.org/10.1163/156852775X00013

Sacks, J. 2000. *The Persistence of Faith: Religion, Morality and Society in a Secular Age.* New York: Continuum.

Taringa, N. 2013. 'For with God nothing is impossible': Reflections on African Initiated Churches (AICs), and Prophets as African Traditional Religions (ATRs) Fundamentalists. In Kügler J., E. Chitando & M.R. Gunda (eds.): *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe*. Bamberg: Bamberg University Press.

Vess, M., J. Arndt, C.R. Cox, C. Routledge & J.L. Goldenberg 2009. Exploring the Existential Function of Religion: The Effects of Religious Fundamentalism and Morality Science on Faith Based Medical Refusals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 197, 2: 334–350. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015545

Fairchild Siyawamwaya
Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University (ZEGU)
Department of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences
fsiyawamwaya@zegu.ac.zw;
mambosiya@gmail.com

A Socio-political Analysis of Pentecostalism and Political Passivity in Zimbabwe

Henerieta Mgovo

Abstract

Religion, particularly Pentecostalism, has proved to be fertile ground for the expression of gullible behaviour. The research argues that religious leaders in Zimbabwe have a hand in the political passivity of Zimbabweans. This article is an analysis of how Pentecostal interpretations of the Book of Romans have led to teachings that have made Zimbabweans politically passive and become a hindrance to political contestations. The research adopted a qualitative approach and a case study focusing on the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa Forward in Faith (ZAOGA FIF). The research observes that Pentecostalism promotes political passivity as it focuses on the literal interpretation of Romans 13: 1–7, and calls for unquestionable reverence to political leaders as they do to their Charismatic Pentecostal Church leaders. This has greatly impacted on the political life of many Pentecostal Church members who have not been able to protest against any political maladministration, be it in the Church or government. In conclusion, the research recommends that Pentecostal adherents must resist the gullible Pentecostal teachings and be sceptical of some of the messages delivered by charismatic leaders.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, gullibility, political passivity, political contestations.

Introduction

Over the centuries, Christianity has been integrally related to the social and political development of most Zimbabwean citizens. It is inevitable that the Church's worldview may greatly influence the manner in which adherents

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a15

perceive or even address administrative issues in both religious and secular spheres. The Church may represent a means of coping with adverse situations, rebelling against political domination or passive acceptance of the status quo. The rise of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe has also brought with it challenges in the area of political contestations, as it has tended to turn adherents into gullible consumers of literal interpretations of certain Biblical scriptures. This article focuses on Romans 13: 1–7 as one such scripture that is a politically-inflected text that has been used by Churches to justify and support dictatorial and undemocratic practices in many countries, including Zimbabwe. In this respect, the article seeks to establish the extent to which Pentecostal Biblical interpretation of Romans13: 1–7 and the unquestionable reverence of Charismatic Church leaders as God's ordained mouthpieces have brought gullibility in the area of political contestations. The article presents an exegesis of Romans 13: 1–7 and demonstrates how Pentecostal literal interpretation of the same has turned Pentecostal Church members into political passivity. To achieve this aim, the author employs the New Testament socio-political method of conceptual analysis. It also draws inferences from primary research conducted by other scholars.

The research acknowledges that Pentecostal Churches are not a united group. They are divided organizationally, socially and theologically. This division has bearing on their engagement, or lack of it, in political affairs in Zimbabwe, giving rise to many different and mutually contradictory forms of Pentecostal views of political establishments. Pentecostal leaders and their followers seem to be ambivalent in their participation in political activities. In Zimbabwe and many other nations, Pentecostalism is the biggest Christian conversion, which claims large mass following. However, the impact of Pentecostalism in politics is still minimal. In this regard, Togarasei (2013: 106) argues that, despite the large numbers and the respect for leadership, Pentecostals have proved '… easy to use as pawns in the hands of politicians'. This is, according to Togarasei (2013), a case of gullibility. Hence, Togarasei maintains that it is time to start thinking about ways of waking up many Pentecostal followers from their political slumber. Furthermore, Freston (2014: 1) echoes the same sentiments by pointing out that all over the world Pente-costalism has reached unprecedented levels of social visibility and that, for that very reason, it has to be transformed into a political trampoline. This is to say, since Pentecostalism has reached the public sphere with great vibrancy, it has to instil confidence in its followers to be able to take part in political contestations.

This article is divided into four sections. The first section defines Pen-

tecostalism and gullibility. The second section focuses on literal and exegetical interpretations of Romans 13: 1–7. Section three delves into the impact of Pentecostalism on the adherents' political consciousness and goes on to analyse the problems Pentecostalism creates in matters of political contestations. The article ends with a fourth section which provides findings, some recommendations and a conclusion.

Methodology

The study utilised a qualitative research approach. According to Creswell (2014: 4), qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or a human problem. Therefore, the qualitative research approach is suitable to deal with the human problem of religious gullibility being explored in this article. The study uses both primary and secondary sources. The hermeneutical and exegetical methods of reviewing scriptural relevance in relation to the role of the Church in politics are employed. Some data were also collected through desk research and face-to-face interviews with selected Pentecostal Church followers. The study has taken into consideration the core fundamentals of ethical practices regarding consent, anonymity and confidentiality.

Theoretical Framework

The research is underpinned by Karl Marx's philosophy of religion (Lobkowicz 1964). Marx (1884) was of the opinion that religion is the opium of the people from which people get solace and comfort from their troubles or sufferings. In his critique of Hegel's book, *Philosophy of Right Standing*, McKinnon (2005: 1–2) maintains that 'Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world, just as it is the spirit of the spiritless situation'. The implication is that, although religion gives moral support as well as counselling services to the followers, it also helps to mould and influence people to accept their situation without complaint. This is what this article refers to as gullibility in the context of political consciousness.

Based on the Marxist Philosophy of Religion, the article observes that the consequences of religious passivity are that religion can lull the followers into subservience so that they accept their leaders as God-given or natural. Therefore, this theory is the most suitable as the basis of an exploration of the place of religion in the political passivity of Pentecostal Church followers.

Defining Terms

Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism is understood as a renewal movement within Christianity. It places extraordinary emphasis on individual experiences of the Creator or God through the baptism by the Holy Spirit. Pentecostalism has become a global Christian revivalist and missionary movement that places the transcendent workings of the Holy Spirit and charismatic practices such as the spiritual gifts of healing, speaking in tongues or glossolalia and prophecy (according to Acts 3 and 1 Cor. 12–14), at the centre of its activities. Anderson (2004: 17) defines Pentecostalism as:

> … divergent African churches that emphasise the working of the spirit in the church, particularly with ecstatic phenomena like prophecy and speaking in tongues, healing and exorcism. The key characteristics of Pentecostal churches are speaking in tongues, performing of miracles, healing, prophesy and the preaching of the gospel of prosperity. Aspects of Pentecostalism include the purported move of God, usually noted through people rolling on the floor, hysterical activity, exorcisms (demon casting/screaming), miracles, claims of healings, interpretation of visions and dreams, and the association of every negativity with evil or satanic spirits.

The term 'Pentecostal' is taken from the account of the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2: 1–13 (Anderson 2010). The followers of Jesus Christ were 'filled' with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other tongues in the Upper Room in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-13), which is one of the views of how the church was founded (Clifton 2009; Stanley 2007). Most Pentecostal activities are traced back to Topeka Kansas on 1 January 1901 under Charles Perham, and the Azusa Street, Los Angeles in April 1906 under William Seymour (Anderson 2010). Men and women replicated the acts of the First-Century apostles: speaking in tongues, healing the sick and prophesying (Miller & Tetsunao 2007). Therefore, the New Testament is important as a source on which Pentecostal Churches base their foundation.

In recent years, Zimbabwe has witnessed tremendous Pentecostalism, particularly after the 1990s. Some of the Pentecostal Churches are locally initiated by Africans without any relation with mission Pentecostal Churches abroad. They are self-financing, self-governing and self-supporting. In outlook, all Pentecostal Churches proclaim a pragmatic gospel that seeks to

address practical issues of poverty, unemployment, sickness and evil spirits (Friedrick 2017). Pentecostal leaders avoid direct political engagement and contestations with the state and are often accused of unquestionably or gullibly supporting the status quo. Their political acquiescence is partly due to their theological interpretation of Romans 13: 1–7, which calls for obedience to those in authority, as they are ordained by God. In this case, Pentecostal Churches' political philosophy becomes profoundly ambivalent. Therefore, Pentecostalism in this study refers to those African Churches that emphasise the centrality of Holy Spirit in faith and in practice.

Gullibility

Gullibility is generally understood in various ways, ranging from outright stupidity to indecision raised by the epistemic indeterminacy of the testimony of others. The activities of tricksters fall within this range. These activities happen in almost every scope of life, be it business, religion, law or politics. The preachers sway people into believing that they have something to offer. As a result, people throw caution out of the window and follow them. Those who claim to have direct contact with God tend to have an edge over those who do not have direct access to God. It is in such contexts that religious imposters arise and many people are wavered into believing them sheepishly. It is against this backdrop that some end up being cheated. Often this tendency is labelled gullibility. If gullibility is understood as a belief in something with no substantiating facts, does this make the affected persons foolish? Believing that another person is endowed with special gifts from God, which can help them, is not unwarranted, but taking what the person says uncritically can be irrational and hence gullible. In this article we seek to unpack the concept of 'religious gullibility' in relation to political passivity in Zimbabwe.

Chimuka (2017) infers that 'gullibility' is the unwarranted belief in something with no substantiating facts to support it. In this, gullibility is failure of social intelligence, where a person is easily tricked or manipulated into an ill-advised course of action. Greenspan (2009) suggests the existence of a distinction between credulity (an uncritical acceptance of information presented) and gullibility (a tendency to be tricked or manipulated). Therefore, credulity is merely 'a belief' and gullibility is the behaviour or concrete action aspect. Hence one may manipulate a potential victim's credulity in order to have them perform a gullible action (Teunisse 2015, in Greenspan, Loughlin & Black 2001).

Kourken Michaelian (2010) refers to gullibility as blind trust; that is, trusting without questioning. The question is, how much should one trust the testimony of another in the absence of compelling evidence? Should one be radically sceptical and not believe anything, which presents itself with no undefeated evidence, even when it comes from the mouth of someone who speaks on behalf of God? Is it possible to question Pentecostal Charismatics leaders who are believed to be God's mouthpieces to humanity if they purport to speak what they proclaim to be the will of God and back their utterance with a Biblical basis such as Romans 13: 1–7? Will one not be labelled as a heretic if he or she questions Biblical texts and renowned inspired preachers?

In the African traditional context and unlike in the Christian context, Chimuka (2017) singles out examples of folktales that were meant to warn children or listeners against falling victim to tricksters. Listeners to the folktales who were, particularly children, were cautioned against taking what was said by others as true in all cases. The lessons drawn from the folktales warned children not to take anything at face value, particularly from characters who were morally suspect and particularly dangerous. However, the question with which the study wrestles pertains to whether pastors, bishops and elders can be categorised as morally suspect or dangerous preachers in the context of Biblical interpretation and giving political guidance to followers. These people deserve respect from the public, to such extent that if they turn out to be tricksters, they will mislead many. If they fail to interpret a Biblical text properly, they sway the congregants who trust them as God's mouthpieces.

Accordingly, the study focuses on Pentecostal Christians as prone to naivety or gullibility, as they tend to believe everything they hear from their leaders without questioning it. In this respect, they can easily fall prey to being tricked. To what extent can Pentecostal followers question the credibility of one who purports to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit and still remain faithful followers of Christ? Trusting others, especially trusting Pentecostal Charismatic leaders in their scriptural interpretation under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is the most common practice among Pentecostal Christians (Origgi 2008: 36). However, because of this trust, Pentecostal Christians fall prey to political tricksters. Greenspan (in Chimuka 2017), says that gullibility is not generally seen as an affliction; yet it can do terrible harm, as evidenced in losing one's life-savings to a swindler, falling in love with a sweet-talking scoundrel, or putting one's life into the hands of a cruel political leader. The article does not intend to deal with gullibility in all its facets, but specifically with Pentecostalism and political gullibility evidenced in political passivity.

Role of Leadership in Pentecostal Churches

Pastors, bishops and elders are very influential people in Church circles and their attitudes are likely to rub of onto their followers. This implies that even the political position of the leader becomes that for the followers without them questioning this. This implies that Pentecostal leaders can easily exploit this reverence to influence their followers for either political passivity or political transformation. They can profoundly shape the thinking and behaviour of their members. Shafranske (1996) also highlights that it is the groups of people that individuals are closely affiliated to that influence their worldviews the most. According to Galanter in Shafranske (1996), a charismatic leader's influence within a church group establishes the validation of the beliefs within the sect, often within the exclusive control of the leader. The leader often has the ability to inspire hope or fear, combined with a dynamic presence. This is an important aspect of the leader's authority and influence in the formation and maintenance of the charismatic group.

Taylor *et al.* (2000) remind us that dealing with social, religious and political problems was the domain of religious leaders and communities for many centuries prior to the advent of modern secular structures. Religious leaders are still deemed important by many people, even politicians themselves. In Pentecostal Churches, therefore, it can be said that considerable political influence is located within the person of the charismatic leader. The Charismatic leader; that is, prophets, pastors, bishops and archbishops, are sometimes the first and only people that individuals encounter when in need. They often function as gatekeepers to social, political and health services (Taylor et al. 2000). They are typically approached directly by Pentecostal followers in spiritual, economic, social and political matters. As a consequence, Charismatic leadership positions are important ones with respect to the political decisions of their congregants. Therefore it must not be underestimated.

Pentecostalism and political gullibility are evidenced in the political passivity of most Christians. The research wonders why such a large and influential body has not had a strong voice in the country on issues affecting the people's freedom. According to Young (2010), Pentecostal churches seem to be convinced that the task of the Church is primarily spiritual and they base this on Romans 13: 1–7 which they preach from a literal interpretation. Since politics is about governance of the all people, regardless of religious or political affiliation, Pentecostalism needs to stop interfering with the people's political consciousness. Young (2010: 3) alludes that Pentecostal churches cannot

afford to be silent in addressing socio-political challenges of the country as if they are not affected.

A Literal Interpretation of Romans 13: 1-7

A literal Biblical interpretation is often used as a pejorative to describe or ridicule the interpretative approaches of fundamentalist or evangelical Christians. According to Recanati (2004), literal interpretation means interpreting words in their usual or most basic sense without metaphor or allegory. Literal interpretation is often necessarily associated with the belief in verbal plenary inspiration according to which not only the Biblical message, but also the individual words in which that message was delivered or written down were divinely disclosed. This was the long-held interpretation of Romans 13:1-7 that acts as the biblical basis for corporal punishment.

Tshuma (2017: 229) argues that Romans 13: 1-7 has been misconstrued to imply a blind endorsement and support of all those in authority, like the appeasement drive by the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) during the election violence of 2008, when it indicated that:

> We are not anti-Government; we will not condemn our leaders just because the imperialist West wants us to do so …. We are a Church body and we need to support our leaders and pray for them and not insult them.

One possible context of Romans 13: 1-7, as interpreted by scholars of Romans, was an acknowledgement of the peace and stability that was achieved during that time; hence the need to back up the stability with prayers. Misguided claims, such as emphasising that Christians are to be in the world, but are not of this world, need to be unpacked for the purposes of clarity. The salvation gospel, which is futuristic, tends to pacify Pentecostals and limit them to the pulpit gospel, surrendering all to God with mere intercessory prayers.

Tshuma (2017) further contends that politicians have a tendency to reduce Christians to the opening and closing prayers during conferences and/or national gatherings, while leaving the 'important issues' on the table for political elites. Politicians attend church services largely for 'political convenience' but Christians are threatened not to cross the line into the political domain. This is an inherently contradictory relationship bent on subordinating the mission of the church. According to Mtata, quoted verbally at *The Zimbabwe Council of*

Churches conference in 2018, '… in a situation of injustice, the role of the Church is to identify with the poor and the voiceless and to give them support in their struggle for freedom, justice and dignity'. Combating political injustices and advocating for the poor will mean Christian political involvement of one sort or the other. Not every Christian will take the same approach or be called to the same political stance, or even the same political conclusions. Some will write letters to politicians (e.g. the ZCC Pastoral Letters, The Zimbabwe We Want document), while others might teach voter education and observe elections (Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative). Others will launch prophetic protests, like during the Pentecost Conference in Harare (1992), when Guti rebuked some of the leaders of the nation for shedding innocent blood, and the mysterious disappearance of people (Guti 1994: 105), which is a very progressive contribution coming as a lone voice from a Pentecostal leader during those politically uncertain times. Others may sit at a political discussion table and try to 'be the Daniels', like the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe (EPOIZ). Others will march around the city in spiritual warfare and intercession for the sins of the city, while others may run for political posts.

Exegetical Interpretation of Romans 13: 1-7

Exegesis, from Greek word *Exegoma*i which means (to lead out), is a critical explanation or interpretation of a Biblical text, particularly a religious text (Hayes & Holladay 2007). Exegesis aims to provide a standardized, scholarly and critical interpretation and explanation of a written text. Its purpose is to present a case for how the original author intended his/ her text to be understood by using a methodology that incorporates many vital considerations. Exegesis is important to Biblical scholars because it allows the researcher to critically interpret and attempt to explain the meaning of the biblical text and be rigorously accountable for that interpretation. Exegesis provides modern persons and evidence based scholarly approach to reading the bible. This method is the one that will be used in interpreting Romans 13: 1-7 (Hayes & Holladay 2007).

Hermeneutics, according to Osborne (1992), is both a science and an art involving logically orderly classification of the law of interpretation on one hand and an acquired skill demanding both imagination and ability to apply those laws of interpretation on the other. This art and science will be applied in the interpretation of Romans 13: 1-7.

The Historical Political Setting of Romans 13: 1-7

Marcus Borg (2002) contends that the letter to the Romans was written in A.D. 57 when Nero was in power, but in the early part of his reign (A.D. 54-68). There appears to be no indication that at that time he was a tyrant and brutal ruler. The Jews had been expelled in A.D. 49, but that was under Claudius and things appeared to be different in A.D. 57. There was a problem with 'tax protests' under Nero in A.D 58, but this does not appear to be relevant at the time of the writing of Romans. Therefore, the study assumes that political conditions were fairly stable and that the Christian Church which was undoubtedly born in the Synagogue at Rome enjoyed the status of *religio licita* (lawful/ permitted or legitimate religion) as they were still largely seen to be within Judaism's fold. Kasemann (1980) suggests another possibility for the background to the passage. He claims that certain Christian enthusiasts had thrown off all restraints in the light of their heavenly calling and regarded 'earthly authorities' with indifference or contempt. This may be true, but it is difficult to defend from within or outside of the passage. Indeed, the use of the indicative 'you pay taxes' (v. 6) would tend to indicate that there was at least some degree of submission to the state already in the Church. Paul exhorts the Romans in right conduct toward the state but it is very difficult to say for sure what prompted such a decision.

Romans 13: 1–7 has often been used as a blue print for church state relations by both Christian and non-Christians alike. The question is as Christians: Should we meddle in politics? Is politics for the politicians? In his response to these questions, Dr Aynos Moyo, quoted *ippisisma verba* (quoted verbatim) when he was questioned on what Paul meant by the phrase 'Government is appointed by God'. He articulated that Paul was apocalyptically inspired, as he thought the world was coming to an end. Paul was optimistic about the state and he thought that the Roman Empire was the good thing given to the people. Dr Moyo further highlighted that Paul could have changed his mind, had he lived up to the era of persecution. He could, instead, have demonized the State. However, he reiterated that the State is necessary to regulate order and peace for the good of humanity, but where is the role of the Church?

The Church is the watchdog; it must make sure that the State fulfils its mandate of protecting the country from outside invasion and deliver goods and services. Tshuma (2017: 225) argues that Church and State are independent and autonomous in their own spheres, but are at the service of humanity. The engagement between politics and the Church should be that of provision of

checks and balances for both parties. Hence, Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwean society cannot afford to be indifferent or reduced to prayers and offering guidance on moral issues, which is a rather narrow interpretation of its broad-based mission. The question is, should the Christians in this case consign themselves to the pulpit and allow the politicians to do whatever they want with the country? Is the church's duty to preach and spectate saying thus not our domain; ours is the salvation of the soul?

One common interpretation of Rom 13: 1–7 is that Paul re-inscribes colonial values to colonial subjects (Sugirtharajah 1998: 20). Paul seems to allude that God and history are on the side of the Roman Empire. The only options left to the colonized is subordination or resistance. Paul seems to advocate support for the Roman Empire's political authority and offers no political strategy or solution for its liquidation. On the other hand, Elliot (2011: 64–65) argues that Paul should be read as more critical, challenging and antagonistic towards the Roman Empire. Drawing from the above two positions, the author sees Paul's position as both socially conservative and politically challenging towards the Roman Empire. This position is well supported by Wright (2004: 82–87), who says Paul's views on Romans 13: 1–7 represent a significant demotion rather than elevation of emperors; however, Paul is doing it in a wise way. Bhabha (1995: 206–209) refers to the way Paul is communicating as negotiating between cultural diversity and cultural difference. Charles (2009: 247) summarises this as a way to understand the different struggles that come to play in defining authority and subordination in a particular colonial situation. Hence in challenging his audience, Paul challenges the dominant elites' exercise of authority as guided by the good, and not the bad, as he does in Romans 13: 1–7.

A logical starting point for the analysis of Romans 13: 1–7 is apartheid South Africa where systemic and endemic violence, designed to create the theology of the empire, was embedded in the institutional superstructure and the institutional theology of the Dutch Reformed Church. This theology was rightly criticised by the Kairos Document of 1985. A colonial interpretation of Romans 13: 1–7 became an exemplar for other African dictators.

For many Christians across the world, Romans 13 is an unequivocal, unrelenting call for blind obedience to the State (Lamarquand in West and Dube 2000: 83, cited in Mukuka 2012). This was epitomized in South Africa where, for many years, the apartheid regime, bolstered by the colonial hermeneutics of the Dutch Reformed Church, used Romans 13 to justify their unfair treatment of the majority Black population, whose challenge was that of

submission (Munro 1990). However, as early as 1967, Susan Rennie Ritner (1967: 17-37) pointed out the irony of the Church's position when it tried to build on the Christian message of brotherhood to buttress the apartheid regime.

It is somehow ironic to still find African leaders today who use the Bible against their own people. In 2008, Robert Mugabe once declared, 'Even Romans 13 says leaders are appointed by God. 'I am an image of God who appointed me to my current position' *(The Daily News* 2008.) Such a reading of Romans 13 has not always been unanimous. A similar stand was adopted by the second Zambian President, Frederick Chiluba, in the face of opposition to his religio-political decisions, especially from the leadership of the Zambia Episcopal Conference during the period 1991–2001.

Acceptable Interpretation of Romans 13:1-7

There have always been voices of dissent that question if every authority enjoys the divine right to obedience, or only those that excel in their responsibilities. In the context of Rom 13: 1-7, one's immediate problem is the injunction to be submissive to the ruling authorities. What do we understand by the term 'authority'? Are all authorities, including repressive and corrupt regimes, worthy of obedience? In the light of our understanding of authority and obedience to the state one needs to question whether the prevailing authority excels in its authority and therefore worthy of our submission. It is this interpretation that the researcher agrees with. Interpreters of Romans 13: 1-7 ought to use insights from the historical-critical method as a springboard for the newer tools of Biblical interpretation. Throughout the history of Christianity, totalitarian regimes have tried to legitimize an attitude of blind obedience and absolute servility towards the state by quoting this text, which compounded political gullibility among many Christians.

Pentecostal Political Passivity

Togarasei (2017: 21) describes Pentecostals Biblical interpretation as possible contributor to the pacification of the public in socio-economic and political affairs of Zimbabwe. He further highlights that Pentecostal Biblical interpretation led people to surrender everything to God and to describe everything as the will of God and allow the status quo to prevail. It is this Pentecostal stance regarding politics that the researcher refers to as political gullibility. Political gullibility among Pentecostal Churches, therefore, becomes the uncritical en-

dorsement of and submission to exploitative and abusive powers that are preached in some Pentecostal sermons. Banana, as cited in Tshuma (2017), explains such naivety and unwarranted meekness by the Church during the armed struggle for independence when he asserts that the Church spent years preaching peace and forgiveness in the midst of war and vengeance, powerless love in a state of loveless power, obedience in a state of rebellion, and loyalty in a state of illegitimate authority. Thus, Church activism in the context of social disintegration and national polarisation demands a practical, socio-political and economic engagement with the relevant arms of governance and political players or parties in order to move towards a socio-political contract that will give birth to peace and democratic space for all. This type of message is alien to the vast majority of Pentecostal preachers who are busy trying to appease the powers that be, even in matters where there is gross abortion of justice and human rights abuse. This is why the article maintains that Pentecostal position in respect of the State's atrocities is shrouded in ambivalence and unwarranted neutrality, indicative of passivity, which is evidence of gullible political behaviour.

Pentecostal Churches, who herald as the largest denomination and have managed to recruit the literate and illiterate alike, have no choice but to move from the confinement of salvation of the spirit alone at the expense of mortification of the flesh, eschatological and other worldly approach to constructive critical engagement on socio-economic and political misfortunes. Pentecostal Churches cannot afford to sit back and watch while new governments take their own course without spiritual guidance. Pentecostal Churches' withdrawal from their prophetic role as the salt and light has given leeway to some politicians to shut Christians out of politics, telling them not to mix church with politics, since they found backing from the conservative biblical interpretation that seems to endorse these rulers blindly, citing Romans 13: 1-7. Today's Church must reject the lie and participate in the running of the nation (Guti 1994: 54).

Pentecostals are apocalyptic in their political understanding for their preaching regards political challenges as a passing phase guided exclusively by politicians, which in no time shall be a thing of the past. The message of hope and the call for resilience leaves everything to prayer, waiting for God to change the situation. People's hopes are pinned on God's time to change everything, while its members are subjected to economic and political strife. The Pentecostal response to these gross human rights abuses is conservative at the expense of the suffering masses, as if economic and political challenges

exclude Pentecostal Christians. This position aligns with the view that most African Pentecostal churches are conservative by nature and enjoy a pan-African agenda. They tend to support the status quo.

As argued by Raftopoulos and Mlambo (2008: 113), there was a time when the political climate itself warranted the silence of the church. This was when the church was confronted with the political intolerance of ZANU PF, which tried to establish its hegemony over autonomous civil institutions after independence, and churches avoided criticizing government openly; hence churches adopted the accommodationist approach to the state. During this era, the Church in this era was swallowed by the state or accommodated itself to the state. This was partly due to the brutality of the security forces and the natural peace-loving nature of the people of Zimbabwe. However, due to mounting social and economic pressures, churches could not stand it any longer; hence, critical engagement evidenced by some church-based organizations speaking prophetically against the status quo.

What explains ZAOGA's aloofness or political passivity around the 1980s, according to Maxwell (2006: 250), was the political climate punctuated by danger. ZANU PF guarded its legitimacy against opposition and any form of criticism. ZAOGA was a target because of its mass appeal. It had to protect itself; hence a lack of involvement in politics. The stance of ZAOGA distancing itself from politics was a calculated move, given the reigning political intolerance, though this ambivalence was at the expense of the masses. This position taken by ZAOGA is not unique to ZAOGA, but was used by many Zimbabwean individuals and faith-based organisations for safety. Politicians capitalize on this stance; hence they instil fear in people in order to weaken any form of protest. That is why passivity is interpreted by many as gullibility.

Pentecostal Political Consciousness

The kind of Pentecostal consciousness raised by Guti (1994: 63) in his book, *The Church and Political Responsibility*, clearly expresses the politically consciousness gospel. It talks of the responsibility of the Church in politics; that is, the need for the Church to be involved in the running of the government through the guiding authority from God. For Guti (1994), preaching alone without participating in the development of a nation can only help spiritually, while people live in poverty, without financial resources to spread the gospel. 'That is why politicians are not bothered about indigenous churches because they do not have a realistic approach' (Guti 1994: 49). It means that children

cannot get medicine and teachers do not teach. ZAOGA has even conducted 'Healing the Nation' crusades, preaching the gospel of reconciliation to survivors of political violence. The message of justice and peace is taken to the people and even to the State House. In his book, Guti writes and preaches political consciousness, but practically speaking, the stance of the Church in politics is still minimal. There is yet a need for an effort to put the Founder of Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa Forward in Faith's theory into practice.

However, due to the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe since the year 2000, ZAOGA had a leeway through the doctrine of talents. According to Maxwell (2006: 202), the doctrine of talents inculcates the spirit of industriousness and creativity where women in particular are encouraged to prosper in the Church through hard work. Women engage in selling an assortment of wares and numerous small items and goods in the spirit of promoting self-reliance, in the wake of desertions by their husbands in response to the rising cost of living.

Through their agencies and in faith-based organisations like EFZ, ZCBC, and ZCC, Pentecostal churches have participated in the democratization of the country. Through these platforms churches, both mainline and Pentecostal, pledged to use their global and international connections to help the government build bridges among and between Zimbabweans and the international community (ZCBC, ZCC & EFZ 2006: 43). However, this effort by churches is not coming to fruition since some Christian leaders are aligned with the state, benefiting from the status quo. Thus, Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political challenges are indicative of a wedge of division that separates the State from the church's guidance; hence this discussion to reconsider the detrimental effects of such a separation.

In 2018 and at a ZCC Conference at Arupe Jesuit University, Taringa asked how proper it was for the Church to try and offer solutions to the political problems of the State and later come up with a political party. He further attested that, this is the dilemma of the Church. Taringa concluded his 2018 presentation by citing Martin Luther King Jr's view that the belief that God will do everything for humanity is untenable, because that is not faith, but superstition.

Findings

Pentecostal movements have never formally spelled out their approach to scriptures, such that Pentecostal hermeneutics is still a burning issue in the 21st century. Pentecostals love the Bible but the majority seem to be restricted to a

literal interpretation of the text. They seem not to be conscious of the historical critical methods; hence they fall into the detour of eisegesis (reading one's ideas into the text) instead of exegesis (drawing meaning from the text). This is evidenced in a number of Pentecostal church leaders who spoke on behalf of their churches, and individual church leaders who openly showed their allegiance to the government, irrespective of all glaring misgivings. Tshuma (2017) castigates these as a curious breed of 'Men of God' who are peddling party political propaganda in the name of God. These political activist cadres masquerade as Christians and purport to preach the virtues of forgiveness, national healing and peace, when in fact all they are doing is covertly conveying party-political messages to an unsuspecting clergy and general membership of the Church, which turns the follower into the pitfall of gullibility. This can be viewed as an infiltration of churches by using divide-and-rule tactics whereby party politics are disseminated to the congregants by a religious leader on behalf of the politicians. The followers, due to the respect owed to the charismatic leader, abuse the pulpit to further his/her interests. The attitude of religious leaders (Pentecostal) who shower the powers that be with blind eulogies, reiterating their divine appointment using literal interpretation of Romans 13: 1-7, mislead, dupe and trick the majority of Pentecostals into political passivity. The issue at stake is not that leaders who execute their duties with people at heart should not be praised, but Christian leaders are now blind nationalists divided alongside partisan politics and promoting that stance to members as the will of God. This attitude is what is imparted to the flock or congregants to support ungodly authority faithfully as Divine will spiced with a biblical flavour of a misinterpretation of Romans13: 1-7. This has led to Tshuma's comment that 'Party politics has found its way into the pulpit, bringing the name of the Church into disrepute', hence swaying most Christians into gullible behaviour; thus promoting the political interests of the religious leader as if it is the will of God (Tshuma 2017).

However, Pentecostal leaders cannot be painted with one brush, for there was a minority voice from Pentecostal leaders who opposed the gross abortion of justice by the government; hence they clamoured for justice. Guti (1994: 11) reinforces the need for positional change by the Church on a one-sided salvation gospel when he explains that: The focus of the church and its theology has been pre-occupied with heaven. It needs to be changed, because once you receive Jesus as your personal Saviour and be born again; walk in the fear of the Lord, heaven is yours. With this move some Pentecostal voices are now being heard.

According to Guti (1994: v), church and government should work together, as exemplified by the Old Testament's theological narration: As in the past the nations had a head of state who ruled under the direction of God through the prophet. It was a prophet who would be used by God to warn the nation when it sinned. He would go to the head of the state to inform him what God was saying and he would heed the warning. This prevented the famine, starvation and many other disasters that might befall the nation, as the leader and nation humbled themselves before God as in 2 Chronicles 7: 14. However, if they rebelled against the warning of God, then catastrophes would befall them.

It is also important to note that Jesus Christ himself also dealt with gullible behaviour in Matthew article 4. The devil tried to trick Jesus by quoting scriptures. 'Change stones into bread ----' but Jesus refused to listen and believe the devil's tricks. Therefore, non-gullibility in dealing with the devil is a quality attributed to Christ, as reflected in Matthew 4. Christians must take a leaf from their Messiah on how to deal with religious gullibility.

Conclusion

Pentecostal Biblical interpretation leads people to surrender everything to God, therefore allowing the perpetuation of the status quo. Pentecostals are facing serious challenges of a belief that it is rebellious to question teachings and practices of authority figures. The Pentecostal belief that the Lord's anointed are not touched, failure to differentiate between anointing and crowd control techniques as well as the difference between presence of God and goose bumps are areas that Pentecostal members need exercise caution. Propensity of exaggeration is high in the Pentecostal leaders. Pentecostal growth in Africa is creating a standardized view of the world that will function as a sort of imperialism, by associating the personal political interests of the Pentecostal leaders with those of God. They impart this to followers as dreams or visions received from God; hence, Pentecostal followers accept the stance blindly, which turns into gullibility.

Pentecostal politics promote a wave of 'new Christendom' in Africa whereby Pentecostal adherents are attracted to the dream of converting the ruler, or of electing one of its own members as president, seeing this as the height of its political aspirations and as panacea for the problems of the country. There is little understanding of politics as a system; instead, there is the recurrent 'messianic' hope in an 'evangelical' or 'born-again' president,

and a belief in the possibility of the 'people of God' exercising power in an unambiguously positive way.

Pentecostals adhere to triumphalist theology; this traditionally apolitical religious community is unable to see itself as one political actor amongst many; it sees itself as the most important. Something along those lines has already occurred in Zambia, where a Pentecostal president declared the country to be a 'Christian nation' and performed a ceremony to cleanse the presidential palace of nefarious spiritual influences left over from the previous occupant, but in the end he had to leave power immersed in accusations of corruption and abuse of human rights. The case of Zambia and other examples from Africa and Latin America show Pentecostals to be very susceptible to the prevailing political culture in each national context. The idea of spiritual warfare ascribes a country's problems to the fact that the wrong people are in power, and we are the right people. There is no concept of political apprenticeship, nor of painstaking construction of a movement over many years, through education and institutional development.

However, for the long and more diffuse process of democratic consolidation, Pentecostals might be more useful, because they are anti-fatalist and teach ordinary people to exercise leadership in public spaces. Pentecostals, therefore, do not fit into the negative stereotypes of being dangerous for democracy, potentially violent. However, neither do they fit their own cherished self-image as carriers of political blessings for their countries.

Recommendations

The article recommends that Pentecostal biblical interpretation should not only be limited to literal interpretation which leads to eisegesis, but may use historical critical methods that lead to exegesis. Pentecostal churches should have tremendous spiritual, social, economic and political influence on the mundane life of Zimbabweans since they claim a mass following in the area of evangelization. Their excellence in organizing national prayers and national crusades as evangelistic methods must carry with them political consciousness as relevant message.

The article further recommends that Christians, in dealing with gullibility, must follow Jesus' example who, in Matthew 4, refused the devil's appeal to scriptures without sanity.

The Pentecostal churches need to be united in themselves and join other faith-based organisations to counter political divisions. Their unity must

transcend party politics, as it includes people from all parties and stand for the good of all Zimbabweans. Pentecostal Church leaders should guard against being manipulated by politicians and always be neutral in their engagements. Pentecostal churches that herald themselves as the biggest and fastest-growing churches in numbers must also grow in activism, so that their biblical interpretation influences the socio-economic and political landscape. The respect owed to Pentecostal leaders by their followers as voice of God among the people must be utilized to influence congregants into political responsibility rather than political passivity.

References

Anderson, A.H. 2010. Varieties, Taxonomies and Definitions. In Anderson, A.H. (ed.): *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*. Berkeley: University of California Press, Ltd. https://www.academia.edu/6068798/Global_Pentecostalism_Charismatic_Movements_and_Independent_Churches_Christianity_Shifting_Southwards_Historical_Overview

Bhabha, H.K. 1995. Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences. In Ashcroft B., G. Griffiths & H. Tiffin (eds.): *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge. https://books.google.com.gi/books?id=zcpiQwtw4hMC&printsec=frontcover&rview=1#v=onepage&q&f=false

Borg, M.J. 2002. *Reading the Bible again for the First Time: Taking the Bible Seriously but not Literally*. San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco. https://www.amazon.com/Reading-Bible-Again-First-Time/dp/0060609192?asin=0060609192&revisionId=&format=4&depth=1

Charles, R. 2009. Hybridity and the Letter of Aristeas. *JSJ* 40: 242–259.

Chimuka, T.A. 2017. *The Threat of Gullibility:* Faith and Christian Behaviour in Southern Africa. *Oral History Journal of South Africa* 5,1: 49 – 63. Available at: https://journals.co.za/content/journal/10520/EJC-f2c6f811e (Accessed on 15 June 2018).

Clifton, S. 2009. Empowering Pentecostal Women. *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies (AJPS)* 12, 2: 171–179: Available at: www.app.edu; (Accessed on 12 June 2018.)

Creswell, J.W. 2014. *Research Design.* London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Elliot, N. 2011. The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire. (Paul in Critical Context Series.) Minneapolis: Fortress Press. https://www.bibleandcriticaltheory.com/issues/vol7-no1/vol-7-no-1-2011-review-of-neil-elliott-the-arrogance-of-nations-reading-romans-in-the-shadow-of-empire-paul-in-critical-context-series-minneapolis-fortress-press-2008/ (Accessed on 13 July 2018.)

Freston, P. 2014. *Religion and Politics in Global Context*. Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University.

Friedrick, K. 2017. The Progressive Pentecostal Conception of Development within an African Context of Poverty. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal (STJ)* 3,1. Available at: http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2413-94672017000100010 (Accessed on 17 September 2018.)

Greenspan, S. 2009. *Annals of Gullibility: Why we Get Duped and How to Avoid it*. Connecticut: Praeger Publishers.

Greenspan, S., G. Loughlin & R. Black 2003. Credulity and Gullibility in Persons with Mental Retardation. In Glidden L.M. (ed.). *International Review of Research in Mental Retardation* 24: 101-135.

Guti, E.H. 1994. *The Church and Political Responsibility*. Harare: EGEA Publications.

Guti, E.H. 1997. *History of ZAOGA Forward in Faith: The Book of Remembrance. How it Began and Where It is Going*. Harare: EGEA Publications.

Hayes, J.H. & C.R. Holladay 2007. *Biblical Exegesis*. West Minister: John Knox Press.

Kairos Document 1[985] 1985. *Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa*. London: Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR).

Kallas, J. 1965. Romans XIII. 1–7: An Interpolation. Available at: https://bradlittlejohn.com/2010/09/30/2010930romans-131-7-an-interpolation-html/ (Accessed on 18 August 2018.)

Käsemann, E. 1980. *Commentary on Romans*. London: SCM.

Lamarquand, G. 2000. New Testament Exegesis in (Modern) Africa. In West, G.O. & M.W. Dube (eds.): *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends.* Leiden: Brill

Mukuka T. 2012. Reading/ Hearing Romans 13:1 - 7 Under an African Tree: Towards a *Lectio Postcolonial Context Africana*. *Neotestamentica* 46,1: 105-138. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/43048847 (Accessed on 18 August 2018.)

Lobkowicz, N. 1964. Karl Marx's Attitude on Religion. *The Review of Politics* 26,3,July: 319 – 352. https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1405231.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A9b614d96283e992279180553764be9f2 (Accessed 17 September 2018.)

Maxwell, D. 2006. *African Gifts of the Spirit*: *Pentecostalism and The Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement*. Harare: Weaver.

McKinnon, A.M. 2005. *Reading 'Opium of the People': Expression, Protest and the Dialectics of Religion.* Available at: https://doi.org/10.1163/156916 3053084360 (Accessed on 19 October 2018.)

Michaelian, K. 2010. In Defense of Gullibility: The Epistemology of Testimony and the Psychology of Deception Detection. *Synthese* 176: 399-427. DOI: 10.1007/511 229-009-9573-1.

Miller, E. & Y. Tetsunao 2007. *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Munro, W. 1990. Romans 13:1-7: Apartheid's Last Biblical Refuge. In Nanos, M.D. (ed.): *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress.

Origgi, G. 2008. Trust Authority and Epistemic Responsibility. *Theoria, Universidad del Bio-Bio* 23/1, 61: 35–44.

Osborne, R. 1992. *Philosophy for Beginners*. Village Station: New York.

Raftopoulos, B. & A.S. Mlambo (eds.). 2009. *Becoming Zimbabwe: A History from the Pre-Colonial Period to 2008*. Harare: Weaver Press.

Recanati, F. 2004. *Literal Meaning.* Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/36734770_Literal_Meaning/citation/download (Accessed on 17 August 2018.)

Ritner, S.R. 1967. The Dutch Reformed Church and Apartheid. *Journal of Contemporary History: Church and Politics* 2,4: 7–37.

Shafranske, L.R. 1996. Cognitive-behavioural Therapy and the Religious Person. In Shafranske, E.P. (ed.): *Religion and the Clinical Practice of*

Psychology. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/10199014 (Accessed on 15 August 2018.)

Shafranske, E.P. (ed.). 1996. Religion and the Clinical Practice of Psychology. *American Psychological Association*. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1037/10199-000 (Accessed on 17 August 2018.)

Spivak, G.C. 1999. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present.* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Stanley, S.C. 2007. Wesleyan/ Holiness and Pentecostal Women Preachers: Pentecost as the Pattern of Primitivism. In Yong, A. & E. Alexander (eds.): *Philips' Daughters: Women in Pentecostal-Charismatic Leadership*. Eugene: Pickwick Publishers.

Sugirtharajah, R.S. 1998. *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretations.* Sheffield: United Bible Societies.

Taylor, S.E., L.C. Klein, B.P. Lewis, T.L. Gruenewald, R.A.R. Gurung & J.A. Updegraff 2000. Behavioural Response to Stress in Females: Tend-and-befriend not Fight-or-flight. *Psychological Review* 107: 441–429.

The Daily News. 09 December 2013.

Togarasei, L. 2013. Pentecostal Churches and Politics in Zimbabwe's Turbulent Years (2000-2008). In Chitando E. (ed.): *Prayers and Players: Religion and Politics in Zimbabwe.* Harare: SAPES Books.

Togarasei, L. 2017. Assessing the Place of Pentecostal Biblical Interpretation in Zimbabwe's Socio-Political and Economic Affairs. In Chitando E., F. Machingura & L. Togarasei (eds.): *Pentecostalism and Human Rights in Contemporary Zimbabwe*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Tshuma, V. 2017. Beyond the Pulpit Gospel: An Overview of Pentecostal Churches' Engagement with Socio-Economic and Political Issues in Zimbabwe - A Case of ZAOGA FIF and Word of Life. In Chitando E., F. Machingura & L. Togarasei (eds.): *Pentecostalism and Human Rights in Contemporary Zimbabwe*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Wright, N.T. 2004. *Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part Two. Articles 9-16.* London: SPCK

Young, E. 2010. *Challenges to Conceptualising and Actualising Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: How Viable is the Theory in Classroom Practice*? Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/10022487109353775 (Accessed on 28 August 2018.)

ZCBC, ZCC & EFZ 2006. *The Zimbabwe We Want: Towards a National Vision for Zimbabwe by the Churches of Zimbabwe.* Harare: Benaby Printing and Publishing.

Henerieta Mgovo
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Great Zimbabwe University
Masvingo
henerietamgovo@yahoo.com

The Bible and Gullibility among the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu in Zimbabwe

David Bishau
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2245-4911

Abstract

Gullibility takes diverse forms; indeed, it exhibits several dimensions that make it impossible to situate it within a particular discipline and area of study. Religious gullibility in particular is difficult to characterize. One indubitable observation is that it has a psychological disposition, which religious rituals and language so often mystify that the possibility of its occurrence, its exact nature where and when it occurs and its depth and spread are often difficult to ascertain. Therefore, studying it often requires a careful multidisciplinary approach that penetrates its salient features to make a case for its existence and to map its nature, depth and breadth among the devotees of a given religion. This study explored the possibility of the occurrence, nature and depth and breadth of religious gullibility among the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu. The study used the theoretical framework of transactional psychology to analyse ethnographic field notes taken from a case study of the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu in Chitungwiza during the period from 1998 to 2008 in a bid to demonstrate the presence of gullibility in the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu's attitude and overall reception of the Bible. The study's findings are that Nzira, the then leader of the group, played a mind game and instilled among his members a certain attitude towards the Bible. The study's conclusion is that through this mind game Nzira managed to draw attention to himself by removing the Bible from the minds of the devotees and replacing it with his own person. Nzira's psychological stage management obscured gullibility in this case.

Keywords: gullibility, *sowe*, religious ritual, religious language, transaction

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a16

Introduction

Contrary to the general impression people may have, the Johanne Masowe is not a homogeneous group operating under a unified leadership and structure. This heterogeneity is not unique to the Johanne Masowe, but something that characterises the Apostolic Faith in general (Maguranyanga 2011: vi). There are several almost independent groups known as Johanne Masowe whose only unifying factor is a common ancestry and history (Bishau 2010: 420). For the purpose of this chapter, it was advisable to generally classify these independent groupings into three major groupings in 'Harare', 'Bulawayo' and 'Mutare', respectively, and this distribution is largely historical (Bishau 2010: 420). 'Mutare' here is meant to represent groups in and around Mutare that still meet, at least annually, at the main shrine in Gandanzara. 'Harare' is meant to represent the groups in and around Harare, going even as far as Muzarabani the majority of who are collectively known as the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu (Bishau 2010: 420). Scholars like Musoni and Gundani (2016) carried out research on perhaps a branch of this group, which they refer to as Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi (2016; 2019). This implies that the heterogeneity even extends to the individual groupings I earlier stated. I did not have sufficient data on the groups in Bulawayo and therefore I could not make any meaningful analysis of their composition and operations. The conclusion of this article is based on data collected on the group in Mutare and the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu. I selected the group in Mutare for study because of its view of the Bible that is in sharp contrast to that of the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu. Unlike the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu, the Johanne Masowe in Mutare do read the Bible. Therefore, while the focus in this article is on the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu, for clarity, I contrasted it with the Johanne Masowe in Mutare at relevant points in the discussion. I did not study all the groups comprising the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu; I drew my case study from the group led by Nzira, popularly known as Madzibaba Pagineck. This is a group which meets even at present meets, at a *Sowe* to the North of Makoni Shopping Centre in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe.

The subject of the Bible among the Johanne Masowe in general has been a subject of research from several and diverse contexts. Researchers have come up with different conclusions about the presence of the Bible among the Johanne Masowe. One group of researchers argues that the Johanne Masowe do not read the Bible. A notable representative of this school is Engelke, who

describes the founder of the Johanne Masowe, Shoniwa, as the 'Bible burning prophet' (Engelke 2004: 77). Other scholars argue that the Johanne Masowe do read the Bible.

It seems that within their faith, the Johanne Masowe are not in agreement regarding the status and role of the Bible. What is curious is the fact that historically the Bible seemed to have had a central place in the founding 'theology' and traditions of the Johanne Masowe, which some of them, like the groups in Mutare, still maintain. However, the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu have made a radical departure from the traditional Bible-affirming position and there is a need to analyse the factors influencing this radical stance on the Bible closely. Is mere gullibility one of those factors influencing this radical departure from the traditional Bible affirming position?

The Bible among the Johanne Masowe: A Historical Analysis

A brief history of the Johanne Masowe may be important in an effort to demonstrate the problem under investigation. Officially, the Johanne Masowe movement is known as the Gospel of God Church, although sometimes there are variants to this name like the Africa Gospel Church, which is the name on a preacher's certificate granted to C Sairosi Kutsanzira on 11 November 1960 (Dillon-Malone 1987: 9). In fact, Africa Gospel Church was the first official name of the church adopted at a gathering in Zambia on 14 May 1963, but it was later changed to the current name in 1977 (Dillon-Malone 1987: 9). However, other sources refer to the Church as the Apostolic Sabbath Church of God and the devotees as vaHosanna, especially in the formative years between 1932 and 1947 (Kileff & Kileff 1979: 151; Anderson 2001: 154).

However, the name of the church does not shed light on the role and status of the Bible among the Johanne Masowe more than some excerpts from the life of the founder do. I cite only a few of the parallels to demonstrate that at its inception the Johanne Masowe Apostolic Church indeed used the Bible.

There are many parallels between some incidents in the Bible and Shoniwa's life. Both primary and secondary sources agree in principle that the founder of the church was John Shoniwa. One informant, who my research assistant interviewed, claimed that members of the Johanne Masowe popularly call him John Phillimon Shoniwa Masowe (Chikanya 2004). The first and latter names were not his names at birth and it is a bit confusing as to how and why members and researchers attached those middle names to Shoniwa's name.

According to Chakanya, Phillimon was the person who sewed John Shoniwa's first garment. Dillon-Malone (1987: 19) call him Shoniwa Masedza Tandi Moyo.

The first parallel comes from his mother, Efie's testimony (Dillon-Malone 1987: 19-20). According to the testimony, Shoniwa's conception was miraculous from the very beginning. When Efie was three months pregnant, the child in the womb began to leap in an extraordinary way (Dillon-Malone 1987: 19-20). Although there was not an equivalent of Mary, the leaping of the child in the womb compares with what took place when John the Baptist did leap in Elizabeth's womb (Dillon-Malone 1987: 19-20). It is not surprising that when he began his ministry Shoniwa called himself John the Baptist. At this time, Efie's husband Jack was in prison in Rusape for refusing to pay tax. When she experienced this extraordinary leaping of the child, she went to Rusape and told her husband, who told her that all was going to be well, but she was not supposed to tell the clergy in her area. The clergy mentioned here were probably either Catholic priests with whom he had a lot of contact or Methodist priests or missionaries with whom, according Murphree, he was quite familiar. What is interesting is that Jack wanted this pregnancy to remain a secret, because if the priests knew about it they would seek to kill the child. This reminds us of how Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Egypt for fear that Herod would kill him. It is important to note from Shoniwa's birth narrative close connections between the legendary births of Johanne Masowe and the biblical figure of John the Baptist. Johanne Masowe alleged he was a replica of John the Baptist.

Another parallel to a biblical tradition is an incident that took place when Efie came back from Rusape. One morning when she was in a field, she began to experience what felt like labour pains. As the pains intensified, she became worried, since the baby was not due yet. She saw a green cloth descending from heaven and she heard a voice commanding her to get hold of this cloth and to kneel down and pray. This reminds us of Peter's experience in Acts that denotes the spreading of the gospel to the Gentiles. Therefore, just as the Peter incident marked the beginning of the spreading of the Gospel to the Gentiles, the birth of Johanne Masowe would mark the spreading of the Gospel to the Africans, in particular, the black Zimbabweans. In her response to the voice, Efie said she did not know how to pray. The voice then taught her the Lord's Prayer. This reminds us of the biblical tradition about how Jesus taught the disciples to pray. It is interesting that to this date, Johanne Masowe

recites the words of the Lord's Prayer as the voice dictated them to Efie. The prayer is long and detailed, but what is interesting is the substitution of the word 'bread' for '*sadza*' in the prayer. Sadza is the staple food among the Shona. It is clear right from conception that Johanne Masowe would be an African apostle of Jesus tasked to preach the gospel to Africans. Efie, the testimony goes, did not tell anyone about this; instead she went to Rusape again and told her husband, Jwho wrote down everything she told him.

One close similarity with the biblical narratives is Shoniwa's call, which I reconstructed from testimonies of two eyewitnesses, Samson Mativera and Onias Bvuma, written on 1 October 1932 and 14 October 1932, respectively. According to Samson Mativera, the three: Shoniwa, Mativera himself and a Mr Chourombe Mazhambe, were workers at a certain farm (*papurazi* as farms are commonly known among the Shona) and they were staying in the same room. At this time, people still knew Johanne as Shoniwa. They also nicknamed him Susupenzi, a Shona name for a five-cent coin in the then Rhodesia. The nickname was a derogatory term that referred to a very poor and seriously deprived person. As farm labourers, Shoniwa and his friends were marginalized persons suffering deprivation. However, like a typical prophetic call, his call empowered and raised him to prominence, and was a source of authority that he always invoked throughout his ministry.

One day Shoniwa fell ill. The illness was strange and looked like a mental illness. Using logs, Mativera and Mazhambe secured the door to their room at night so that Shoniwa would not escape at night. On this particular night, the two woke up in the middle of the night, only to discover that Shoniwa had escaped but to their surprise, the door was locked and the logs were as they had fixed them onto the door. They heard Shoniwa speaking to someone outside, who, according to the two witnesses, was Satan. As was the case with Jesus' temptations, Satan was offering Shoniwa everything in heaven and on earth on condition that Shoniwa would worship him. Shoniwa refused saying, 'Get behind me Satan!' This happened for some time, with Shoniwa giving the same reply. Satan left him for some time and then came back and then said to Shoniwa, 'I have come to take back my sins from you. I have removed four ten-cent coins from one of your sides'. Still Shoniwa told Satan to leave him alone. After this incident, Shoniwa knocked on the door and Mativera and Mazhambe let him in. He was cold, breathing heavily and showing every sign that he was seriously ill. According to Mativera, Shoniwa died early in the morning before sunrise.

At sunrise, Mativera says they heard a voice, which they believed was God's voice, calling Shoniwa from heaven. According to Mativera, God called Shoniwa three times, using his nickname. This shows close parallels with Samuel's call. When God called Shoniwa, he answered, 'You are Lord. Be gracious to me'. Mativera says Shoniwa's body was in the room, but they heard his voice as if it were in heaven. The voice from heaven then instructed Shoniwa to sing a song, 'Be gracious to us Lord! Alleluya! Alleluya!' that is a popular song among the Johanne Masowe to this day. In the ensuing conversation, Mativera says God told Shoniwa that he was ill because of his sins from birth. God wanted to take Shoniwa now, for there was a task God wanted him to do. However, Shoniwa pleaded with God to take him back to the earth where there were more people. God then allowed him to return to earth and, according to Mativera, immediately Shoniwa came back to life. His first words were,

> People of this world are in pitch darkness. Did you listen to me speak with the Father. God wanted to give me work to do in heaven but I requested God to allow me to come back here on earth so that I can teach people here.

This is a typical example of an Old Testament prophetic call narrative. However, the Johanne Masowe contextualize the Old and New Testament conceptions of theophany and commission based on their understanding of Shona spirit mediums. Johanne, like all Shona mediums, fell ill, which usually is a sign that some important external force wants to possess a person, but unlike the spirit mediums among the Shona, Johanne saw visions of the New Jerusalem. We witness here a key characteristic of the Johanne Masowe 'theology' and *modus operandi*. The Johanne Masowe do not put in writing inherited biblical traditions, but rather they become part of, and are acted out in, a contextualized apocalyptic drama. This dramatization comes out more clearly among the major group that this study focuses on, the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu, who claim that the Bible is present among them, as Engelke puts it, 'live and direct' (Engelke 2004: 77).

During the same incident, God gave Johanne the Ten Commandments. Again, we witness a contextualized version of the incident at Mt. Sinai where God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. It is interesting that some sections of the Johanne Masowe refer to Johanne as the Black Moses. It is interesting

that while the commandment regarding the Sabbath is surprisingly absent here, it is crucial to note that right from the beginning keeping the Sabbath is a key commandment among the Johanne Masowe. However, one group observes Saturday as their Sabbath day, while the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu observes Friday as their Sabbath.

Other close parallels to biblical traditions are events about Johanne's death and resurrection that Onias Bvuma recorded on 14 October 1932. These events are key elements of Johanne's call that eventually led to Johanne's ministry from Mount Marimba. I will not give all the details that Bvuma recorded, but Johanne fell ill after falling off from a bicycle. Johanne lit seven candles in his hut (Sundkler & Steed 2000: 970). This is one very crucial incident, which seems to be a dramatization of Revelations 4: 5. It is important to note that this verse is on the official stamp and logo of the Gospel of God Church and is clearly inscribed with the picture of the golden stand with its seven candles lit and standing on the whole globe. The latter imagery implies that Johanne, while focusing on Africa, conceived of his mission as a universal one.

Johanne died at 1 o'clock in the afternoon and the white farmer who was his employer asked his workers to collect the body and bury it around 4 o'clock the same day. The workers could not finish digging his grave and could not bury him since it was late. Therefore, they put the body in the grave and put metal sheets on the grave hoping to bury the body the following day. Bvuma narrated something dramatic that happened the following day.

At 7 o'clock, the workers went to the grave to complete the burial process and they were shocked to discover that Johanne's body was not there. They told the owner of the farm who probably took it lightly and simply said he was going to report the matter of a missing body to the police, a thing he probably did. According to Bvuma, when Johanne rose from the dead he went up Mount Marimba near Hunyani River. Nobody witnessed the resurrection, but Bvuma and the other workers saw Johanne the following day in the mountain and he was singing a song called 'Hosanna'. This has become a key song of the Johanne Masowe and a definitive mark of their identity.

According to Johanne's own testimony, a man appeared and took him to heaven. When the two approached the first gate, they saw a man who called himself Abraham. It is important to note that Abraham occupies a very important place in the Johanne Masowe theology and there are songs formulated around the figure of Abraham. Abraham opened the gate and Johanne and his

escort entered. They approached the second gate manned by Isaac and a third one manned by Jacob. Again, it is vital to note that the patriarchs occupy a very important place in the theology of the Johanne Masowe and socially the Johanne Masowe organize themselves along patriarchal lines. When the two were at the third gate, Johanne says, he heard voices of people wailing and crying and he became afraid. Jacob opened the gate and they entered. At this point Johanne narrated something with very close parallels to John's vision in the book of Revelations. He saw a big river as glorious as the sun, with people that he could not count, so full of joy that Johanne felt a burning desire to be part of them; the city was so glorious that he felt a burning desire to be its citizen.

When Johanne approached the river, he came across Peter with two other men. One of the two must have been Jesus, who told Johanne that he did not allow anyone to enter the city unless they were baptized. Again, note the parallels with John 3. Johanne stepped into the river and Jesus came and grabbed him by the hand. Immediately a crowd of infants, that Johanne later discovered were born as twins, came to the river. Apparently, these infants came from the traditional Shona society where Johanne belonged. The traditional Shona society considered it a bad omen to give birth to twins, or a disabled child, or an albino. These were common grounds for divorce and sometimes excommunication from society. Therefore, Shona women would get rid of such children at birth and culturally the society expected of them to do so. The infants suffered cruel deaths. The women would either burn such unwanted infants in fire or suffocate them in huge clay pots. Johanne learnt that the early Shona people had killed these infants.

Johanne says the infants asked Jesus when the world would end so that their fathers would receive their due judgement and punishment for their crime. Jesus comforted them, saying it would soon do something. Jesus gave them white robes and they left. Immediately another group of infants and children who had died through acts of witchcraft came. These came crying, demanding to know from Jesus why their communities in Africa had killed them. Angels around Jesus suggested it was better somebody from among the Africans was sent to the Africans because they were now very evil. Jesus then baptized Johanne and commissioned him to go back to Africa with a message that they should repent from witchcraft, as the world was about to end. There Jesus gave Shoniwa the name of John the Baptist, for he was going to preach to Africans and baptize them. The missionary churches had failed to teach the Law among the Africans. They had failed to address African problems. Again, Jesus told

Johanne to sing 'Hosanna' and another song '*Mweya Mutsvene*' (Holy Spirit). Angels then escorted Johanne through the gates back to earth. He found himself standing by the grave and beside him, was a rod, a white gown and a small Bible. He took these three items and went up Mount Marimba. These became Johanne's key tools for ministry.

From this brief background to his prophetic call, it is clear that the founder of the Johanne Masowe movement was closely associated with, operated within the understanding, and based its teachings on the Bible. From the call, Johanne made a series of prophecies and pronouncements. The prophecies were compiled in a book entitled *Izwi RaMwari MuAfrica* (translated as 'Prophecy of God in Africa') *1932*. On pages 9-13, Johanne describes several trips that his followers must embark on. On page 11 is a trip to England and the purpose of the trip is to go and retrieve the three items mentioned above, the rod, gown and Bible. According to *Madzibaba* Mundonga (2005), the Johanne Masowe strongly believe that the three items are stored in a library in England.

However, what is more fascinating as far as it takes us deep into the book of Revelations is the Johanne Masowe's view of the New Jerusalem. The Johanne Masowe took a group of women referred to as the 'sisters' as the New Jerusalem. Johanne Masowe recruited them as virgins and the women took vows not to get married to keep themselves pure (Mundonga 2005). The Johanne Masowe sometimes regard sisters as the Ark of the Lord where Moses placed the Book of the Covenant (*Izwi RaMwari kuAfrica* 1932: 1). However, the key imagery comes from the book of Revelation. According to the same source '… *Mwari ndiyezve akati Mai Meggie ndiro Jerusarema remuAfrica …*' (God is the one who ordained Meggie to be the Jerusalem of Africa). Meggie is *mbuya* Matanhire, the founding leader of the sisters and in fact the *de facto* leader of the Gospel of God Church (Mundonga 2005).

Johanne's vision of the virgins was that they would be vessels of the Holy Spirit. There are clear instructions to support these sisters materially as the New Jerusalem of Africa and the Masowe strongly believe that when Johanne recruited the virgins in a typical Mosaic fashion recorded in Numbers 11, his spirit rested on them. Similarly, when he died, his spirit remained with them. Thus, the Johanne Masowe consider the sisters both as the embodiment of the Law and as the vessels or embodiment of the Holy Spirit. The Johanne Masowe WeChishanu call them *Vamiriri veMweya* (representatives of, or those who stand in for, the Holy Spirit).

It is clear that historically, the Bible takes centre stage among the Johanne Masowe. It still does among the Johanne Masowe in Mutare. It is in this context that I find Engelke's depiction of Johanne Masowe as a Bible-burning prophet (Engelke 2004: 77) unattainable. Maybe Engelke's conclusion arises from the fact that he based most of his studies of the Johanne Masowe on one group, the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu, who openly claim that they do not read the Bible. According to them '*Bhaibheri munya',* or '*Bhaibheri chitunha*'. I discuss this in detail later in my analysis section. It may be interesting to check how and why the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu adopted this view of the Bible against the assertive presence and role of the Bible that we observe from the history of the movement. What could be the factors that influenced the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu to depart from their founder? Why do they differ from the Johanne Masowe in Mutare with regard to the presence and use of the Bible among them? Does the physical non-availability of the Bible among the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu mean the Bible is really absent among this group? How are we to account for this apparent denial of the relevance of the Bible? To what extent can we explain this in terms of gullibility among the members?

On one of my visits to their main shrine in Chitungwiza, I made two interesting observations. First, most of the leading *Vadare* (the late *Madzibaba* Nzira's lieutenants) among the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu were once members of either some established missionary churches or Pentecostal churches like ZAOGA. Therefore, they must have been familiar with the Bible one way or the other. Furthermore, most of the prophecies uttered on that day were biblically based. For example, one prophecy that narrated a huge rock falling down reminds one of Jesus' remark in Luke 10: 18. Besides, the late *Madzibaba* Nzira, the leader of this group, referred to various biblical figures and considered himself possessed by the spirit of Abraham and sometimes the spirit of Moses. He also claimed *baba* Johanne's spirit was often upon him. When he spoke in spirit, he repeated *baba* Johanne's mission to Africa. Therefore, how are we to understand the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu claim that they do not read the Bible? Does it mean the Bible is absent among them? Can we explain this absence in terms of gullibility on the part of the members of the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu? I chose Eric Berne's analytic model of Transactional Analysis (TA) that has its roots in psychology and psychotherapy to explain the presence or absence of the Bible among the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu.

Transactional Analysis (TA) as the Model of Analysis in this Study

In this article, I chose to probe the questions above through the model in psychology called Transactional Analysis (TA). A Canadian-born United States psychiatrist, Eric Berne developed TA in the late 1950s (Widdowson 2010:9). He developed the concept in a series of articles (Berne, 1957a; 1957b, 1958; 1959) and in several books (Berne 1961; 1963; 1964; 1975a; 1975b). TA became subject of discussion from that time to the 2000's when new ways of reading and understanding Berne led to a series of papers, most of which were by Cornell (2000 and 2005), Tudor (2002), and Cornell and Landaiche (2006). In this decade, major books on TA include those by Widdowson (2010), Lapworth and Sills (2011), Cornwell, Graaf, Newton and Thunnissen (2016), Widdowson (2016) and, very recently, Cornwell (2020).

TA is both an approach to the psychological and psychotherapeutic theory that integrates elements of humanist and cognitive psychoanalysis and a theory of communication. As a psychoanalysis theory, it describes first people's psychological structure using the psychological model borrowed from Freud's theory of the human psyche. As a theory of communication, TA looks at how a person's personality affects communication and the resultant impact of the communication on that person's interactions with others.

While TA has its roots in psychoanalysis, Berne marked a point of departure from psychoanalysis by focusing more on transactional analysis than on psychoanalysis per se. Through TA, Berne introduced a paradigm shift from the traditional psychological and psychotherapeutic belief that increasing awareness of the contents of unconsciously held ideas brings healing to a patient. Berne's TA drew people's attention to the content of people's interactions with one another and the basic belief that changing these interactions would bring healing through solving the patient's emotional problems. Thus, Berne focused on both understanding and curing his patient by pursuing specific desirable changes that brought healing in the patient.

Berne revisited Freud's theory of the human psyche as comprising the id, ego, and super-ego. Berne zeroed in on the ego and further subdivided it into three more states, which he referred to as 'ego states' namely the Parent, Adult, and Child states (Cornwell *et al.* 2016: vii). According to Berne, childhood experiences largely shape these ego states. Bad experiences at childhood bring harm to a person's Adult and Parent ego states, resulting in

unproductive interaction (transactions) with other members of the community.

The diversion to phenomenology that Berne introduced to his TA, following the influences of psychoanalysts like Federn, Weiss and Erikson (Heathcote 2010: 257) fascinated me and attracted me to TA. In fact, his definition of an 'ego state' was indeed a phenomenological one. According to Berne (1961:17), an 'ego state' from a phenomenological perspective is

> … a coherent system of feelings related to a given subject, and … a set of coherent behaviour patterns; or … a system of feelings which motivates a related set of behaviour patterns.

In that score, he identified common counterproductive or ineffective social interactions that he referred to as 'games' (Cornwell *et al.* 2016: 86). I am a little bit uncomfortable with terms like 'counterproductive' or 'ineffective' to describe the 'games'. I follow Berne and his school in their focus on social interaction from a phenomenological perspective. Berne utilized phenomenology to explain his concept of identification. By this concept, Berne refers to the process of identifying from which type of ego state a person may be transacting at any given time (Lapworth & Sills 2011: 29). Berne found phenomenology useful to diagnose transactions, due to the ego state of a person subjectively re-experiencing the past; that is, experientially reliving the original event (Lapworth & Sills 2011: 31).

Phenomenology too is my point of entry into the identification (diagnosis) and analysis of the types of ego states that Nzira and his members transacted from in their communications about the Bible. However, I mark a point of departure from Berne and his school who used identification within the context of psychotherapy. I focus on how Nzira, a powerful and advantaged religious practitioner, manipulated and/or abused transactions to produce negative behaviour among innocent but gullible members of his sect. I elaborate on this later below. Therefore, although in the history of the interpretation of TA there have been marked references to, and comparisons with Freud's developmental stages – oral, anal, phallic, and Freud's three ego states – id, ego and superego. I refrain from such marked references and comparisons, since I do not want to turn this article into a psychological treatise featuring Nzira and his devotees. I only refer to Freud and certain details of Berne's TA, where I think such a reference may clarify my discussion of Nzira's personality and the transactions between him and his devotees.

To understand how I use TA as a phenomenological approach, there is a need to discuss those key elements of the approach that are useful for my analysis very briefly. The key concept that many scholars regard as the cornerstone of TA is that of ego-states (Berne 1972: 223; Heathcote 2010: 254; Widdowson 2016: 10). An ego state is a way in which a person thinks, feels and behaves that defines and/or manifests that person's personality at a given time. As I stated earlier, from a phenomenological perspective, Berne (1961: 17) defines an ego state as a system of feelings that motivates or triggers a related set of behavioural patterns. This is my preferred definition because of my focus. I look at the possibility that Nzira packaged his feelings about the Bible in a way that manifested a 'parent figure' that triggered a behavioural pattern among his church members of rejecting the Bible as stale. Thus, the concept of ego states is critical for my analysis. It is prudent at this point to say a little more regarding the three 'ego states'.

As I hinted earlier, Berne did not coin the term 'ego' or 'ego state'. Rather, he developed a point of departure in the ego state theory from Freud, but more so from Weiss (1950), Federn (1952) and Fairbairn (1952), his contemporaries (Widdowson 2016: 10). Berne identified three 'ego states', namely the child, adult and parent ego states, respectively, and outlined four ways of diagnosing them as behavioural, social, historical and phenomenological (Berne 1961: 76).

The Parent ego state refers to the coherent system of feelings, thoughts and behaviours that are either copied and/or borrowed, or even learned from a parental figure (Berne 1961: 66; Widdowson 2016: 10). The parental figure is not necessarily the biological parent, but a significant other who wields enough power, authority or influence to trigger or motivate a related behavioural pattern in people assuming a Child ego state (Berne 1961: 66; Cooke 2019).

The Adult ego state, like the Parent ego state, is a coherent system of feelings, thoughts and behaviours that manifest a personality who operates rationally, logically and appropriately without external influence in the here and now (Berne 1961: 67; Cornwell *et al.* 2016: 5).

The Child ego state is an archive, as it were, of those feelings, thoughts and behavioural patterns experienced from childhood (Berne 1961: 69; Morad 2018). These feelings, thoughts and behaviour patterns from the past lie in the subconscious, or what Adams (2008: 4) calls 'a person's unconscious state', and only a Parent figure triggers or activates them at an appropriate time. Thus, a person operating within the Child ego state does not necessarily behave as a

child, but brings to consciousness some childhood experiences the moment a Parent ego state activates them through a transactional stimulus.

Berne's ego state theory is much more than what I am presenting here. Berne did much more in a bid to carefully process his thoughts and sharpen his therapeutic profession using TA. For example, he used capital letters as I did above to show the difference between the theoretical Parent, Adult, and Child ego states from adults, parents, and children in real life and he provided detailed and refined explanations for his selection of each of his concepts. However, in principle, Berne based his TA on three axioms, which Morad (2018) neatly summarises as follows:

- Every person has three 'ego states' (Parent, Adult, and Child);
- At any given time, individuals communicate from a particular ego state, either internally with themselves, or with other people and Berne refers to these intra-personal or interpersonal communications as transactions (Berne 1961; see also Widdowson 2016: 12);
- During the interpersonal communications, individuals unconsciously activate their ego states, which can lead to either negative emotions or pain in, or conflict with, others.

As such, a number of scholars and practitioners from various disciplines have used TA for different purposes. Berne used it in the area of psychotherapy. However, in essence, the scholars and/or practitioners utilize a key concept of TA to analyse contaminated communication between two or more parties in a bid to identify sources of either negative emotions or pain in, or conflict with, others. The key concept is, by identifying which ego states the parties are transacting from the scholars and/or practitioners may gain better insight into human psychosocial relationships and the insight may assist in prescribing remedial action where the ego states have caused negative emotions or pain in, or conflict with, others.

Later TA theorists refined Berne's ego-state theory. For example, TA theorists in Australia argued that there is need to place the Adult ego state within the Parent ego state (White 2000: 4). Only two ego states are significant when analysing communications between parties. Thus, the Australian TA theorists restructured Berne's three ego-state theory into a two ego-state theory.

The Adult ego state does not quite fit into my scheme of analysis and

it is for this reason that I adopt the two-ego-state proposal from Australian TA practitioners, which is useful when clarifying the three types of transections and the kind of Games Nzira was playing. Thus, the two ego-state theory attracted me and I used this revised version of Berne's ego state theory in my analysis. This is my second point of departure from Berne.

Berne viewed communication and/or interactions between two or more parties in their respective ego states in terms of transactions. Most scholars and/or practitioners in TA define the term transaction as the flow of communication, and more specifically the unspoken psychological flow of communication that runs in parallel between the transacting parties at both explicit and psychological levels (Negi 2010: 427). Berne preferred to use the term 'transaction', as opposed to communication or interactions to emphasise the fact that in communication and interactions people invest something of themselves in communication, expecting a return in their investment (Cornwell *et al.* 2016: 60). This is the point that I utilize in this article to analyse the kind of investment that Nzira put in his communication with his members and the return on the investment he expected from the communication.

One of the points that Berne emphasised was that during communication or transactions, the parties involved can contaminate these ego states. Berne's focus was on developing ways to heal his clients by improving communication and therefore his emphasis was on avoiding contamination of ego states. My focus is elsewhere.

In this article, I mark my third point of departure from Berne in that I analyse Nzira's deliberate contamination of ego states through manipulation of the ego states to achieve some expected return on investment in his communication with members. Nzira's desired return on investment comes out clearly in my analysis of field observations below.

TA and Analysis of Data from the Field

I based my analysis on specific concepts of TA that explain various ways in which Nzira contaminated the ego states from which he and his members transacted. Thus, the concept of contamination is the overarching conceptual framework for analysis. The other concepts complement my analysis of the transactions between Nzira and his members from within the context of the contamination of ego states. I explain these other concepts, as I do the analysis for purposes of exercising the economy of both space and time. These concepts

are reciprocal, crossed and duplex transactions respectively, strokes, mythos and its role in reinforcing a person's life script, redefining and discounting, and time structuring through ritual, games and intimacy. However, it is prudent to briefly explain contamination as the overarching analysis framework.

All scholars on TA define contamination as a concept and each scholar has particular emphases, depending on their peculiar research focuses. I was particularly attracted to Melwin (2014)'s explanation and especially his examples, because they suit exactly my specific focus in this analysis section. According to Melwin (2014), we experience contamination of ego states when the parent intrudes into the boundary of the child ego state. The reverse is also true when the child ego state intrudes into the boundary of the parent ego state. For example, there is contamination in transactions if an adult accepts as true either distorted or unfounded parent beliefs (Joy 2014). This is adult contamination (Martin 2011: 597). Similarly, there is contamination in transactions if an adult either mistakes some parental slogans as adult reality or takes some taught beliefs as facts (Joy 2014). This is child contamination (Martin 2011: 597). As I demonstrate in the analysis section of this article, child contamination comes out as gullibility on the part of the members of Johanne Masowe WeChishanu. It becomes even clearer as gullibility, taking into consideration Martin (2011)'s additional explanation. Martin (2011: 597) adds that child contamination results in delusions grounded in fear and her point applies in the three cases I selected for analysis.

I have already defined the term 'transaction' in detail above. In this analysis section, I now want to look at the different types of transactions within the context of the rest of the concepts of TA, which I identified earlier. From my ethnographic field notes on the Juranfiri Santa (place of healing), a congregation of the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu, led by the late Madzibaba Pagineck or Godfrey Nzira, I selected only three cases, which I name Case 1, 2 and 3, to demonstrate my thesis in this article well. These are field notes I took in 1999 at the Juranfiri Santa when I was doing field research for my doctoral study. I visited Nzira's shrine almost every day. During most of my visits I accompanied Matthew Engelke and his fiancé (I hope I understood their relationship well) Rebecca Nash, two very accomplished anthropologists who, consciously or unconsciously, taught me many skills on how to do field research. Besides, Matthew had a car, a Mazda 323, and I had none. I am very grateful to him because the availability of ready transport increased my frequency at the shrine.

Analysis of Case 1

The first occasion was an incident involving a man who probably was not yet an established member of the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu. This I deduced from the fact that like us he was not clad in the expected Johanne Masowe regalia. However, from his testimony he must have received healing from Nzira and he had come to express his gratitude. In his expression of thanks, he cited from the gospel of Luke in the New Testament. Immediately, as if incensed, the *Vadare* who were close to him instructed him to sit down. Nzira suddenly appeared from nowhere and started preaching in a very dramatic way. He explicitly castigated this man for citing from the Bible.

> *Pano hatitauri nezvemaBhaibheri. Chii Bhaibheri kwandiri. Bhaibheri rinoita munya. Inga mukarichengeta rinomweka. Ramweka motora mapepa acho moashandisa mutoireti. Pano tine Bhaibheri rechokwdi.* (We do not talk of Bibles here. What is the Bible to me? It gets stale. After keeping it for a long time, it falls apart and you use the loose papers from it as toilet paper. Here we have the true Bible.)

I then understood that this was the source of the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu's 'slogan', *Bhaibheri munya* or *Bhaibheri chitunha*. Engelke (2004)'s statement, '*Bhaibheri rinogara*', literally meaning 'the Bible stays', does not quite bring out the actual metaphorical meaning of this statement. The first statement can be translated literally as 'The Bible is stale, i.e. *sadza* that has stayed overnight' and is thus no longer hot, while the second statement literally means, 'The Bible is a corpse', meaning it is dead; it has no life. The metaphorical meaning is that the written Bible has overstayed its usefulness and it is thus no longer relevant.

To analyse and draw meaning from the transactions at play during this first case, there is a need to take cognizance of different types of transactions in TA. Generally, TA scholars recognize three kinds of transactions, namely Reciprocal or Complementary, Crossed and Covert transactions, respectively.

A reciprocal transaction occurs when both partners address the ego state; the other is to complement the transactions. In this kind of transaction, there is a psychologically balanced exchange of strokes. The parties in the transactions pay one another attention. In this first case, Nzira was careful to avoid this kind of transaction. He decided to castigate the man in a sermon.

Devotees do not answer or raise questions during a sermon. In a way, communication during a sermon is one-way and not reciprocal. The man remained glued to the ground, perhaps wondering what he had done wrong. In my analysis, Nzira discouraged reciprocal transaction here, because it would undermine the assumption and perpetuation of his Parent ego state among his members.

Crossed transaction occurs when one partner in the transaction addresses an ego state other than that their partner is in, resulting in communication failure. This type was not present in this case and I never witnessed this type of transaction at the Juranfiri Santa. Communication between Nzira and his members was very clear and each party was fully aware of their ego states during the communication. In cognizance of their Child ego state, the *Vadare* ordered the man to sit down, just as children do when one of them does something wrong to a parent.

The third type, the covert transaction, was the most common type at the Juranfiri Santa. A covert transaction takes place where the explicit social conversation occurs in parallel with an implicit psychological transaction that usually has an ulterior motive (Berne 1959: 157; Cornwell *et al.* 2016: 72). Cornwell *et al.* (2016: 72-79) give extended details of the different types of covert transactions and how they come into play during communication. I am mainly interested in Berne's classification of this type of transaction as an integral part of what he called a 'game' (Berne 1959: 157). Games are usually part of much larger and complex transactions in which players in their different ego states utilize the various options they have to attain social control (Berne 1959: 158). From my analysis of Berne's development of this concept of games in his 1964 publication, I tend to call this type the transaction of manipulation, which Nzira used to assume and perpetuate a Parent ego state among his members. This type of transaction gave him the option to attain social control as a Parent over his members. This type of transaction was at play in this first case. The explicit message was,

> Do not read the Bible because you get nothing from there. These are old stories about other people's engagement with God.

The implicit psychological message was that

> When I healed you, you experienced God. God is present in me.

> What I am doing here I am writing the live story about God's engagement with the Africans and therefore, why do you need the Bible?

Four other TA concepts, redefining, discounting, injunctions and drivers, may further clarify my analysis of the transaction between Nzira and his members in this first case. Redefining occurs when a transacting party contaminates ego states through deliberately distorting reality to match their preferred way of seeing the world and thus, choosing to ignore any evidence that would contradict their life script, an unconscious pathway created from childhood and that parents reinforce (Berne 1972: 46). Discounting occurs when a transacting party takes something as of a lesser worth than it is. I argue that this is exactly what Nzira did with the Bible. He redefined and discounted it. He then intensified the discounting through the injunctions and/or drivers of healing rituals and games.

Berne (1972: 139) defined an injunction as a prohibition or negative command from a parent. Budisa and other authors (2012: 29) list several injunctions and argue that a people form their life scripts based on injunctions they receive. In this first case, the injunction not to read the Bible had the effect of perpetuating Nzira's Parent ego state and it became part of the ridiculed man's life script. Nzira enhanced his attainment of social control through the driver of the healing rituals. Drivers are words, tones, speech patterns, gestures, posture, facial expressions, the way people dress and any behaviour to this effect that accounts for a child's introjection of messages from a Parent ego state that a transacting party in Child ego state moves into in response to distress (Davidson & Mountain n.d.) or, as I call it, deprivation. For quite some time, this man in question had suffered from the deprivation of ill health, and the healing drove him into a Child ego state in which he accepted the injunction from the Parent, Nzira. Nzira conducted several healing ceremonies daily at Juranfiri Santa, and each healing ritual, like this one under analysis, culminated in teaching comprising injunctions about this or that and with the ulterior message that he was in control.

Analysis of Case 2

On the second occasion Matthew and I visited the shrine and I think that day we were quite early because, although there was a huge crowd already, there

was no activity yet. People were just sitting waiting for Nzira to appear. I guess he has a way of hiding himself from people because on that day he just stood up from among the apostolics who were there and started to address them. We were all surprised where he suddenly came from. Even Matthew, who knew him very well, had not recognized him. He started talking in a very low voice with his interpreter, shouting the message out for people to hear. One *Mudare* sitting next to me explained that the 'angel' who was speaking through Nzira that day was *Baba* Johanne himself (meaning Shoniwa, Johanne Masowe himself). True to this elder's word, Nzira indicated that he was sent to Africa to deal with cruelty, witchcraft, jealousy among Africans and to solve African problems. Interestingly, he distinguished between ailments that require biomedical solutions and ailments due to *mashavi* (spirits of the dead that possess people and cause illness) and his mission was to deal with the latter.

> *Ukakuwara muaccident usauya kuno, enda kuchipatara. Hatirapi zvirerwe zvakadaro kuno. Kuno tinorwisana netsino, utsinye wemunhu mutema.* (If you are injured in a road traffic accident, do not come here; go to the hospital. We do not deal with such ailments here. Here we deal with illness caused by spirits and cruel or evil intentions of the Africans.)

This, as I stated earlier, was Johanne Masowe's mission. Nzira was re-enacting that mission and bringing it forth among his people. This makes me bring to attention in this analysis a concept of TA, *mythos* (plural, *mythoi*), which Berne (1972: 438) mentions, but did not develop as much as he did the other concepts. I translate the term *mythos*, as others familiar with *Koine* Greek do, to mean a myth, but for purposes of this analysis, I do not get into the different detailed definitions of a myth from scholars. I follow Milnes' (2017: 203) definition of a myth as an ancient religious story, because he uses this definition within the context of TA, which is my context too. This translation and definition, though convenient, do not capture everything that the Greek term *mythos* entails and therefore, in my analysis I will maintain the Greek term.

I will deliberately elaborate on the historical analysis of the presence of the Bible among the Johanne Masowe in order to present my analysis of this second case with some relative clarity. That section of the article tells us the religious story of the legendary birth and call of Johanne Masowe with a definitive mission to deal with evil among the Africans. This story plunges us

deep into the African, and particularly Shona, *mythos.* Each culture, country and people in the world has a *mythos*, which gives valuable insights into how the people in that culture perceive and think about their world and how they order their lived experiences, set standards of behaviour, and shape and reflect on their cultural values (Thornhill 2019, Greek Mythology para. 2.). part of the African *mythos* is crafted around the world of *mashavi* (alien spirits) especially, the African belief in *ngozi* (avenging spirits). In this *mythos,* evil spirits possess people and influence them to harness evil natural powers to control and even harm others. However, part of the *mythos* is that there are benevolent spirits, God or gods or the ancestral spirits, champions, who can exorcise these evil spirits and bring healing among the people. God sent Johanne Masowe as that champion to deal particularly with African health problems. Looked at from the context of TA, this *mythos* has become part of the Shona's life scripts.

In the healing rituals, Nzira cited the exact words of Johanne Masowe when God gave him the mission to Africa: '*Ndakatumwa kuAfrica kunorwa netsino dzeAfrica*' (I was sent to fight with the evil spirits in Africa). Thus, Nzira's healing rituals re-enacted, not only the myth of the birth and call of Johanne Masowe, but also the very core of the African (Shona) *mythos.* This re-enactment placed him at the centre of the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu belief system, not just as a representative of Johanne Masowe, but also as the living champion of Africans suffering from the deprivation of ill health that evil spirits in Africa cause. That takes us to an analysis of the third case.

Analysis of Case 3

The third and last incident involved a female leader of a huge group of Johanne Masowe apostolics from Hatcliffe, Harare. I later understood that she once belonged to the Juranfiri Santa congregation under Nzira. She broke away and because of her healing powers and prophetic gift she managed to grow her own *Sowe* (congregation) in Hatcliffe. In my guess, her members exceeded 2 000 just by mere looking. She stood up and started explaining why she had come and Nzira gave her ample time.

> *Tadzoka kubva kukakiriniki kedu ketakagadzira petakasimuka pano tichimbopambara nenyika. Tati zvekukiriniki hazvina kunyatsa kukwana, saka tati timbouya nevana kuno kuchipatara.* (We have come back from the clinic that we introduced when we left this place.

> We thought services at the clinic may not be adequate and so we had to bring our children here at the hospital for adequate services.)

To analyse this last case, I use the TA concepts of strokes and intimacy as well as the overall philosophy and goal of TA as a communication tool. Strokes are the recognition, attention or responsiveness that one person gives another and how that recognition and attention influence motives (Cornwell *et al.* 2016: 40). The key idea is that people hunger for recognition, and that lacking positive strokes, will seek whatever kind they can, even if it is recognition of a negative kind. In this third case, we witness Nzira's hunger for recognition and the effect that hunger for recognition dwarfed all other members who may have been equally, if not more talented than him in terms of spiritual gifts. This female leader from Hatcliff failed to break free from the Child ego state and the historical maladaptations embedded in her childhood script like lack of self-confidence and the need always to come back to the parent for vindication. Nzira himself played games in which members exchanged very strong strokes with him but satisfied his covert purposes.

What lacked in Nzira's interaction with this female leader was yet another concept of TA called intimacy. Intimacy is the act of allowing the interaction where one exchanges the strongest strokes in an unconditional and relational manner without any covert purposes. Such kind of interaction is in tandem with the goal and overall philosophy of TA. The goal of TA is for people to gain autonomy from the childhood script by changing their destiny through getting rid of historical maladaptations embedded in that script. This way they become free from undesirable emotion that hinder their justifiable and honest reflection of their present life. We do not see that autonomy in the female leader from Hatcliff who should not have come back to Juranfiri Santa for vindication of her powers and leadership. However, this worked well for Nzira. His game paid the ultimate dividend of attracting the strongest of strokes from his members, which were so strong that he even replaced the Bible from their minds.

Conclusion

Therefore, is the Bible present or absent among the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu? In this article, I argue that the Bible is present among the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu; only that *Madzibaba* Nzira, the leader of the

group, psychologically substituted it in order to maintain a firm grip on his devotees. I use the psychological paradigm of 'transactions' to decipher and provide answers to the critical questions I raised at the beginning regarding the presence or absence of the Bible among the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu. Where there is the presence of a written text, the Bible in this case, then emphasis is on it as a source of authority. Such emphasis would remove attention from Nzira, the celebrated leader of the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu. Through healing rituals, he re-enacted the myth of Johanne Masowe's call and mission to Africa that produced a Parent ego in and around himself through the claim that the spirit of Johanne operated in him and therefore, the Law, let alone, the Bible as a whole, was 'live and direct' in his person. That ideological tactic to shift emphasis from the written text to him granted Nzira not only a lot of power but also lots of authority that resulted in the development of a Child ego within the individual members. He thus became the authority himself. By removing the Bible from the devotees, Nzira manipulated transactions, playing a mind game so that his devotees would never achieve the goal of autonomy; they would never achieve freedom from the childhood script and would continue to depend on him always for spiritual nourishment. Thus, in spiritual matters he would perpetually assume the Parent ego while the devotees would remain passive in the Child ego state. In fact, the net effect of this was to remove God from the devotees and Nzira himself replacing God. I am not surprised that when the police later arrested him in 2003 on charges of rape (Mujinga 2018: 258), his devotees thronged the courtroom chanting a very bizarre maxim, 'You cannot arrest God' (Zimunya & Gwara 2019: 117). Such is what gullibility does when it reaches certain heights. Therefore, while the Bible may be physically absent, it does not necessarily mean it is not important among the Johanne Masowe.

References

Adams, A.S. 2008. Using Transactional Analysis and Mental Imagery to Help Shame-Based Identity Adults Make Peace with their Past. *ADULTSPAN Journal* 7,1: 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0029.2008.tb00038.x

Anderson, H. 2001. *African Reformation African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century*. Trenton: Africa World Press.

Berne, E. 1957a. Ego States in Psychotherapy. *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 11: 293–309.

https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.psychotherapy.1957.11.2.293
Berne, E. 1957b. Intuition V: The Ego Image. *Psychiatric Quarterly* 31: 611-627. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01568754
Berne, E. 1958. Transactional Analysis: A New and Effective Method of Group Therapy. *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 12: 735–743. https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.psychotherapy.1958.12.4.735
Berne, E. 1959. Principles of Transactional Analysis. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* 1,4: 215–221.
Berne, E. 1961. Transactional *Analysis in Psychotherapy*. Auckland: Castle Books.
Berne, E. 1963. *The Structure and Dynamics of Organizations and Groups*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company.
Berne, E. 1964. *Games People Play*. New York: Grove Press.
Berne, E. 1975. *A Layman's Guide to Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Grover Press.
Berne, E. 1975. *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?* London: Corgi Books.
Bishau, D. 2010. *Reign with Him for a Thousand Years (Rev. 20:6): A Socio-hermeneutical Exposition of Biblical and Contemporary Millenarian Movements as Radical Responses to Deprivation.* Bamberg: Bamberg University.
Budisa, D., V. Gavrilov-jerkovic, A. Dickov, N. Vučković & S.M. Mitrovic 2012. The Presence of Injunctions in Clinical and Non-clinical Populations. *International Journal of Transactional Analysis Research* 3, 2: 28–36. https://doi.org/10.29044/v3i2p28
Cooke, B. 2019. Transactional Analysis and Ego States. Available at: https://mcpt.co.uk/transactional-analysis-and-ego-states/ (Accessed on 3 February, 2020 at 2205hrs).
Cornell, W.F. 2000. If Berne met Winnicott: Transactional Analysis and Relational Analysis. *Transactional Analysis Journal* 30: 270–275. https://doi.org/10.1177/036215370003000403
Cornell, F.W., H. Hargaden & J.R. Allen 2005. *From Transactions to Relations: The Emergence of a Relational Tradition in TA.* London: Haddon Press Limited.
Cornell, W.F. & M. Landaiche 2006. Impasse and Intimacy: Applying Berne's Concept of Script Protocol. *Transactional Analysis Journal* 36, 3: 196 – 213. https://doi.org/10.1177/036215370603600304
Cornell, F.W., A. de Graaf, T. Newton & M. Thunnissen 2016. Transaction. In

Cornwell F.W., A. de Graaf, T. Newton & M. Thunnissen (eds.): *Into TA: A Comprehensive Textbook on Transactional Analysis*. London: Karnac Books Ltd.

Cornell, W. 2020. Transactional Analysis and Psychoanalysis: Overcoming the Narcissism of Small Differences in the Shadow of Eric Berne *Transactional Analysis Journal* 50, 4: 1 – 15. https://doi.org/10.1080/03621537.2020.1771020

Davidson, C. & A. Mountain n.d. The Psychology of Relationships. Available at: https://www.businessballs.com/building-relationships/transac tional-analysis-eric-berne/ (Accessed on 2 February, 2020 at 1622hrs.)

Dillon-Malone, C. 1987. *Gospel of God VaPositori VaJohane Masowe*. Lusaka: Teresianum Press.

Engelke, M. 2004. Text and Performance in an African Church: The Book, 'Live and Direct'. *The American Ethnologist* 31,1: 76–91. https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2004.31.1.76

Fairbairn, W.R.D. 1952b. *A Revised Psychoanalysis of Psychoses and Psychoneurosis.* In *Psychoanalytic Study of the Personality.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Federn, P. 1952. The Ego as a Subject and Object of Narcissism. In Weiss, E. (ed.): *Ego Psychology and Psychoses.* New York: Basic Books. https://doi.org/10.1037/10571-000

Heathcote, A. 2010. Eric Berne's Development of Ego-State Theory: Where did it all Begin and Who Influenced Him? *Transactional Analysis Journal*. 40, 3: 254 – 260. https://doi.org/10.1177/036215371004000310

Izwi RaMwari KuAfrica [1932] n.d.

Kileff, C. & M. Kileff 1979. The Masowe VaPositori of Seki Utopianism and Tradition. In Jules-Rosette B. (ed.): *New Religions of Africa.* San Diego: University of California.

Lapworth, P. & C. Sills 2011. *An Introduction to Transactional Analysis.* Los Angeles: SAGE. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473957763

Maguranyanga, B. 2011. *Apostolic Religion, Health and Utilization of Maternal and Child Health Services in Zimbabwe*. Harare: CCORE.

Martin, C.H. 2011. Transactional Analysis: A Method of Analysing Communication. *British Journal of Midwifery* 19, 9:587 – 593. https://doi.org/10.12968/bjom.2011.19.9.587

Melwin, J.M. 2014. Structural Analysis – Transactional Analysis. Available at: https://www.slideshare.net/manumjoy/the-ego-state-model (Accessed on 2 February, 2020 at 1935hrs).

Milnes, P. 2017. The Pilgrim Model. *Transactional Analysis Journal* 47, 3: 203 – 217. https://doi.org/10.1177/0362153717711698

Morad, N. 2018. How to Use Psychology to Communicate Better and Avoid Conflict. https://medium.com/@NataliMorad/how-to-communicate-better-with-transactional-analysis-d0d32f9d50da (Accessed on 2 February 2020 at 2020hrs.)

Mujinga, M. 2018. 'Religion as a Riding Horse of Politics'. A Critical Analysis of Political Influence in the Zimbabwean Ecclesiastical Life. *Alternation Special Edition* 23: 244-265. https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2018/sp23a11

Musoni, P. & P. Gundani 2016. Easter Celebrations with a Difference: A Critical Study of the Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyeyedzi Approach to the Event. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 1-14. https://doi.org/10.17159/2412-4265/2016/422

Musoni, P. & P. Gundani 2019. Open Space Worship: A Religious Identity of Johanne. *Journal for the Study of Religion* 32, 2: 1 – 13. https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3027/2019/v32n2a4

Negi, A. 2010. *Industrial Psychology.* Luchnow: Word Press.

Sundkler, B. & C. Steed 2000. *A History of the Church in Africa.* London: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511497377

Thornhill, P.J.R. 2019. Greek Mythology. Available at: https://www.britannica. com/topic/Greek-mythology (Accessed on 10 February, 2020 at 2013hrs.) https://doi.org/10.17583/remie.2020.5182

Tudor, K. (ed.). 2002. *Ego States.* London: Sage.

White, T. 2000. *New Ways in Transactional Analysis.* Second Edition. North Perth: TA Books.

Widdowson, M. 2016. *Transactional Analysis for Depression: A Step-By-Step Treatment Manual.* London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315746630

Weiss, E. 1950. *Principles of Psychodynamics.* New York: Grune and Stratton.

Zimunya, T.C. & J. Gwara 2019. 'Do not touch my anointed!' – An Analysis of Sexual Violations in Zimbabwe's Religious Movements. In Kügler, J.,

R. Gabaitse & J. Stiebert (eds.): *The Bible and Gender Troubles in Africa*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.

Interviews

Mr Chikanya (First Names not given). Interview, conducted by Joshua Mbeu Gandanzara. Mr. Chikanya is a preacher who is now based in Marondera.

Madzibaba E. Mundonga. 10 March, 2005, Interview, Mutare.

David Bishau
Director
Institute of Theology and Religious Studies
Africa University
bishaud@africau.edu

Pentecostalism and Gullibility

Religious Gullibility and Female Leadership in Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe: A Feminist Inquiry

Henrietta Mgovo

Elias G. Konyana

Caroline Dimingu

Abstract

The research is a religious feminist inquiry into the role of Pentecostal Churches' understanding of female leadership in the creation of gullible Church congregants. The article argues that most Pentecostal views on female leadership have roots in patriarchy, where male leaders contribute to the gullibility of congregants who become customised to accept male leadership in their Churches without questioning. The research adopted a qualitative approach using a case study research design. The research found that the issue of female leadership in most Pentecostal Churches is represented by women who are not critical of the patriarchy all its tendencies. The research revealed that women who assume leadership roles in most Pentecostal Churches are those who ride on their husbands' backs since they are so positioned as wives of influential male leaders such as Pastors, Elders, Deacons, Bishops and Archbishops. In essence, therefore, these women in leadership do not in any way significantly question patriarchal leadership styles and decisions. Thus, instead of helping other women to contest for power in the Church, wives to male Church leaders tend to make congregants gullible to accept the *status quo*. The research recommends that women in Pentecostal Churches should resist and question female representation by women who do not stand up for their concerns and rights.

Keywords: Pentecostal Churches, religious feminist theory, female leadership, gullibility

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a17

Introduction

Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe have made commendable efforts in promoting female leadership, regardless of their status. This is evidenced by the number of female leaders with titles such as Pastor, Elder, Deacon or even Bishop. While this chapter acknowledges that Pentecostal Churches have made efforts to accord females some leadership positions, it argues that this recognition of women is inadvertent since the majority of females who occupy leadership positions in Pentecostal Churches are married to the Pentecostal Church or Ministry founder or other male leaders in the Church. The research argues that women who are married to Charismatic founders of Pentecostal ministries occupy very prominent leadership positions not by merit but either by patronage or by marriage.

Female leadership in Pentecostal Churches occurs by default. It happens when married women assume positions of authority or power because of their husbands who could be the Church or Ministry founders. Being the wife of a Pastor, Deacon, Elder, Bishop or Archbishop automatically places the women into positions of power. For instance, a Bishop's wife automatically becomes Mother Bishop, with the same authority as her husband. This is the case with a Deacon's wife, who also has to be ordained as a Deaconess. Similarly, a Prophet's wife is elevated to the position of a Prophetess. Such women do exert tremendous influence, for they may have a free hand in the running of the organization and setting up projects that benefit the Church. By virtue of being wife to an influential male leader, nobody questions the merit or competence of the female leader. This is an instance of gullibility on the part of the congregation or followers, who are quick to accept the authority of women who would not have earned their leadership. The Church accepts the women not because they are competent in their positions, but because the followers cannot question the authority of the female leader, due to her connectedness to the male leader. Furthermore, when patriarchy is framed as a biblical ideal, it is not only at odds with the teachings of the Scriptures and the purposes of God's covenant people. It also becomes a deadly spiritual disease that chokes all life around it. This has led to a brand of female Church leaders who are not competent because of the selection method that is used.

The main part of the article is divided into four sections.

- The first section is on the background, context of Pentecostalism and its brief historical development in general.

- The second section deals with the female leadership selection procedure in Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe.
- The third section is a discussion of the findings of the research.
- Finally, the article ends with a conclusion and recommendations.

Methodology

Methodology, according to Haralambos and Holborn (1995), is about how researchers go about their research. It is the practice and techniques used to gather, process and manipulate information that can be used to gather, process and manipulate information that can then be used to test ideas and theories about social life. The chapter utilizes the qualitative research approach. Mason (2001: 15) argues that 'qualitative research is a systematic, rigorous, flexible and contextual and strategically conducted'. Creswell (2007: 36) concurs and maintains that qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a test of interpretive material practice that makes the world visible. Qualitative research, according to Carter and Little (2008: 213), utilises text data (not numerical) and analyses in their textual form (rather than converted to numbers) for analysis, with the objective to understand the aim, action and behaviour of a situation. Using the qualitative research design, the study presents the Pentecostal female leadership selection procedure as an unfair representation of women. This study utilises in-depth interviews and participant observation techniques to collect data. Participants were drawn from the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (Forward In Faith Ministries, ZAOGA-FIFMI) and the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe (AFM-Z) Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe. A sample of twenty (20) female leaders and five (5) male leaders were purposively selected. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornbill (2009), purposive sampling allows greater depth of information from a smaller number of chosen cases. The study also took note of core rudiments of ethical practices with regard to consent, anonymity and confidentiality, along with avoiding harm, deception or exploitation.

Theoretical Framework

The qualitative research was also informed by the religious feminist theory, which maintains that women are their own liberators. The theory is useful in

the sense that it is the lens through which women leadership in Pentecostal Churches can be reviewed using religious views. These views are very much in accord with the agenda of numerous religious feminists who advocate a reinterpretation of Biblical scriptures and reflection on them in order to encourage women to avoid being gullible. According to Harrison (2007), religious feminist theory surveys ways in which women can be represented in Pentecostal denominations dominated by men. It seeks to dislodge patriarchal traditions that have systematically excluded women from occupying powerful positions in the Church alongside, or even ahead of men. The theory also helps in exposing the place of women in the creation of a gullible Church following. Thus, through the religious feminist theory, the article maintains that there is a need to interrogate traditions that prejudice women from fully representing other women in areas that are male dominated.

Pentecostal Churches and Female Emancipation

The term 'Pentecostal' is taken from the account of the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2: 1-13 (Anderson 2010). The followers of Jesus Christ, male, female, married or single and widowed were 'filled' with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in tongues in the Upper Room in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-13), which is one of the views of how the Church was founded. The pouring of the Holy Spirit onto Jesus' followers was believed to be open to all, regardless of gender, social status or age, as indicated in Joel 2: 28. This is the primary New Testament text basis for the support of women in ministry among most Pentecostals, which is priesthood for all Pentecostal Christian believers, despite one's biological makeup (Clifton 2009; Stanley 2007). Most Pentecostal revivals are traced to Topeka Kansas under Charles Perham in 1 January 1901, and the Azusa Street, Los Angeles, under William Seymour in April 1906 (Anderson 2010). Men and women replicated the acts of the first-century apostles: speaking in tongues, healing the sick and prophesying (Miller & Tetsunao 2007). Therefore, the New Testament is important as a source upon which Pentecostal Churches base their formation.

Important to note is the fact that, although the spiritual outpouring came at a time in history when, culturally and socially, women were not afforded great freedoms, Lee and Gorh (1999) allude that both men and women were fully involved in the core leadership of the revival. As alluded to by Chant (1999), six of the twelve elders at Azuza Street Revival were women. From

here, women experiencing Spirit baptism, planting churches, travelling as evangelists and working as missionaries have been mirrored all over the world (Clifton 2009). The names of women who have enormously contributed to global Pentecostal Christianity include Lucy Farrow, a woman from Azuza Street, who took the gospel message to Liberia; Maria Woodworth-Etter, who pastored and founded a Church in Indianapolis, the present-day Indiana Church known as Lakeview Christian Center, and Aimee Semple McPherson, founder of International Church of Foursquare (Lee & Gorh 1999). Sarah Jane Lancaster and her 'sisters' pioneered Pentecostal Christianity in Australia (Clifton 2009: 172). These women provide a sample of genuine and credible women leaders in the Church.

There are many Pentecostal Churches that were initiated by Africans without any relationship with the mission Pentecostal Churches. They are self-financing, self-governing and supporting. Churches such as the Zimbabwe Africa OGA (FIF), the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Prophetic Healing and Deliverance Ministries are popularly known for propping up women into leadership positions through the positions held by their husbands either as Church founders or leaders.

However, according to (Mwaura 2005), there have been female religious leaders, particularly in the Neo-Pentecostal Churches in Africa, who have gone on to establish and lead Churches of their own. One of these female leaders' distinguishing characteristics is that they assign prominent roles to other women within the Church. As Spinks (2003) argues, Pentecostal Churches established by women go on to attract other women because they seem to contrast cultural marginalization of women in Africa's traditionally patriarchal society.

While this trend has happened elsewhere in the world, in Zimbabwe the situation is slightly different because most of the Pentecostal Churches were founded by men who also made their wives co-founders. Thus, the wives do not necessarily have any say in the running of the Church or Ministry. Incidentally, their role is to support the men by making sure that the followers are agreeable to the founders' principles and dictates. The wives often make public passionate appeals to the followers to accept their husbands' leadership by appearing to represent all women's interests in the Church. For instance, a Church founder's wife is always displayed hugging her husband on large billboards advertising the Church or its forthcoming crusade or conference. The impression so created is that the couple love each other and that the

followers should follow suit. Thus, in the Church, no follower would dare question the authority of the Church founder and his wife without being treated as being possessed by evil spirits. Followers gullibly agree to be led by the founder and his wife. This kind of leader-congregants relationship is what we refer to as leadership gullibility, where women who are married to Archbishops, Pastors, Evangelists, Deacons and other such titles enjoy occupying leadership positions based not on merit, but on their marital status or patriarchal patronage. Examples are Eunor Guti, wife to the founder of the Archbishop of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa, Ezekiel Handinawangu Guti;, Maureen Berry-Shana, wife to Goodwill Shana, founder of the Word of Life International Ministries; Florence Kanyati, wife to Apostle Langton Kanyati, founder of Zoe Life Changing Ministries Interdenominational; and Ruth Makandiwa, wife of Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa, the founder of the United Family International Church (UFIC). All these women have gone on to be accorded the same leadership relationship that their husbands have within the Churches. They are closely identified with the titles of their husbands as Archbishop, Apostle, and Prophetess, respectively.

Excerpts of Women Leadership in the New Testament

As has been highlighted in the introduction, this article is about women leadership in Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe. It emerged from the research that the kind of women leadership in existence emanates from the gullibility of Church followers. However, this is in direct contrast to the women leadership in the New Testament. A few women and how they contributed to the development of Christianity have been singled out. The women are Mary the mother of Jesus; Joanna, wife of Chuza; Prisca, wife of Aquila (1 Corin-thians16: 19; Acts18: 2ff, 18:18, 26); and Junia, wife of Andronicus (Romans 16: 7).

In the synoptic gospels, we hear of Joseph and Mary who were the parents of Jesus. Unlike Mary, we rarely hear of Joseph except in Matthew when he had a dream that he should keep Mary as his wife, despite the fact that she was already pregnant. As we know from the scriptures, Mary was Jesus' mother and first disciple. Her preparation to be Jesus' disciple started well before Jesus was born. Mary had a strong faith and solid relationship with God; perhaps that is why God called her to be the mother of the Messiah. As God invited Mary to fulfil this call, God did not impose this role on her; Mary acting as an agent decided to accept it, when she said, 'Here I am, the servant of the

lord, let it be with me according to your word' (Luke1: 38).

From the passage above, one can appreciate the fact that Mary was an active and assertive woman who made her own choices (Aquino, Machado and Rodriguez 2002: 21). Also, she knew the signs of her time and the struggles of her people. In Mary's song, the Magnificent (Luke1: 46-55), she praises God and celebrates the merciful acts of God. A close look at the content of this song presents the idea of a Mary who was aware of social injustices, but celebrated the acts of God in reversing the social order in favour of the poor and oppressed (Bond 2002). Thus, this side of Mary's life challenges Pentecostal women, especially those women married to Pentecostal leaders. Given Mary's example of woman leadership, the questions to ask are twofold: Are women in 21st century Pentecostalism active and assertive to make their own choices, independent of their husbands? Are they prepared to know their reality and to study as much as they can so that they can become effective disciples who can challenge social injustice and can reverse social order in favour of fellow women who are oppressed?

Right from the onset, Mary knew that her son was going to be someone special for humanity (Luke1: 31-33), and her relationship with Jesus expanded from the role of motherhood to role of discipleship (Luke 1: 41-52, 8: 19-20). It is important to highlight that both roles are important in the life of a woman and her family. There are women who are young mothers and who are very busy with their young children. At this point in their lives, their role of motherhood is very important, because they are nurturing the future generation, the leaders of tomorrow. This is a demanding stage of life and sometimes women feel overwhelmed by the task of taking care of their children. However, for those who think that women should be only mothers, Mary brings here a challenge, because she teaches that women can be more than mothers; they can be disciples too (Bond 2002). According to Acts 1: 12-14, Mary was a committed and an active disciple of Jesus' movement, involved in the original group of disciples who started the church. The unique thing that is all the gospels depict Mary as a disciple, not Joseph, and this can indicate that in a leadership couple, women can participate actively, while men can also be supportive.

Next is the leadership of Joanna, the wife of Chuza. Joanna appears twice in the New Testament (Luke 8: 1-3, 24: 10). The first occasion presents that, while Jesus was travelling in different cities proclaiming the good news of the reign of God, the twelve disciples, Mary Magdalene, Joanna the wife of

Chuza, and many others were with him.

Joanna was married to a man who was an important personality in the courts. He was Herod's Steward. Joanna was most likely an important woman and probably rich. The passage shows that some of these women provided resources for Jesus and his group. Joanna was most likely giving of her money to support Jesus and his movement. Furthermore, apart from supporting the ministry through money, she was giving herself as a minister in the Jesus movement. She travelled with Jesus, the twelve disciples, and other women, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. Looking at her financial status, why would Joanna leave her rich, comfortable and influential life to go with Jesus who did not have money or accommodation? (Luke 9: 58) Why would Joanna join the Jesus Movement, knowing that she was going to live an uncomfortable life? This is probably because, in the Jesus Movement, she would be called Joanna the human being, the woman (Luke 24: 10). She was no longer the possession of a man, but a person in her own right (Mooney & De Hammod 1989: 34-36). Jesus gave her new status along with a new abundant life that was much better than her previous influence and riches. It can be deduced from Joanna that women can be more than wives; they can serve as disciples.

Joanna was a faithful disciple of Jesus up to her death. The second occasion where Joana is mentioned is during the resurrection of Jesus (Luke 24: 10), but it can be assumed that she was also present along with other women at the time of Jesus's crucifixion and burial Luke (23: 49, 55). Certainly, it was risky to follow Jesus at those moments, but Joanna was brave enough to do that because He had given her so much. He had given her a new sense of personhood and a new vocation as a disciple and in this way, He transformed her empty existence into something new and complete. The Bible does not mention Chuza as a follower of Jesus, but his wife was a disciple who, though married, chose to move with other unmarried women like Mary Magdalene. Together they would champion the cause of the gospel.

Likewise, Matthew (28: 7) recognizes women as the primary witness of the final events of Jesus' earthly career and resurrection. Mary Magdalene and another woman also named Mary are said to be sent by an Angel with a message that Christ has risen. Scott (2011) observes that this has great significance, because in the contemporary culture of the time, women's testimony was not to be trusted. However, Scott notes, Jesus entrusts women to be those who will witness and testify to those events. In making women the primary

witness, therefore, Jesus redeemed the traditional view of the untrustworthiness of women. Witherington (1998) contends that the women witnesses of resurrection are treated by Jesus not as emissaries to the disciples, but as true disciples who are worthy of receiving special revelation about Jesus.

On the day of Pentecost, it is recognized that Jesus shared his Spirit without gender discrimination. Acts (2: 1-4) records that there were women in the upper room, together with the disciples when the Holy Spirit was poured out and all of them began speaking in tongues. Historians of early Christianity fail to notice the important role women played in founding and promoting house churches. Since the house church was a decisive factor in early Christian development, it provided the leadership and determined the form of church life. In the house churches early Christians celebrated Eucharist (Acts 2: 46, 20:7) and preached the gospel (Acts 2: 5). Wealthy women converts exercised a decisive influence over these gatherings. Acts 12: 12 refers to a specific prayer meeting in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark. Paul greets Apphia who, together with Philemon and Archippus, was leader of the House Church in Colossae (Philemon 2). The church at Philippi was founded by a business woman, Lydia, from Thyatra (Acts 16: 14).

Women Leadership and Gullibility in the Church

Presently, women married to prominent men in Pentecostal Churches are strategically placed to assume leadership positions. However, due to the dominance of men in formal leadership positions, women tend to be leaders of women groups or ministries within Pentecostal Churches. This echoes sentiments that women can only lead other women and not men, which is a position that some Pentecostal Churches accept without questioning. Lagerwerf (1990: 44) acknowledges the existence of Women for Women Ministries, which is an example of Church gullibility. In Zimbabwe, such Ministries are Gracious Women's Fellowship led by Eunor Guti, wife of Ezekiel Handinawangu Guti; Precious Stone Ministry led by Rutendo Utaunashe, ex-wife to Utaunashe; and Maureen Berry-Shana, wife to Goodwill Shana. These women ministers are playing a significant role in spreading Pentecostalism, though credit is rarely given to them, but rather to the Charismatic founders, their husbands. Incidentally, the women are contributing to the gullibility of their Church members by presenting the image of women leaders by default in the Church. The women take the lead in bringing together other women in the

Church to be addressed by their men at conferences and workshops. In the process, they achieve gullibility. However, the majority of these women leaders are not assertive or independent, as they abdicate their power to their husbands, even in matters that have nothing to do with men. They consult their husbands even on sensitive female issues that touch the lives of women and require female participation and decisions. In return, the men pass critical decisions on female matters, which have a negative impact on ordinary and already disadvantaged women, who in turn just passively accept, because decisions would have come from 'Men of God.' Unfortunately, the decisions do not affect married women who enjoy the privilege of being their husbands' supporters and keep them in power and control of the Church. Meanwhile, ordinary women and men who have gullible faith in the leadership of the Church-founding couples continue to follow them without raising questions.

Recommendations

The research makes several recommendations. To begin with, there is a need for raising the critical consciousness of women regarding the role they play in the growth and future of Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe and the world at large so as to eradicate leadership gullible behaviour among Pentecostal congregants. Chimhanda (2008: 15) postulates that consciousness raising subscribes to the tenet of liberation theology dealing with the empowerment of women to be proactive agents of their own (her) story.

It is further recommended that, since some women have climbed the ladder of social mobility through their marital status, they must not lean on their husbands, fight to end the plight of women in general. Like other models, women leadership in the social and political world has always been limited by patriarchy. Wives of charismatic church leaders get access to aut-hority and power primarily through their relationship with powerful 'Men of God', which is a privilege that can be utilized rather than be abused (Soothill 2010: 90).

Another recommendation is that the study proffers is that, as studies have shown, women are gifted with alternative leadership skills that are essential in Churches. Married women must utilize their opportunity to reconstruct discourses that hinder women from accessing administrative leadership in Zimbabwean Pentecostalism, rather than blindly accepting the *status quo*.

The research also recommends that women must be their own liberators because, at times, women are their own oppressors and their own worst enemies, particularly when wives of male leaders work in cahoots with their male counterparts. Therefore, women must rise above the occasion and start to liberate themselves from whatever has enslaved them. Otherwise, it will be a total waste of time debating women leadership, while the same women participate in the gullibility of Pentecostal congregants.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is evidence of women leadership gullibility among Pentecostal Church members, where women married to male founders automatically assume leadership positions based on marital status and patron-age, rather than on merit. The research also observed that gullibility in Zimbab-wean Pentecostalism is buttressed by women leaders who ceremoniously represent other women in leadership and help in swaying Church members towards accepting the authority of Church or Ministry founders without question. The article also concluded that Pentecostalism has created new hope for women by allowing them to have very influential positions, although they are within the confines of male boundaries. Reality on the ground shows that, although women are accommodated in Pentecostalism, they do not have access to the reins of power in terms of them occupying critical leadership positions such as Pentecostal leaders. This research has provided some recommendations that in some way will help the Pentecostal movement and Christians at large to cultivate and formulate new identities and new ideologies for the sake of both women and men in helping to eradicate leadership gullible behaviour among Pentecostals.

References

Anderson, A.H. 2010. Varieties, Taxonomies and Definitions. In Anderson, A.H. (ed.): *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*. Berkeley: University of California Press, Ltd. https://doi.org/10.1525/california/9780520266612.003.0002

Aquino, M.P., D.L. Machado & J. Rodriguez 2002. Ignored Virgin or Unaware Women: A Mexican-American Protestant Reflection on the Virgin of Guadalupe. In Aquino, M.P. (ed.): *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology*. Texas: University of Texas Press.

Bond, H. 2002. Who was the Real Virgin Mary? *The Guardian* 18 December 2002.

Carter, S. & M. Little 2008. Justifying Knowledge, Justifying Method, Taking Action: Epistemologies, Methodologies and Methods in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Health Research* 17,10: 1316 - 1328. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732307306927

Chant, B. 1999. *The Spirit of Pentecost: Origins and Development of the Pentecostal Movement in Australia 1870–1939.* Unpublished PhD theses, Macquarie University. Available at: www.barrychant.com (Accessed on 14 June 2018.)

Chimhanda, F. 2008. *Raising Consciousness Regarding the Dignity and Vocation of Women in the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe: A Historical Development Process.* Harare: University of Zimbabwe.

Clifton, S. 2009. Empowering Pentecostal Women. *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* [*AJPS]* 12,2: 171 - 179. Available at: www.app.edu (Accessed on 23 April 2020.)

Creswell, J.W. 2009. *Qualitative Inquiry and Study Design: Choosing among Five Approaches.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Haralambos, M. & M. Holborn. 2008. *Sociology Themes and Perspective.* London: Harper Collins.

Harrison, V.S. 2007. Modern Women, Traditional Abrahamic Religions and Interpreting Sacred Texts. *Feminist Theology* 15,2: 145–159. https://doi.org/10.1177/0966735007072020

Lagerwerf, L. 1990. African Women Doing Theology. *Exchange* 19,1: 1-68. https://doi.org/10.1163/157254390X00167

Lee, J. & G. Gorh. 1999. *Women in the Pentecostal Movement*. Available at: https://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/

Mason, J. 2002. *Qualitative Researching.* London: Sage Publications.

Miller, D.E. & Y. Tetsunao 2007. *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520940932

Mwaura, P.N. 2005. Women and Evangelization: A Challenge to the Church in the 3rd Millennium. In Mwaura P. & N.W. Ndung'u (eds.): *Challenges and Prospects of the Church in Africa: Theological Reflections of the 21st Century*. Nairobi: Paulines.

Mooney, R.E. & M.T. de Hammond 1989. *Jesus, Ias, mujeres y yo: un estadio biblo para mujeres.* UCA Editores, San Salvador.

Saunders, M.N.K, P. Lewis & A. Thornbill 2009. *Research Methods for Business Studies*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Scott, M. 2011. *For Such a Time Like This: Liberation for All through Christ*. Available at www.ebay.com.au/itm/. (Accessed on 15 December 2020).

Soothill, J. 2010. The Problem with Women's Empowerment: Religiosity in Ghana's Charismatic Churches. *Studies in World Christianity*, 16: 82. https://doi.org/10.3366/E1354990110000766

Spinks, C. 2003. Panacea or Painkiller: The Impact of Pentecostal Christianity on Women in Africa. *Annual Journal of Women for Women* 1,1: 21-25.

Stanley, S.C. 2007. Wesleyan/Holiness and Pentecostal Women Preachers: Pentecost as the Pattern of Primitivism. In Yong A. & E. Alexander (eds.): *Philips Daughters: Women in Pentecostal-Charismatic Leadership.* Eugene: Pickwick Publishers.

Witherington, B. 1990. *The Genesis of Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511555183

Henerieta Mgovo
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Great Zimbabwe University
Masvingo
Zimbabwe
henerietamgovo@yahoo.com

Dr. Elias G. Konyana
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Great Zimbabwe University
Masvingo
Zimbabwe
konyanaeg@gmail.com

Caroline Dimingu
Department of Humanities and Social Science
Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University
Bindura
Zimbabwe
carolinedimingu@yahoo.com

Media and Gullibility

Media Engagement with the Abuse and Deception Narrative in the Church in Zimbabwe: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Nhlanhla Landa
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0037-0218

Sindiso Zhou
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4267-8456

Abstract

This article grapples with the trending subject of abuse and deception of women and girls in the church in Zimbabwe. The relationship between religion, abuse and deception is complicated by the notion that 'things religious are things pure', which leads to the violation and exploitation of congregants. This article focuses on media engagement with abuse and deception narratives of women and girls by church leaders. Using the Critical Discourse Analysis and Agenda Setting theories, the study analyses media reportage of abuse and deception of women and girls in the church in Zimbabwe. We also reflect on how the justice system restricts newsmakers in the reportage of court cases. Findings indicate that besides, and because of, the restrictions of ethics of court reporting, the focus of the media is limited to scandals, and naming and shaming, without critically engaging with the underlying issues. Media coverage of abuse and deception in the church is insufficiently investigative and inadequately long-term oriented. The study concludes that the media have not sufficiently explored the link between abuse, deception and critical determinants, namely poverty and socio-economic decline. This has largely been caused by the media's obsession with hard news, which is limited in scope and flexibility in its engagement with issues and is largely restricted by ethics. It has also been because of the stringent restrictions imposed by the legal system on court reporting. We recommend a reorientation of media engagement with

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a18

the religious exploitation of women narrative. The first step towards this reorientation is featurisation of the women abuse and deception story.

Keywords: Women and girl abuse, poverty, deception, media, ethics

Introduction

Abuse of women, especially of a sexual nature, is a growing concern worldwide. Southern Africa has also suffered in this area (Win 2000; Gqola 2015; Sibanda-Moyo, Khonje & Brobbey 2017). Some research has been done specifically on the relationship between crime and the church, and the relationship between crime and religion in general (Bromley & Cress 2000; Cooper 2002; Fortune 2002). It would seem the church is a rich place for crime, especially against women and girls. As a result, the media are awash with headlines of religion-related violation women and girls, both internationally (CBS News 2018; BBC News 2018; RTE News 2018; CRX 2018) and locally (*NewsDay* 2017a; *NewsDay* 2017b). It is the argument of this article, however, that media engagement with the women and girls' abuse and deception is still insufficient, and has not been one that puts the abuse of women on both the media and public agendas.

Politics, the economy and sports have been the predominant issues the media in Zimbabwe deal with in the past two decades. Several political and economic developments have influenced this poised focus on these issues. What this has resulted in is a neglect of other, and equally important, issues of social concern such as the environment, crime in general (which rises with depreciating socio-economic status of a nation), crimes against women and children and social development. Where these are given attention by the media once in a while, they are either sensationalised or trivialised. According to Agenda Setting (McCombs & Shaw 1972), this has the effect of relegating such issues to the periphery of the agenda of the public. We argue in this article that once this happens to the issue of violence against women, the effect is perpetuation of abuse and deception of women even in the church.

This article analysed the media coverage of issues relating to the trending subject of abuse and deception of women and girls in the church in Zimbabwe. The depth, frequency and quality of the stories published by the mass media in Zimbabwe were the major focus of the analysis in the article.

The analysis was framed within a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and an Agenda Setting lens. The basis of CDA is its focus on language use in practical social situations and contexts, while Agenda setting is concerned with establishing the link between the media agenda and the public agenda.

Literature Review

The power of the media in influencing society is indisputable, and has been given attention by a number of researchers in the recent past (Landa 2014; Hobbs 2008). Specifically, Hobbs observes that regimes of truths become true as far as the media project them to be, while Landa insists that the practice of journalism is characterised by the subjective selection of some elements as newsworthy and leaving out some as unimportant. Both arguments presented above project a case for the agenda setting role of the media. As Vangshardt (2009) and Graber (2006) submit, the media have the power to control public discourse. We hold that the media have the power to influence public opinion and, therefore, public agenda.

Correlation of Media Agenda and Public Agenda

Several studies have been carried out on the apparent relationship between media agenda and public agenda. These include Golan and Wanta (2001), Johnson, Wanta and Boudreau (2004), Tedesco (2001), Kwansah-Aidoo (2003) and Fico and Freedman (2001). Kim and Lee (2006) have revisited agenda setting in the age of cyberspace. Furthermore, Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) specifically focused on developing and refining the agenda setting theory, while Young and McCarthy (2009), among others, extend the theory beyond elections, the specific field that it was originally applied to by McCombs and Shaw (1972), Becker and McCombs (1978), King (1997) and McCombs, Lopez-Escobar and Llamas (2000).

In the original conceptualisation of agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw 1972), it was argued that the media play the role of putting at the fore certain issues and downplaying others. They argue that 'the information in the mass media becomes the only contact many have with politics' (McCombs & Shaw 1972; 176) and indeed with many issues of interest in the media in our day. Thus, opinions many strongly hold in relation to issues of interest and the decisions they make as a result are influenced by the media. This way, the

media agenda strongly influences the public agenda; how the public think and feel about specific issues and/or specific individuals.

McCombs and Valenzuela (2007) have recorded a case of successful agenda setting by a Chilean magazine that exposed child pornography, which led to a chain of events that included several arrests, public campaigns and the enactment of legislations against child pornography. This is a case of extending agenda setting beyond politics and elections. Agenda setting has also been applied to environmental issues (Cohen 1975; Zhou, Landa & Zhou 2017), and to human trafficking (Papadouka, Evangelopoulos & Ignatow 2016). This study extends agenda setting to the women abuse and deception narrative.

Court Reporting

Court reporting is generally a difficult sub-genre in journalism. It often comes with a lot of restrictions around publication of information relating to cases before the courts. In many states, reporters are restricted in their reporting of court cases as they are often not allowed to report on prior convictions of an offender or alleged offender under trial (Supreme Court Tasmania 2015: 7). Reporters need to be careful not to report on anything that can affect the accused, complainants and witnesses. Court reporters also often receive non-publication orders in relation to certain cases. For example, in Tasmania 'reporters should be careful not to background the case beyond what is told the jury' (Supreme Court Tasmania 2015: 7). The Supreme Court Tasmania (2015: 4) states that reporters cannot report on anything said in the absence of the jury as this amounts to contempt of court, even if it was said in court during a trial, 'If there is anything newsworthy or interesting arising from the *voir dire*, it must wait until after the trial is over, and there is no longer a risk of the jury hearing material which has been excluded'.

In Zimbabwe, Feltoe (2002) indicates that reporting on material that is likely to prejudice either party in a case before the courts amounts to contempt of court. The media may run into trouble with the law when it writes subjecttively about a case that is already underway or is about to go to court (Feltoe 2002: 9). The threat of being charged with contempt of court hovers above the heads of court reporters, limiting them to reproduce what would have been said in the courts of law. Even when a case has ended and the plea period has come and gone, reporters are unable to pursue cases beyond the court ruling.

Women Abuse in the Church

In a study in Canada, Flynn (2003) established that chances of sexual harassment of women were higher in the church than at the workplace. Often, very few of the victims report their abuse to authorities in their churches and even fewer to the police (Stacey, Darnell & Shupe 2000). With the rate at which ministries and churches are sprouting, in many instances there are no other religious authorities to report to, as the church or ministry is owned by the abuser or their family. Even when they report, women often run the risk of not being believed, leading to shame and isolation, which in turn, have led some to commit suicide (Benyei 1998). Whether the perpetrator is a predator, wanderer or lover type, as classified by Grenz and Bell (2001), they often isolate their victims from their family and make them believe they are the source of comfort and solution to their problems.

Brown and Parker (1989) indicate that the major cause of abuse of congregants by the clergy is the belief that since Jesus suffered and died on the cross to redeem humanity, suffering or self-sacrifice of Christians is equally redemptive and is therefore not something to be rejected. This, as 'Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors' chair Margaret Kennedy (n.d.: 2) observes, makes survivors of abuse believe their suffering is not a bad thing, as they are merely carrying their crosses. We hold that this puts the victim at the mercy of the perpetrator of abuse, and in religious settings it is even more challenging, as the abuser often claims to speak and act on behalf of or upon the instruction of God, which makes it difficult for the congregants to challenge. Women and girls are also often threatened with evil spirits (Landa, Zhou & Tshotsho 2019). It is usually only much later that they realise the religious leader abused his power and betrayed their trust (Fortune 2009). However, Fortune insists, as long as there is no mutuality, lack of choice, inequality and fear, no meaningful consent can be talked about.

Religion in Zimbabwe has recently surged to previously unprecedented growth levels (Landa & Zhou 2018). Much more than previously, as a result, religion has emerged as a lived reality for many Zimbabweans. The worsening economic conditions, over the last twenty years, but especially over the past decade, have seen many people turning to the church, which, as Zhou, Pfukwa and Landa (2018) indicate, has promises for better days for the multitudes facing unemployment and other economic challenges. This has increased women and girls' vulnerability to abuse and deception by religious leaders.

And the church has not done much to help,

> either by its silence or its instruction, the church has too often communicated to battered women that they should stay in abusive relationships, try to be better wives, and 'forgive and forget' (Fortune & Enger 2005).

This has translated into practice, even when the abuse involves the clergy and women and girls who are not necessarily their wives.

Women Abuse and the Media in Zimbabwe

The abuse of women and the media challenge in Zimbabwe are multifaceted as they relate to access, space, representation, visibility, participation, language and interpretation (Morna 2002). Abuse of women relates to,

> … any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (United Nations 1993).

According to Morna (2002: 7),

> violence against women is either not reported at all because it is seen to take place in the private sphere, or reported in bizarre and sensationalist ways that invariably place the blame on the victim.

Morna further argues that the news stories pay no attention to women's human rights abuse in their coverage of abuse cases.

Often, the media re-victimise the victims through sensationalising and scandalising their stories. Women are often presented as prostitutes and gold-diggers (Gadzekpo 2011). Women are often underrepresented and misrepresented by the media, and the media also often reinforce gender stereotypes (Global Media Monitoring Project 2010) that are not favourable to women. According to the Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS 2003), even in gender justice and gender violence issues, men were better heard than women.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative approach. We were interested in the narratives of victims as reported by news articles. The qualitative approach sits well with narratives, as it interests itself with studying phenomena in their natural settings (Babbie 2010). We used a sample of 23 news articles drawn from several newspapers, one online news source, and one television station in Zimbabwe. These were taken off the internet and were published between the year 2010 and 2018. The articles were drawn from NEWSDAY, *The Herald*, NEWS24, ZBC NEWS ONLINE, *The Standard*, *Chronicle* and *The Sunday Mail*. The newspaper medium was chosen for its ability to dedicate more space to news articles than other media. Textual analysis, as done in critical discourse analysis, allows for in-depth analysis of texts and narratives, yielding comprehensive and multiple thematic strands for interpretation; thus, the sample size of 23 news articles was sufficient. The basic assumption of the study was that featurisation of the story of women abuse had better results in raising awareness of violence against women and girls.

Theoretical Framework

The study relied on a dual lens of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Agenda Setting theories. The potency of CDA lies in that it 'serves as both a theoretical framework and a method of analysis' (Zhou *et al.* 2017). What makes CDA relevant for this study is its centralisation, in analysis, of the socio-cultural contexts in which news texts occur (Bell 1998). Furthermore, the CDA approach interests itself with the social reality behind news texts, such as power relations and ideological positions (Van Dijk 1988a; 1988b; Fairclough 1995); beneficiaries of the version represented by what is said (Starosta 1999), and the identities of all involved (Pietikainen & Hujanen 2003).

Agenda setting, on the other hand, interests itself with how the media hold the power to influence the public's perception on issues of social interest. The media thus bring to light chosen issues that would otherwise remain in the dark (Perloff 1998), and similarly keep in the dark issues that they (the media) adjudge as better kept away from public consumption. As the media stress certain issues over others (Wanta 1997), select certain content as more newsworthy than others (Landa 2014), and thus influence the public agenda (Kaid 2004), they are agenda setting.

The media, therefore, have the power to direct people towards what to

think about (Trent & Friedenberg 2008; McCombs 2004). Balmas and Sheafer (2010) add that agenda setting also relates to how the media determine how to think about certain issues emphasised on the news. Weimann and Brosius (2017) submit that 'the salience of elements on the news influences, in turn, their salience on the public agenda'. This is also shared by Weaver (2007). Weaver, McCombs and Shaw (2004) dispute the contention that researchers have unnecessarily expanded agenda setting. What seems to be clear, however, is that the internet and the new media associated with it are changing the implications of agenda setting, as social media users can easily set their agendas (McCombs 2005; Ragas & Roberts 2009; Chaffee & Metzger 2001).

Analysis

For easy reference, the news articles sampled have been labelled A1 (Article one) to A23 as indicated below:

A1 – Pastor gets 60 years for preying on congregant (*NewsDay* 3 November 2017)
A2 – HIV+ pastor caged 18 years for raping congregant (*NewsDay* 15 December 2017)
A3 – Senior AFM pastor faces 5 counts of rape (*NewsDay* 26 August 2016)
A4 – Vic Falls pastor jailed for rape (*NewsDay* 25 January 2013)
A5 – 'Rapist' pastor granted bail
A6 – AFM pastor's rape case crumbles
A7 – Methodist pastor acquitted of rape (*NewsDay* 13 April 2017)
A8 – Zimbabwean Pastor gets 50 years for rape (NEWS24 03 February 2014)
A9 – Drama at Magaya rape trial (*NewsDay* 04 April 2018)
A10 – Magaya charged with rape (*NewsDay* 20 August 2016).
A11 – Prophet Magaya arrested on rape charge (Towindo & Matabvu 2016)
A12 – I was never raped: Magaya accuser (Rupapa 2016)
A13 – Prophet 'rapes' sister-in-law to cleanse goblins (Chiramba 2018).
A14 – Self-styled prophet accused of rape (*The Herald* 01 January 2018)
A15 **–** 'Rapist' Pastor Gumbura owns every woman in his church, Court told (*Newsday* 13 December 2018)
A16 – Gumbura church saga: ACCZ under spotlight (ZBC NEWS ONLINE 6 February 2014)

A17 – State witness chickens out of Magaya rape trial (*NewsDay* 30 March 2018).
A18 – Goba 'burns his fingers' in Magaya rape trial (*NewsDay* 7 June 2018)
A19 – Magaya case: Goba to lodge criminal report (*NewsDay* 6 April 2018)
A20 – Burglars steal Magaya court documents (*NewsDay* 5 April 2018)
A21 – 'Sexual healing' pastor up for rape (*The Herald*)
A22 – We expect salvation, not rape in church (*The Herald*)
A23 – Churches no longer safe for women (Mugugunyeki 2014).

The researchers were pre-occupied with a number of questions in analysing the sampled texts. These questions included:

1. How does the news story put the women abuse and deception narrative on the media agenda to put it on the public agenda?
2. Is the news story analytical?
3. Does the news story go beyond the event and raise the underlying issues; is it in-depth?
4. What is the frequency with which the story about the abuse and deception of women is reported?
5. What issues and key terms characterise the news story?

The sampled articles display a number of weaknesses. We found most of them lacking in depth, and limited just to the narration of court proceedings. Analysis indicated that most news articles on clergy sexual abuse emanated from the courts and the coverage, both in terms of depth and of frequency, was limited to the court sittings and evidence presented by attorneys and witnesses. Our analysis was limited to the news articles, and did not go beyond to understand why the stories were fashioned in the way they were. We were aware, nonetheless, that news stories around cases in court were guided and restricted by a number of legal systems, ethics and instruments.

Depth of News Articles

As Morna (2002: 5) indicates, depth of news articles relates to 'the sources consulted, the extent of investigation and inquiry, and the ability to use a gender lens to uncover hidden stories, context and balance'. Analysis of the data indicates that most of the news articles sampled for the study emanated

from the courts. Only when the accused was a prominent figure in society did the story emanate from other sources, like the police and eye-witness accounts. Even in such, the stories took a scandal stance. Evidence of the sources of the articles is seen in the attribution in the articles. Attribution in the vast majority of the stories is in the following phrasing:

> According to court papers, ...
> During trial, the court heard that ...
> The court was told that ...
> The State alleges that ...
> According to prosecutors ...
> Prosecutors allege that ...
> The court heard that ....

What this indicates is that on their own, reporters have not done much in the direction of exposing the abuse of women and girls in the church. Before stories are reported to the police, the media have not engaged with communities in as far as this narrative is concerned; the media have not put the women abuse narrative on their agenda. While it is a golden rule that journalists are not supposed to interfere with, and unduly influence proceedings in the court, there is no policy stopping the media practitioners from exposing rape cases and all other forms of abuse of women in cases that have not been brought before the courts. The media have also been reluctant to investigate cases that have been concluded by the courts. Furthermore, reporters do not follow up on cases that have been withdrawn by complainants to expose circumstances surrounding the cases and leading to complainants withdrawing cases against the accused. However, it would seem that beyond the details provided by the court, journalists are neither able, nor interested to dig further.

Only when investigations are done around the cases and reported can the issue of women abuse take a pole position on the media agenda, be successfully put on the public agenda and influence public behaviour. Reproducing, or at best narrating, what is said in the arguments in court would not put the women abuse issue on the public agenda; establishing the underlying issues, the issues the court has not heard, would. For example, in the case covered under the headline *Drama at Magaya rape trial* (*NewsDay* 04 April 2018), in which the complainant later dropped charges and withdrew the case claiming she had falsely accused the alleged perpetrator, what would put the women

abuse narrative on the public agenda are details on the following set of questions relating to the case in question:

1. Why did the complainant falsely accuse the alleged perpetrator?
2. Did the complainant not rightly accuse the alleged perpetrator and later change her mind? If so, why did she change her mind?
3. The state had lined up six other witnesses; what were they going to say? Had they also changed their minds about testifying? If so, why?
4. To what extent is the state's allegation that *'Magaya deposited $100,000 into the complainant's bank account, allegedly to induce her to drop charges'* (*News Day* 04 April 2018) true?
5. How many other women and girls have withdrawn cases of abuse before the courts and what have been their reasons?
6. In what circumstances can the state, in the interest of justice, continue with a case in which the complainant or the major witness has withdrawn from the proceedings?'
7. What charge(s) can the court lay against a complainant who reports a case and decides to withdraw it when it goes on trial?

The answers to these questions in the media would give the narrative of women abuse and deception a new position in the agenda of the public. However, in the absence of comprehensive media engagement with the narrative of women abuse and deception, many questions are left unanswered. Where an alleged victim drops charges, the public will be interested in knowing why. The public is left to process the stories and try to separate information from misinformation. It is such fickle engagement or non-engagement by the media that causes the story of women to be dismissed easily.

Another example of lack of depth is in sample A8 (*Zimbabwean Pastor gets 50 years for rape*) (News24 03 February 2014). The story indicates that the accused 'claimed that all female members of his church were his wives by right, and married women were on loan from their husbands'. This is an important strand of the news article that deserves to be followed up outside what 'the court heard'. For instance, from such a story the public would want to know the following;

1. What do the unmarried women in the church think of the claim that by right they are all the pastor's wives?

2. What are the feelings and beliefs of all the married men in the church whose wives are 'on loan' to the leader?
3. Are there no unreported cases of women, married and unmarried, who had been sexually abused in the belief that the pastor had a right to be intimate with them all?
4. What were the beliefs and sexual behaviours of all the pastors in the branches of the church in other towns and cities throughout the country?
5. What does the ordinary Zimbabwean in the street think of the claims that every unmarried woman in the church is, by right, their pastor's wife?
6. What sexual behaviours do such beliefs promote in the country in general and in the church in particular?

Serious engagement with this case beyond the court proceedings and after the conclusion of the case would expose the rot not only in the particular church, but also in other churches and cults-cum-churches that share the same, or similar, beliefs. Engagement with such important questions would give the story about women abuse a key position in both the media and public agendas. In the excerpt below, the reader is left with questions on the fate of the accomplice. The excerpt reads;

> *The court heard upon arrival the woman entered into Maurukira's residence together with the convict's friend, Kudakwashe Rwodzi, who locked the door from outside and promised to return after a few minutes.*
> *Maurukira then took out a bottle of anointing oil and instructed the woman to comply with his orders, claiming her spiritual attacks would return if she did not.*
> *Maurukira pushed the woman onto his bed and raped her* (A1: *NewsDay* 3 November 2017).

Mentioning that the convict's friend locked the door from outside and moving on with the story without ever mentioning the friend, who is an obvious accomplice, is hardly enough for the reader. However, because the particular case the reporter is covering is specifically on the convict, mention of the accomplice is only once and it is from its mention by the court.

Pre-occupation in the stories seems to be with the sentences given to the convicted at the conclusion of trial as indicated in the headlines below:

> *Methodist pastor acquitted of rape (*A7*: NewsDay* 13 April 2017*).*
> *Zimbabwean pastor gets 50 years for rape* (A8: NEWS24 03 February 2014*).*
> *Pastor gets 60 years for preying on congregant* (A1: *NewsDay* 3 November 2017*).*
> *HIV+ pastor caged 18 years for raping congregant* (A2: *NewsDay* 15 December 2017*).*

In the following story lead,

> *A 70-year-old pastor with an apostolic sect from Victoria Falls was on Wednesday jailed for 15 years for raping his 12-year-old niece several times* (A5: NEWSDAY 25 January 2013).

Further, pre-occupation also seems to be on bizarre circumstances surrounding sexual abuse of women in the church. Examples are the following headlines,

> *Prophet 'rapes' sister-in-law to cleanse goblins* (A13: *Chronicle* 04 January 2018)
> *'Rapist' Pastor Gumbura owns every woman in his church, Court told* (A15: *NewsDay* 13 December 2018)
> *'Sexual healing' pastor up for rape* (A21: *The Herald*)

An example of a story lead that focuses on the uncanny is excerpted below,

> *A 50-YEAR-OLD prophet from Bulawayo has appeared in court for allegedly raping his sister-in-law while her husband was in prison after having first suggested that her private parts needed to be cleansed as goblins were bedding her* (A13: *Chronicle* 04 January 2018).

However, attention is rarely on the victim or the complainant, not even on secondary victims. While ethically the identities of alleged victims are protected in reporting rape cases, merely stating their ages removes the person aspect

of victimhood. Of the 23 articles sampled in this study, only one article is on the alleged victim, the major reason being that she had contributed to a major shift in the case by withdrawing her case and threatening to approach the Law Society of Zimbabwe to institute a disciplinary hearing against the Prosecutor General for wanting to proceed with the case after she had withdrawn the case. In other words, she is a hero in the story for threatening to prosecute the Prosecutor General, a major turning of tables.

Further, communities are absent in the reporting of court cases. While ethics demand that the identities of victims of rape and their families cannot be revealed for their protection, there is no policy against seeking their feelings, views and voices on the issues involved. For example, a section in one news article reads,

> *A MUTARE-BASED Methodist Church in Zimbabwe pastor was last Friday acquitted of rape charges levelled against him after the complainant's witnesses gave contradictory statements* (A7: NEWSDAY 13 April 2017).

Regardless of the case being concluded, the reader is obviously still interested to know what the conflicting statements by the witnesses were, and what the church elders referred to in the story, and what other congregants and the community in general said and felt about the whole alleged crime. This would help put the story of the women abuse on the public agenda. We hold that the absence of the voices of community members and people close to the victims of crimes excludes families and communities from the women abuse narrative and relegates the narrative to a matter for the courts and for the media, since the media only give voice to the alleged perpetrators and their representatives. The state, in most cases, is the voice of the victims.

It would seem that featurisation of the story of women abuse gives it more depth, space and focus, and gives the reporter the flexibility to bring women's voices into the story. One example of a feature that gives depth and is likely to institute debate around the women abuse and deception story is headlined;

> *Church no longer safe for women* (*The Standard* 19 January 2014).

The reporter goes on to document several dimensions of the women abuse

story, in the process also referring to cases both before the courts and being dealt with by the police and the Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe (ACCZ). A section of the story reads,

> *Abused women are always in a quandary. Their abuse by pastors, often during spiritual or marital counselling sessions wins little public attention and they are often held responsible for the relationship ... Pastor Gumbura was seen as being above reproach and the victims are now viewed as the 'seductresses' who tempted the man of God into a sexual relationship* (A23: *The Standard* 19 January 2014).

The feature allows a report space, and a reporter time to investigate several issues related to the subject at hand.

The other feature (A22) in the sample also takes a look at a number of critical issues that seek to spark debate around the abuse of women. For example, sections of the feature read,

> *Is it a search of wonder workers, visionaries or riches that is making people not see the light? Day in day out church leaders are being made to stand in the dock over accusations of deflowering maidens in church, impregnating married women and even stealing from members of their flock ...*
> *Just like driving a car, checks and balances and even a competence test must be demanded for someone to lead a church.*
> *Church leaders must possess certain qualities to ensure their doctrines do not poison the religious communities they lead. Lack of leadership qualities affects the way people worship and erodes confidence in God ...*
> *The Bible lists qualities which church leaders must have ...* (*The Herald*).

As indicated above, a feature allows the reader to express opinions and comment on issues they would otherwise not comment on.

Without featurisation of the story of women abuse, and due to stringent court reporting regulations and ethics, hard news forces reporters to stick to what is said in court and to include trivial material that adds no value to the women abuse narrative. Examples include,

> *Magaya arrived at the court uncuffed in a double-cab vehicle and escorted by two police detectives. He chuckled as photojournalists captured him entering the building where some of his congregants knelt and greeted him as he walked into Court 6. Sporting a blue shirt, black trousers and black shoes, Magaya appeared relaxed and occasionally chatted with a Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Services officer as his wife sat in the gallery* (A11: *Sunday Mail* 21 August 2016).
> *Magaya arrived at the courts after courts had already closed and the magistrates had to be recalled from home (*A10: *NewsDay* 20 August 2016).

This backgrounding does not add value to the women abuse narrative. If anything, it projects the accused as a confident hero who, even in such 'difficult' times was chatty and was worshipped by congregants from his church. The second excerpt serves the same; even magistrates had to change from their home clothes and return to work because an important person had been arrested. However, without the trivial backgrounding, in hard news reporters will be forced to write three-sentence news articles. For example, if we remove the second excerpt above from the story where it is excerpted from, the story remains with only three sentences as indicated below;

> *PROPHETIC Healing and Deliverance Ministries (PHD) leader Walter Magaya has been arrested and arraigned before the courts on allegations of raping a 25 year old woman last year in July.*
> *Magaya was arrested on Friday night and detained at Rhodesville police station. He appeared before magistrate Vakai Chikwekwe who granted him $2,000 bail coupled with stringent reporting conditions (*A10: NEWSDAY 20 August 2016)

Such stories are a result of both stringent court reporting ethics and lack of innovativeness on the part of the reporter. The reporter's target reader would seem to be those people who know who Magaya is. The assumption is that every reader knows who Magaya is. The article makes no effort to explain the brevity of the story and the lack of details on the alleged crime.

We also did a key term scanning of the articles. We drew up a total of ten terms that are key in the narrative of the abuse of women and girls and

checked the frequency of their use in the media reportage of sexual abuse of women and girls by the clergy. These included gender-based violence, violation, trauma, traumatised, horrific, violence against women, social problems, brutality, suffering, and sexually transmitted infections. We hold that these sets of terms take the women abuse story into the media agenda and, by extension, the public agenda. For example, the conception of rape of women and girls in the church as gender-based violence, violence against women, traumatic, horrific, a social problem, brutal, causing untold suffering, transmitting several infections, and a general violation of women and of their human rights, position the women and girls abuse narrative an important and strategic angle in the public agenda.

Analysis indicated that of all the 23 news articles, none refers to gender-based violence, violation, trauma, human rights, horrific, brutal, suffering, and sexually transmitted infections. Only one article refers to rape cases as violence against women, while another one refers to leadership problems in the church, which remotely relates to the key term 'social problem'. Furthermore, data indicate that articles A22 and A23, which refer to violence against women and social problems respectively, are features. This reinforces the fact that featurisation of the women abuse story gives the newsmakers flexibility and space to explore the issues from different angles.

Discussion

Analysis of data indicated that media engagement with the narrative about women and girls is insufficient and fickle. This is caused both by stringent court reporting regulations and ethics as well as reluctance by the media to investigate stories that have either been concluded by the court or withdrawn by complainants. The major problem, to start with, is the media's reliance on the court for coverage of women abuse by the clergy. Without the court cases, it would seem there is no coverage of women abuse issues, except by a few features and opinion pieces.

Lack of depth and inadequate sourcing trivialise the women abuse story. It is difficult for the reader to attach importance to a story that has too many gaps. In essence, the reader remains with so many unanswered questions. These unanswered questions represent gaps in a story. Often, there is not even effort to acknowledge these gaps by the newsmaker, the acknowledgement that would otherwise be represented by such statements as,

> Efforts to get details from the PG's office on the state's claim that it has evidence that Magaya paid $100 000 into the alleged victim's bank account were fruitless as the PG said revealing the details to the public would prejudice the defence's case (Creation by researchers).

Without such framing, stories lend themselves to the criticism that they are cursory, lack depth and have too many gaps. There obviously are other sources than the court on the cases of the abuse of women.

Media engagement with the women abuse and deception narrative is weak and superficial at best. Declaring that 'cases of church leaders abusing women are common in Zimbabwe' without engaging with, for example, what the justice system is doing to nip the problem in the bud, or how the problem has affected the community, spirituality or women and girls in particular is inadequate. The media engagement with the women abuse narrative has therefore not painted rape and sexual assault of women and girls by the clergy as a social problem that needs the urgent and undivided attention of the society.

Conclusions

Given the gravity of the deception of women, leading to their sexual abuse in the church and the ideal that this issue should be on the public agenda, we concur with Vangshardt (2009: 20) that,

> if the media over a prolonged period of time cover certain issues more than others it will, theoretically at least, create correlation between the media agenda and public agenda.

However, successfully setting an agenda for the public goes beyond that. It further needs to include the question of framing, and following up on issues to their logical conclusion. Therefore, agenda setting involves frequency, consistency, quality of coverage of issues of social import and the credibility rating of the sources of salient issues. The media's setting of an agenda for the public, is a deliberate exercise that begins with the media seting goals to be achieved.

Absence of the voices of families and communities in the news articles on sexual crimes committed by the clergy against women and girls does not make the women abuse and deception narrative a social, or at least community

problem. We conclude that as long as the media do not raise the narrative about the abuse of women and girls to the magnitude that warrants it to be considered as a social problem, it will be difficult for it to find a spot in the public agenda. Hurried, and often comic, narrations of what takes place in court would not achieve this magnitude. Instead, investigative feature articles that give space to a multiplicity of voices, especially voices of the women who are mostly victims in these crimes, would.

References

Babbie, E. 2010. *The Practice of Social Research*. Cape Town: ABC Press.

Balmas, M. & T. Sheafer 2010. Candidate Image in Election Campaigns: Attribute Agenda Setting, Affective Priming, and Voting Intentions. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 22,2: 204–229. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edq009

BBC NEWS. 16 August 2018. Pope Francis on Side of Victims of 'Predator' Priests in US. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45211942 (Accessed on 27 March 2019.)

Becker, L. & M. McCombs 1978. The Role of the Press in Determining Voter Reactions to Presidential Primaries. *Human Communication Research* 4: 301–307. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1978.tb00716.x

Bell, A. (ed.). 1998. *Approaches to Media Discourse*. London: Blackwell.

Benyei, C.R. 1998. *Understanding Clergy Misconduct in Religious Systems: Scapegoating, Family Secrets, and the Abuse of Power*. New York: Haworth Pastor Press.

Bromley, D.G. & C.H. Cress 2000. Narrative of Sexual Danger: A Comparative Perspective on the Emergence of the Clergy Sexual Violation Scandal. In Shupe, A., W.A. Stacey & S.E. Darnell (eds.): *Bad Pastors: Clergy Misconduct in Modern America*. New York: New York University Press.

Brown, J.C. & R. Parker 1989. 'For God so Loved the World?' In Brown, J.C. & C.R. Bohn (eds.): *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*. 1st Edition. New York: Pilgrim Press.

CBSNEWS 2018. Pope Francis to Meet Victims of Sexual Abuse in Ireland. CBS/AP 21 August 2018, 8:42 AM. Available at: https://www.cbsnews.com/ news/pope-francis-catholic-church-meet-victims-of-sexual-abuse-in-ireland-today-2018-21-08/

(Accessed on 25 August 2018.)
Chaffee, S.H. & M.J. Metzger 2001. The End of Mass Communication? *Mass Communication and Society* 4: 365–379. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327825MCS0404_3
Chiramba, S. 2018. Prophet 'Rapes' Sister-in-law to Cleanse Goblins. *Chronicle*. Available at: https://www.chronicle.co.zw/prophet-rapes-sister-in-law-to-cleanse-goblins/ (Accessed on 27 March 2019.)
Cohen, D. 1975. A Report on a Non-election Agenda Setting Study. Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism. Ottawa, Canada, 1975.
Cooper, D. 2002. Desiree Cooper: Encounter with her Minister Broke Trust, but not Faith. Available at: http://www.freep.com/news/metro/des28_29920328.htm (Accessed on 25 August 2018.)
CRUX 2018. Pope Opens Chile Trip with Apology for Clerical Sexual Abuse. 16 January. Available at: https://cruxnow.com/pope-in-chile-and-peru/2018/01/ 16/pope-opens-chile-trip-apology-clerical-sexual-abuse/ (Accessed on 25 August 2018.)
Fairclough, N. 1995a. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London: Longman.
Fico, F. & E. Freedman 2001. Setting the News Story Agenda: Candidates and Commentators in News Coverage of a Governor's Race. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 78,3: 437–449. https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900107800303
Flynn, K.A. 2003. *The Sexual Abuse of Women by Members of the Clergy*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.
Fortune, M.M. 2002. Introduction: Forgiveness and Abuse. *Journal of Religion & Abuse* 4,4: 1–5.
Fortune, M.M. 2009. *Responding to Clergy Misconduct: A Handbook.* Faith Trust Institute. https://doi.org/10.1300/J154v04n04_01
Fortune, M.M. & C.G. Enger 2005. Violence against Women and the Role of Religion. Applied Research Forum, National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women. https://vawnet.org/sites/default/files/materials/files/2016-09/AR_VAWReligion_0.pdf
Gadzekpo, A. 2011. Battling Old Ghosts in Gender and African Media Research. *African Communication Research* 4,3: 389–410.
Gender and Media Baseline Study 2003. Regional Overview of the Gender and

Media Baseline Study. Gender Links. Available at: https://genderlinks.org.za/programme-web-menu/publications/gender-and-media-baseline-study-2003-2005-06-30/ (Accessed on 27 March 2019.)

Global Media Monitoring Project 2010. Who Makes the News? GMMP Report. Available at: http://youcantbewhatyoucantsee.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Global-Media-Monitoring-Project-2010.pdf (Accessed on 27 March 2019.)

Golan, G. & W. Wanta 2001. Second-level Agenda Setting in the New Hampshire Primary: A Comparison of Coverage in Three Newspapers and Public Perceptions of Candidates. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 78,2: 247–259. https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900107800203

Gqola, P.D. 2015. *Rape: A South African Nightmare*. Johannesburg: JM Books.

Graber, D.A. 2006. *Mass Media and American Politics.* 7th Edition. Washington: CQ Press.

Grenz, S.J. & R.D. Bell 2001. *Betrayal of Trust: Confronting and Preventing Clergy Sexual Misconduct.* 2nd Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

Hobbs, M. 2008. On Discourse and Representation: Reflections on Michel Foucault's Contribution to the Study of the Mass Media. Annual Conference of the Australian Sociological Association, University of Melbourne.

Johnson, T.J., W. Wanta & T. Boudreau 2004. Drug Peddlers: How Four Presidents Attempted to Influence Media and Public Concern on the Drug Issue. *Atlantic Journal of Communication* 12,4: 177–199. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15456889ajc1204_1

Kaid, L.L. 2004. *Handbook of Political Communication Research*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410610584

Kennedy, M. n.d. Christianity and Child Sexual Abuse - Survivors Informing the Care of Children Following Abuse. *Child Abuse Review* 9. https://doi.org/10.1002/1099-0852(200003/04)9:2<124::AID-CAR589>3.0.CO;2-L

Kim, S.T. & Y.H. Lee 2006. New Functions of Internet Mediated Agenda-setting: Agenda Rippling and Reversed Agenda-setting. *Korean Journal of Journalism & Communication Studies* 50: 175–205.

King, P.T. 1997. *The Press, Candidate Images, and Voter Perceptions in Communication and Democracy*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kwansah-Aidoo, K. 2003. Events that Matter: Specific Incidents, Media Coverage, and Agenda-setting in a Ghanaian Context. *Canadian Journal of Communication* 28,1: 43–66. https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2003v28n1a1340

Landa, N. 2014. *Investigating Sociolinguistic Factors Influencing the Blurring of Boundaries in Press Print Media Genres in Zimbabwe*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Fort Hare, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities.

Landa, N. & S. Zhou 2018. A Critical Discourse Analysis of 'Religious Othering' in Pentecostalism: A Case of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe. In Machingura F., L. Togarasei & E. Chitando (eds.): *Pentecostalism and Human Rights in Contemporary Zimbabwe*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Landa, N., S. Zhou & B. Tshotsho 2019. Interrogating the Role of Language in Clergy Sexual Abuse of Women and Girls in Zimbabwe. *Journal for the Study of Religion* 32,2. https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3027/2019/v32n2a5

McCombs, M.E. 2004. *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

McCombs, M.E. 2005. A Look at Agenda-setting: Past, Present and Future. *Journalism Studies* 6,4: 543–557. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700500250438

McCombs, M.E., E. Lopez-Escobar & J.P. Llamas 2000. Setting the Agenda of Attributes in the 1996 Spanish General Election. *Journal of Communication* 50,2: 77–92. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2000.tb02842.x

McCombs, M.E & D.L. Shaw 1972. The Agenda-setting Function of Mass Media. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36,2: 176–187. https://doi.org/10.1086/267990

McCombs, M.E & S. Valenzuela 2007. The Agenda-Setting Theory. *Cuadernos de Información* 20: 44-50. Available at: http://www.redalyc.org/ articulo.oa?id=97120369004 (Accessed on 27 March 2019.) https://doi.org/10.7764/cdi.20.111

Morna, C.L. 2002. Promoting Gender Equality in and through the Media: A Southern African Case Study. Expert Group Meeting on 'Participation

and Access of Women to the Media, and the Impact of Media on, and its Use as an Instrument for the Advancement and Empowerment of Women. Beirut, Lebanon, 12 to 15 November 2002. United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW).

Mugugunyeki, M. 2014. Churches no Longer Safe for Women. *The Standard.* Available at: https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2014/01/19/churches-longer-safe-women/ (Accessed on 27 March 2019.)

NewsDay 2017a. HIV+ Pastor Caged 18 Years for Raping Congregant. 15 December.

NewsDay 2017b. Pastor Gets 60 Years for Preying on Congregant. 3 November.

Papadouka, M.E., N. Evangelopoulos & G. Ignatow 2016. Agenda Setting and Active Audiences in Online Coverage of Human Trafficking. *Information, Communication and Society* 19,5: 655–672. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/ 10.1080/1369118X.2016.1139615 (Accessed 27 March 2019.) https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1139615

Perloff, R.M. 1998. *Political Communication: Politics, Press, and Public in America.* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Pietikainen, S. & J. Hujanen 2003. At the Crossroads of Ethnicity, Place and Identity: Representations of Northern People and Regions in Finnish News Discourse. *Media, Culture & Society* 25: 251–268. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443703025002517

Ragas, M.W. & M. Roberts 2009. Agenda Setting and Agenda Melding in an Age of Horizontal and Vertical Media: A New Theoretical Lens for Virtual Brand Communities. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 86,1: 45–56. https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900908600104

RTE News. Pope Francis will Meet Abuse Survivors during Visit to Ireland. Updated Thursday, 23 Aug 2018 09:36. Available at: https://www.rte.ie/news/ 2018/0821/986443-pope-francis/ (Accessed on 7 April 2019.)

Rupapa, T. 2016. I was Never Raped: Magaya Accuser. *The Herald.* Available at: https://www.herald.co.zw/i-was-never-raped-magaya-accuser/ (Accessed on 27 March 2019.)

Scheufele, D.A. & D. Tewksbury 2000. Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models. *Journal of Communication* 57,1: 9–20. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0021-9916.2007.00326.x

Sibanda-Moyo, N., E. Khonje & M.K. Brobbey 2017. *Violence against Women in South Africa: A Country in Crisis.* Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.

Stacey, W.A., S.E. Darnell & A. Shupe 2000. How Much Clergy Malfeasance is Really Out There? A Victimization Survey of Prevalence and Perceptions. In Shupe A., W.A. Stacey & S.E. Darnell (eds.): *Bad Pastors: Clergy Misconduct in Modern America*. New York: New York University Press.

Starosta, W.J. 1999. Critical Discourse Analysis and the Other. *Journal of Communication* 49,2: 145–147. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1999.tb02799.x

Supreme Court of Tasmania 2015. Annual Report 2014 – 2015. Available at: https://www.supremecourt.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/SCoT_AnlRpt_1415.pdf (Accessed on 27 March 2019.)

Tedesco, J.C. 2001. Issue and Strategy Agenda-setting in the 2000 Presidential Primaries. *American Behavioral Scientist* 44,12: 2048–2067. https://doi.org/10.1177/00027640121958483

Towindo, L. & D. Matabvu 2016. Prophet Magaya Arrested on Rape Charge. *Sunday Mail.* Available at: https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/prophet-magaya-arrested-on-rape-charge (Accessed on 27 March 2019.)

Trent, J.S. & R.V. Friedenberg 2008. *Political Campaign Communication: Principles and Practices.* 6th Edition. Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.

United Nations 1993. *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.* (UN Resolution 48/104.) Paper at the Proceedings of the 85th Plenary Meeting. Geneva: United Nations General Assembly.

Van Dijk, T.A. 1988a. *News Analysis: Case Studies of International and National News in the Press*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Van Dijk, T.A. 1988b. *News as Discourse*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Vangshardt, T. 2009. The Agenda Setting Effect of the U.S. Mass Media during the 2008 Presidential Campaign. Copenhagen Business School.

Wanta, W. 1997. `*The Public and the National Agenda.* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Weaver, D. 2007. Thoughts on Agenda Setting, Framing, and Priming. *Journal*

of Communication 57: 142–147. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00333.x

Weaver, D., M. McCombs & D.L. Shaw 2004. Agenda-setting Research: Issues, Attributes, and Influences. In Kaid, L.I. (ed.): *Handbook of Political Communication Research.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Weimann, G. & H.B. Brosius 2016. A New Agenda for Agenda Setting in the Digital Era. In Vowe, G. & P. Henn (eds.): *Political Communication in the Online World: Theoretical and Research Designs*. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315707495-3

Young, R. & K. McCarthy 2009. Why do Municipal Issues Rise on the Federal Policy Agenda in Canada? *Canadian Public Administration* 52,3: 347–370. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-7121.2009.00087.x

Zhou, S., N. Landa & I.N. Zhou 2017. Analysis of Media Roles in Bridging the Information Gap for Environmentally Sustainable Development in Zimbabwe. *Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review* 33: 2.

Zhou, S., C. Pfukwa & N. Landa 2018. Of Prophets and Apostles: The Onomastic and Linguistic Implications of Using Titles as Names in Pentecostalism. In Machingura, F., L. Togaresei & E. Chitando (eds.): *Pentecostalism and Human Rights in Contemporary Zimbabwe*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1353/eas.2017.0009

Dr. Nhlanhla Landa
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities.
University of Fort Hare
nlanda@ufh.ac.za

Dr. Sindiso Zhou
Department of English
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
University of Fort Hare
szhou@ufh.ac.za

‘Accepting the unacceptable’: The Clash between Faith and Reason in New Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe

Joyline Gwara
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2245-1171

Francis Machingura
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5161-5369

Abstract

Religion is the most interesting and ironical ideology that the world has ever experienced. Religions tend to evoke emotions that are protected from criticism, both from within and without. Africa has been marred with religious and cultural pluralism, with African Traditional Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam as its main traditions. Thus, the immediate experience of Africans is a mixture of a traditional, political, religious and cultural worldviews. The current situation in new Pentecostal movements in Zimbabwe is the flourishing numbers of prophetic Pentecostal movements that claim to solve African problems. What is ironic is the pace at which founders of these Pentecostal movements become wealthy, whilst their members continue to wallow in poverty, yet still hope for a holistic breakthrough as preached by the clergy. Is it not the gullible clergy who have realized that wealth quickly comes with the founding of a Church? Is it not the gullible followers who will survive the economic and religious abuses? Why is reason condemned in the ‘faith’ paradigm? In most cases, it is against this backdrop that we call for an analysis of issues to do with faith and reason in the face of religious pluralism and gullibility.

Keywords: faith, reason, religion, religious experiences

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a19

Introduction

Religion is one of the most robust, greatly felt, and authoritative forces in human communities. It is responsible for shaping up inter/intra-connection between peoples or groups; guiding their families, communities, economics, and political life. This being the case, religion becomes a remarkable aspect of social life. As John Mbiti observes, 'Africans are notoriously religious' (Mbiti 1969). There is no doubt that religion is very significant for the lives of African people. It therefore follows that those religious values, places, beliefs and practices influence people's actions and their religious experiences that aid them in life. Though religion plays such a pivotal role in social life, it is one of the most pervasive phenomena of human life and culture in every lifetime. However, religion is taken for granted by many people without seriously questioning it.

With the rise of New Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe, religion, and in this case Christianity, has assumed a different meaning from what it used to be in the medieval period. Christianity in Zimbabwe is now characterized by prophets who predict people's fortunes; hence the so-called 'gospel of prosperity'. Charismatic leaders of these Churches have contextualized the gospel to fulfil the fantasies of their followers by performing all sorts of controversial miracles (miracle babies, miracle monies characterised by gold nuggets falling into peoples' pockets) and preaching of the prosperity gospel to people experienceing poverty and disease. The situation seems to be in sync with how Sigmund Freud describes religion in his book *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1933). For Freud (1933), 'religion is an illusion and it derives its strength from the fact that it falls in with our instinctual desires'. In the case of Zimbabwe, there is much poverty, disease, unemployment, political tensions and hopelessness. People look up to religions such as Christianity for solutions to their problems and challenges. However, though religion seems to be an ideology that is beyond criticism, there are some theologians and philosophers who dedicate their work to questioning religious immunity from the rational scrutiny that the discourse enjoys. This led Voltaire to subject organized religion to rigorous analysis and criticism, because he did not believe any religion, let alone Christianity or the Church, to be the one and only interpreter of religious issues (Cliteur 2010). Voltaire sought to help believers to engage critically with all institutions of power, including the Church. The reasoning of empowerment cultivated critical discussion, freedom of thought and inquiry, freedom of conscience and freedom of speech. Voltaire favoured a scenario

where people were freethinkers so as to deter villains from breaking the law and tyrants from exploiting their citizens. This called for the power of reason and a critique of faith or religion, so to empower citizens against unfortunate elements and tendencies associated with the clergy or institutions of religion or the Church. Voltaire propagated the use of reason. This attitude is particularly widespread in the West where no feature of religion has escaped scepticism and doubt. It is against this background that we interrogate the relationship that exists between faith and reason in an attempt to call for rational scrutiny of religious beliefs and practices in Zimbabwe. The emphasis on the use of only reason or only revelation should be avoided in Christians' daily life. This is not a situation of 'either/ or' but a 'both/ and' situation. Faith and reason can be differentiated, but never separated. Faith is an act of both the will and the intellect, whilst reason is an act of the intellect. One cannot talk of faith only, minus the operation of the mind or reason, especially if one wants to engage in the same faith. Failure to do that exposes people to manipulations as reported in media, e.g. poor lay people being ripped off of their hard-earned cash, or innocent women being raped by self-proclaimed prophets. Faith and reason must reciprocate each other as two sides of the same coin. Both faith and reason are essential to Christianity even as they function within their proper spheres.

Conceptual Analysis

In order to have a full appreciation of the discussion, we saw it fit to start off by analysing the concepts 'religion', 'faith' and 'reason'. The term 'religion' has been a bone of contention for religionists who do not agree on what the term means. Austin Cline (2019) notes that the fundamental problem with defining religion is that the definition is 'either too narrow or excludes many belief systems and practices which most agree are religions or (it is) too vague and ambiguous, suggesting that just about anything and everything is a religion'. The problem with a broad definition is that it ends up failing to exclude what is not religion. On the other hand, a narrow definition of religion ends up excluding non-traditional faiths, as well as minority religions that hinder the growth and development of religion. However, the best that religionists could offer is a working definition of religion. Thus, for the purposes of this article we adopt Hargrove's (1979) definition of religion as a human phenomenon that unites cultural, social, and personality systems into a meaningful whole. For Hargrove, religion's components generally include,

(1) a community of believers who share;
(2) a common myth that interprets the abstractions of cultural values into historic reality;
(3) ritual behaviour, which makes possible personal participation, in
(4) a dimension of experience recognized as encompassing something more than everyday reality – the holy.

Just like religion, the word 'faith' is shrouded in several meanings. In some cases it can be used to depict hope, optimism or expectation. In religious circles, faith is founded upon belief in God. Hebrews 11:1, however, provides a biblical Christian definition of faith as 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen'. There are several or different understandings of the word faith in the Jewish Hebrew Bible. For instance, in we have the following in a selection of texts.

- In Habakkuk 2:4, faith is understood as denoting steadfastness, loyalty or faithfulness[1].
- In Romans, faith is used to depict strong personal conviction[2].
- In 1 Corinthians, it is used to speak of a spiritual gift[3].

In addition to these, faith is also used to designate belief[4]; in other cases,

[1] And also 'So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham' (Galatians 3:9); 'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)' (Hebrews 10:23); ' Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you in prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and will give thee a crown of life' (Revelations 2:10).
[2] 'And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin' (Romans 14:23).
[3] 'And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing' (1 Corinthians 13:2).
[4] John 12:42 'Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue'. See also Hebrews 11:6.

trust[5] and obedience[6]. Holistically, faith involves many aspects of one's life.

Understood from a philosophical perspective, Collingwood (1968: 122) observes that faith is a religious attitude or habit of mind that,

> accepts without criticism, pronounces without proving and acts without arguing. It knows nothing of analysis and classification, hypothesis and induction and syllogism. For the machinery of thought it has no use.

From Collingwood's definition of faith, it can be seen that faith is viewed as an uncritical disposition towards matters to do with divinity. Faith then strongly holds the view that the truth of religious propositions is indubitable. Different philosophers came up with different understandings of the word 'faith'. For instance, William James in his book, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays* (1896:1), gives a description of faith as our 'right to adopt a believing attitude in religious matters'. Thomas Aquinas observes that faith is 'an act of the intellect assenting to the truth at the command of the will' (1945). Whenever there is an engagement with faith claims, the intellect must also be summoned and involved in order to appreciate the truth claims at hand. For John Locke (1689:416), faith is an 'an assent to [a] proposition …'. It is our conviction that faith is of paramount importance in religious circles and it is a necessary characteristic of mankind. For purposes of our article we will capitalize on Collingwood's definition that depicts the uncritical and irrational nature of faith. Pentecostal Churches' understanding of faith fits under Collingwood's definition where faith and reason are regarded as divorced. In most cases, reason is shunned and side-lined.

The term 'reason' also has its own problems, especially when used as synonym for common sense. Lionel Ruby (1960) in his text, *Logic: An Introduction,* formulated what has come to be known as the law of rationality. According to Ruby (1960),

[5] 'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me' (John 14:1). See also Romans 14:17-20 and Luke 7.

[6] 'And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them' (Numbers 20:12). See also, John 3:36; Romans 1:5 and Hebrews 10:39.

> Every person who is interested in logical thinking accepts what we shall call the 'law of rationality', which may be stated as follows: We ought to justify our conclusions by adequate evidence …. By 'adequate evidence' we mean evidence which is good and sufficient in terms of the kind of proof which is required. There are occasions when we require conclusive proof, as in mathematics, and there are occasions when it is sufficient to establish the probability of a given conclusion, as in weather prediction. But in all cases the evidence must be adequate to its purpose.

In this regard, reason is believed to depict a mental process known as inference whereby the mind apprehends logical connections between facts or between given premises and a conclusion. These premises and conclusion form what in logic is called an argument. The argument can either be arrived at deductively or inductively. In the former, the conclusion derives from the premises with logical necessity, whereas in the latter the conclusion follows with logical probability. Drawing from this then, reason should be taken to mean the ground, support or justification of an act or belief.

The Philosophic Background to the Problem of Faith and Reason

The relationship between faith and reason has seldom been tranquil or peaceful; rather, conflict and controversy appear at every turn. Serious religious thinkers as well as some philosophers have argued that faith and reason are not compatible at all and that their relationship is, and must be, that of mutual rejection and hostility. The question becomes, is religious belief rational? Or is faith an irrational activity? Or is it a rational one? Can rationality and faith connect? Can one be a rational believer? Hudson (1991) notes that, most religious traditions consider their teachings to be based on pronouncements from superhuman/ divine sources and thereby exempt from rational criticism. In some cases reason is declared to be finite, limited and even tainted, and therefore not competent to make judgements concerning the truth of what is divinely revealed. In light of this, it is the inspired writings of religious traditions, their scriptures or holy books that serve as the source of divine revelation and their adherents are often expected to just accept and believe the teachings derived from these writings unquestioningly. It is from this point of

view that the source of religious truths ought to be revelation or faith. When philosophers and theologians begin to raise criticism to the uncritical acceptance of religious dogmas, they base their objection on the claim that reason has discovered some inconsistences in the doctrines themselves, or between religious knowledge claims derived by reason from other sources. This sets the stage for a feud between supporters of faith and advocates of reason.

To this effect, the debate on faith and reason saw the emergence of two schools of thought. On the one hand, there are those that believe that faith and reason are commensurable; that is, it is rational to believe in God. These are the views of such acclaimed philosophers as St Thomas Aquinas and Immanuel Kant, among others. In an attempt to reconcile faith and reason, Aquinas insisted that they are both gifts of God (faith and reason); therefore, they could not possibly be in conflict. Aquinas argued that there are many things that reason is competent to discover for itself, unaided by revelation, and it is clear that God intended us to use it for just that purpose. On the other hand, some things are beyond the powers of reason. Among these are things that humans need to know because they are essential ingredients in the practice of religion and for human salvation.

Aquinas further argued that, through reason we can know that God exists, because God has revealed himself to us through scriptures, prophets, the doctrine of the church and the incarnation. But there are certain things about God that reason finds unacceptable and cannot even understand; for example, that God is a Trinity or three persons in one, or that Christ is both fully human and fully divine (Hudson 1991). The scriptures were written in advanced Greek and Hebrew; a sign that the authors used their minds to engage people of their time. It is the same scriptures where languages such as Greek and Hebrew had to be used to communicate. The writers used the power of reason to communicate in an understandable way. The process took some decades or centuries to copied into the different languages, as in the case of Africa. All these processes involved the power of the mind. On the part of biblical writers, they reasoned with their audience in case of doctrinal misunderstandings or bringing the message home. Paul used reasoning in his ecclesiological, pneumatological, hermeneutical, theological and soteriological discourses. Paul used philosophical arguments to engage his audience, for example, Corinthians, Romans and Galatians, and he used reason to illustrate the power of faith. Aquinas wrapped up by indicating that God provided the overlap of faith and revelation for a good and deliberate purpose, that is, to make it possible for us

to test the workings of reason as we develop more fully its use. What this means then is that, though Aquinas advocated a mutually inclusive relationship between faith and reason, his arguments implies that faith must have the final authority. Aquinas appreciated the marriage between reason and faith. However, the fact that he advocates for the superiority of faith over reason makes his views unattractive. For one critic, Aquinas placed the doctrine of the Trinity beyond the competence of reason and this is tantamount to exempting it from rational scrutiny. This is the trend today where people think issues of faith did not need reasoning or the participation of the mind.

From a rational perspective, the doctrine of the Trinity is a violation of the laws of logic, that is, the principle of non-contradiction, which states that it is impossible for the same thing to belong and not to belong to the same thing in the same respect at the same time. What this implies is that the 'same thing' that belongs must be one and the same thing; it must be the actual thing and not merely its linguistic expression. In support of Aquinas' views, John Calvin and Karl Barth asserted that a natural theology is inappropriate because it seeks to meet unbelief on its own. The Trinitarian discourse has remained elitist and difficult to understand for lay people, for example, to talk of God, the Son and the Holy Spirit as one and co-equal. Yet people find it heretical to pray by mentioning the Son first, the Holy Spirit and ending with the Father. Why the hierarchical order if they are one and co-equal? In this regard, faith is not against reason, but above and beyond it is its own proper domain. Faith must be reasonable to its beholders. Faith holders must be able to question as well as express their faith reasonably.

Kant pushed Aquinas' argument further and maintained complete harmony between faith and reason; that is, religious belief within the realm of reason alone. After Kant, many thinkers distinguished as well as separated faith from reason. Faith and reason were thought to occupy two entirely different spheres. Faith could be spoken of in terms of probability, mystical experience, supra-rationality, irrationality, being beyond knowledge and so on.

This leads us to the second school of thought which denies the assertion that faith and reason are commensurable. These views are represented by philosophers such as David Hume, Søren Kierkegaard, Karl Barth and John Calvin, among others. Peterson gives a clear biblical example of how the apostle Paul emphasizes the conflict between reason and faith. In Colossians 2:8, writers after Paul write, 'See that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit' (Peterson *et al.*). Further to this, the Early Church

Father and writer, Tertullian, popularly asked, 'What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?' (Petersen *et al.* 1991). The implied answer is, 'Faith and philosophy have nothing in common; they are totally opposed', In line with this argument Pascal wrote, 'The heart has its reasons which reason does not know'. Pascal implied that some persons might have to take steps to dull their reasoning faculties in order to be able to believe. The quest for knowledge, and the desire for certainty is two of the concerns most characteristic of Western philosophy. This goal of philosophy is clearly demonstrated by Rene Descartes in his five rules for the direction of the mind. He sets forth that we should refuse to believe anything that is subject to doubt. Building on this idea, some philosophers have argued that human beings have no right to extend belief beyond the available evidence.

Those who stretched the argument further hold that reason is the sole source of knowledge. This is the view that rationalists such as Plato, Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz championed. Plato gave the allegory of the chariot. In the *Phaedrus,* Plato, through Socrates, has it that,

> The chariot is pulled by two winged horses, one mortal and the other immortal. The mortal horse is deformed and obstinate. Plato describes the horse as a 'crooked lumbering animal, put together anyhow … of a dark color, with grey eyes and blood-red complexion; the mate of insolence and pride, shag-eared and deaf, hardly yielding to whip and spur'. The immortal horse, on the other hand, is noble and game, 'upright and cleanly made … his color is white, and his eyes dark; he is a lover of honor and modesty and temperance, and the follower of true glory; he needs no touch of the whip, but is guided by word and admonition only'. In the driver's seat is the charioteer, tasked with reining in these disparate steeds, guiding and harnessing them to propel the vehicle with strength and efficiency. The charioteer's destination? The ridge of heaven, beyond which he may behold the Forms: essences of things like Beauty, Wisdom, Courage, Justice, Goodness – everlasting Truth and absolute Knowledge. These essences nourish the horses' wings, keeping the chariot in flight (McKay & McKay 2013).

In the allegory, the Charioteer represents man's reason, the dark horse his appetite and the white horse his spirit. Each element has its own motivations

and desires. Thus, reason seeks truth and knowledge, and appetites seek drinks, sex, and material wealth, and the spirit seeks glory, honour and recognition (McKay and McKay 2013). To this effect, Plato ranked his three parts of the soul with reason being at the apex followed by the spirit and the appetites. Being at the apex, reason's duty is then to control the spirited part and the appetites. Having looked at how reason is viewed in philosophy, we now turn our attention to how reason manifests in the New Testament?

The Celebration of the Power of Reason and Faith in the New Testament

Those who argue that faith has nothing to do with reason and vice versa miss the point. Some of the scriptures in the Holy Bible show that there is room for 'rational belief', For instance, Isaiah 41: 21[7] demonstrates the test between one true God and the false gods. The test obviously involved reasoning on the part of the believers. Deuteronomy 13 also makes the same call by commanding the Israelites to practise sound judgment by thoroughly testing the teachings of their leaders. There are a number of Biblical texts that celebrate reason as important to faith (Job 2: 11-12, 36; Proverbs 5: 23, 23: 7; 1 Chronicles 10: 11-12; Isaiah 1: 18-19, 29: 14, 43: 26, 55: 8-9; 1 Peter 1: 13, 3: 15; Romans 2: 14-18, 8: 5-7, 12: 2; Acts 17: 22-23, 17: 2-4, 18: 4; 1 Corinthians 13: 11; 1 Tim 2: 3-4; Mt 4: 17). Jesus is often quoted out of context that he commanded that 'Judge not, or you too will be judged' (Matthew 7: 15-20). Yet Jesus exhorts people to judge false prophets and teachers whose teachings and behaviour lead people astray (Croteau 2015). The evidence of marriage between faith and reason can also be found in 1 Thessalonians 5: 21[8]. Paul urges Christians to prove or test all things by seeking evidence or proof for everything. Thus, the phrase 'prove everything' extends to even question-ing the so-called miracle workers or miracles. According to W.K. Clifford (in Cliteur 2010),

> No ideology, no book, no religion, no cultural practice may be exempt from criticism. That implies that, on the basis of 'test everything; hold

[7] 'Produce your cause, Saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob' (Isaiah 41:21).

[8] 'Prove all things; hold fast that which is good' (1 Thessalonians 5:21). See also Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 8:8.

> fast to what is good' (1 Thessalonians 5: 21), the Bible itself has to be tested. Some passages are good whilst some are bad. The testing that 1 Thessalonians 5: 21 encourages us to do have also implications for the Holy Spirit itself.

The manifestation of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit in Churches has to be put to test. If the Holy Scriptures can be tested, this does not exempt preachers of the gospel, their doctrines and their lifestyle. All convictions, beliefs and ideas must be put to test for the good of society. No-one is entitled to privileges merely on the grounds that they are votaries of the divine or certain powers, hence exempt from being criticized. There are many occasions when the members of the clergy are fond of using words such as 'I have a word from the Lord or God told that'. As a result, people find it very difficult to disagree or engage in any discussion with someone who claims to have received direct commands from God. On some occasions, the claims have turned out to be false, selfish or manipulative (Chan 2009). Paul calls people to use the power of the mind by testing all things at their disposal. 1 Thessalonians 5: 21 exhorts Christians to examine carefully and critically everything one hears and sees. Some critics would like to argue that Paul implied testing everything to do with prophecies. Yet it's not always the case that when people meet it's all about prophecies. Christian gatherings involve a lot of teachings and declarations that are manipulative by nature though not prophetic. Testing for Paul possibly implied whenever spiritual instruction was involved (Chan 2009). Pink (2012) argues that, on many occasions the Christ of many pulpits is radically different from the Christ of God, because of preachers who change the figment of their own imagination with the name of 'Christ'. Many innocent Christians or lay-persons get deceived into supposing that it is the Christ of the Scriptures who is set before them. In order for one to be able to discern between false and truth, there is need to evoke the powers of reason. Faith alone would not help matters in a scenario where there is a thin line between false and orthodox teachings**.**

In Acts 17: 11[9], reason was given an honorary position. The book of 1 Peter 3: 1 also sets forth the justification of a rational belief in God. The writer puts it upon every Christian to be in a position to give reason or justification

[9] 'These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so' (Acts 17: 11).

for the hope they have in God, Christ, Word of God and the Church and so on[10]. Every belief for the writer of 1 Peter needs to be reasonable and justifiable.

From these scriptures it can be demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt that reason and faith need each other in the development of an informed believer. It is our conviction that the most critical issues facing today's Christians is the extensive desertion of rational belief. Faith is an act or power of a well- informed mind to make its own choices or decisions. In other words, it is a nexus between the will and the intellect, not one in the absence of the other. Thus, on the one hand, knowledge in the absence of devotion is tantamount to disbelief and on the other hand, devotion in the absence of knowledge is tantamount to irrationality. In short, faith and reason ought to work as checks and balances of each other in order to avoid some of the issues facing the modern church.

Modern Pentecostal Churches, Teachings, Faith, Miracles and the Shunning of Reason

Pentecostal teachings on curses and blessings call for analysis especially in the case of Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular. African believers have been exposed to strange demands with the hope of being blessed or remembered by God. There have been several cases that have been recorded in both print and electronic media of pastors and prophets calling upon followers to eat grass (Manuel-Logan) or drink diesel or sewage or eat snakes or dog meat (Mitchley & Schatz 2015) or throw away life-saving drugs if they are to be remembered or experience the power of God. One of the prophets, Rufus Phala, allegedly gave his members Jik, a household bleach, to drink as a sign of faith during a church service (cf. Mitchley & Schatz 2018). Six members died after drinking Jik. While this happens, they are reminded that, things of faith do not need any reasoning. On most occasions, innocent victims have been abused at the hands of gullible prophets. Some have been sexually and financially abused in the name of God. What is surprising is that people do not want to look at other factors that cause poverty in Africa.

[10] 'But sanctify the Lord in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you ...' (1 Peter 3:15).

Africa has passed through a number of sad episodes such as slavery and colonialism. The two episodes left a dent on the lives of Africans and the dent will affect Africa for generations to come. Zimbabwe is not an exception when it comes to how colonialism has ripped the lives of the majority of the Zimbabwean rural folk apart. Colonization is responsible for most of the poverty, socio-economic classes and disease witnessed and experienced in Africa. African indigenes lost most of the arable land. There are several factors that determine or establish peoples' understanding of blessings and curses. For Vengeyi (2011: 223 - 237),

> Colonization is responsible for the poverty that many African states are going through. Although, Africa is politically independent, it is still economically colonized. Land was and remains the means of production for many indigenous Africans. As such, land alienation was in effect economic alienation. Until the year 2000, 70% of arable land in Zimbabwe was owned by 4 500 whites while more than 13 million were landless. Whites had either inherited the land from their ancestors or had bought from their parents and friends. As such, to claim that Africans are poor as a result of lying, hence sinful is not only unfair but also a belief in lies.

Land loss has been the talk in Africa and most African states have tried to address inequalities. Colonization resulted in the religio-cultural, political and social domination of the indigenes (Zimunya & Gwara 2013). Christianity, on the other hand, legitimized the oppression of the local people. Missionaries were handmaidens to the colonisation plot. Africans were made to ignore earthly material possessions and focus on going to heaven (Lk 6:20; 18:12; Mt 6:19-20, 6:24; 8:20). Biblical texts were quoted out of context by missionaries. Most of the services offered by missionaries to Africans were meant to entrap Africans into servitude and poverty. Missionary education similarly created a class of Africans who served as efficient instruments in the establishment of colonial rule. European colonisation of Africa would have been difficult without missionary assistance. Africans have found it difficult to recover from such a sad history.

It is sad to realize that Pentecostal preachers choose to ignore the sad history of colonialism and its impact on the lives of indigenes. In fact, Pentecostal preachers have continued to make the same call that bastardises

Africans as hopeless and disobedient sinners who are under the cloud of generational curses; hence the reason why the majority of Africans are poor. Prosperity gospel legitimises the unequalled access to resources as ordained by God through curses and blessings. People are made to accept the unacceptable. It is the gullible believers who use their reasoning power to question such teachings. Vengeyi (2011:107) shows how the biblical Amos dismissed the doctrine of prosperity by looking at the concrete historical, legal and economic policies that were skewed against the poor. For Amos, God had nothing to do with the poverty of the majority poor, since their condition of poverty results from man-made policies. It is the same call that we make in this article, namely that any discourse on poverty and prosperity will not help address the problems faced by Africans if one does not look at the historical-colonial and Western world-pushed economic policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank on Africa. The two institutions have forced third-world economies to open their economies to Western penetration and increase the export of primary goods to wealthy nations to multiply profits for Western multinational corporations while exposing African nations to horrendous levels of poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, economic decline and illiteracy (Ismi 2004). However, there are other factors that impoverish Africans, for example, corruption, poorly planned policies and contested elections that sometimes result in civil war or political violence and nepotism. In this case, poetry has nothing to do with God but men. Any talk about demons being the source of poverty for most of the Africans is a sad and contemptuous attitude towards Africans who have been victims of other races.

The multiple challenges cause Africans to find solace and hope in religions such as Christianity. The recipients of prosperity gospels, for unknown reasons, fail to realize that some of their challenges have nothing to do with the spiritual realm, but the human or physical realm. People must be careful as some of the teachings are heretical and not Christian. On the other hand, it could be possible that the Pentecostal prophets and pastors believe what they teach because they read all biblical texts at face or literal level. The understanding is that the Bible must not be academically engaged hence the usual call to 'suspend all reasoning'. According to Chimuka, (2013) some black Pentecostal founders lack sound theological training. A number of Pentecostal pastors have questionable academic qualifications which make it very difficult for them to engage with the same Bible they profess to know. The number of miracles that have been experienced in some of the Pentecostal

Churches have helped draw people to their churches. It is only the gullible that have questioned or queried some of the Pentecostal doctrines and miracles.

According to Vengeyi (2013), critics suspect that some clergymen such as Makandiwa and Angel could be playing African magic acquired from either Ghana or Nigeria. Critics' concerns were confirmed by Sekuru Elisha Matanga, a traditional healer, who claims to be the force behind countless miracles performed by several prominent prophets in the country by saying,

> The prophets' success is due to my powers and some of these prophets are involved in satanic practices. What you have to understand is that nowadays the church is now a business and most church leaders mainly prophets are desperate for power and money for them to draw many people. Most of these Zimbabwean prophets who are making a lot of noise in the country are my clients, not all of them but most of them. I cannot reveal their names because my service is confidential to me and my clients. We strengthen them and we give them powers to perform. What amazes you in churches and to some we even host traditional ceremonies for them here. Those whom I have imparted my powers operate with a good spirit because my powers are linked to ancestral spirits but there are some who have gone to the extent of getting satanic powers. They kill to attain miracle power; some of them make covenants which are costly for their lives. I want all Christians to be careful on who shepherds them spiritually.

Critics are justified to argue that Zimbabwean prophets and diviners or *n'angas* suspiciously operate at the same level. For Matanga, it is only the gullible Christians who will be able to survive the machinations of some gullible prophets and Church leaders who have turned the Church into their business projects. Critics are justified being sceptical and suspicious of spiritual foul play. Some prophets have simply chosen to vacillate between the traditional African realm and Christianity when addressing African problems. What is interesting is that most of the prophetic movements are domiciled in towns and cities where there are opportunities. As a result, the focus is not on salvation, but on materialism and personal wealth that promote individualism, as opposed to serving others. In the end, it is the Pentecostal prophets and pastors who benefit. For Zimunya and Gwara (2013), generous giving by members to founders has fuelled their lavish lifestyles that contrast with the poverty of the

general members.

Proponents of prosperity theology have been regarded as deeply interested in their own prosperity at the expense of members of the churches (Chitando 2013). They avoid rural areas where the majority of people remain poverty stricken, thereby making the gospel of prosperity relevant and necessary in empowering the people against poverty and disease. If poverty for prosperity gospel preachers has to do with sin, lack of faith and evil spirits; then it implies that rural areas are under siege from the devil or Satan; hence the need for prosperity gospel preachers to pitch their tents in rural areas. If cities and towns experience frustration, disappointments, betrayals, false promises by the government, lack of opportunities, uninhabitable shanty houses, unemployment, malnutrition, violence, and poverty, and diseases such as cholera, typhoid and lack of medication; the scenario will be dire or worse in rural areas. Therefore, it is not surprising that, people flock to cities and towns in search of opportunities. Mayrargue (2008) rightly notes that Pentecostal Christianity has attracted Africans as a result of the problems they face. And Pentecostal Christianity, on the other hand, claims to solve all daily life and existential problems. Kugler notes that poverty is one of the most urgent problems, which cannot be ignored, since it is a challenge of peace and justice (Kügler 2013). In the case of Zimbabwe, the Pentecostal claim to solve all problems targets people (youth, women and persons with disabilities) who are faced with the decreasing quality of life, feelings of isolation and loss of traditional points of reference (Mayrargue 2008). It is understandable that, when miracles get stage managed, people flock there in the hope of being helped. The decreasing quality of life has left the world wondering as to how to deal with HIV and the AIDS pandemic where the virus has remained elusive in terms of killing it. ARVs have helped to minimize the pain and loss of loved ones. It was the power of the mind and faith in God through the drugs that has helped prolong the lives of those living with the HIV virus. Of late, Prophet Magaya spoke to his Church congregants and claimed to have found cure for the HIV virus and cancer when he said,

> I have been praying for it, and I have been concentrating on it, but I want to assure you, the world may deny it, but they will eventually agree, because you cannot fight with facts and win. Facts are facts. I have seen the hand of the Lord healing his people. I have seen testimonies and I have prayed for people. But while praying, I asked

> God to lead me to something that can help many. He showed me a tree, he showed me my counterparts in India. We have tested it and found out that it works. I can stand in front of you as a man of God and say I have found a cure for Aids. We have tested on people living with HIV and these people have gone negative. If a person takes the medication, made from an Aguma plant, within 14 days, his CD4 count will have gone up by 200%, suppressing the virus before it eventually disappears. Yes, you have heard me correctly, we have found the cure (*Daily News* 31 October 2018).

Magaya's claims were met with mixed reactions from a cross-section of people. As for his congregants, they ululated, sang and danced in appreciation of the man of God for such developments that had been elusive to world experts and scientists who had accepted that no cure had been found. The jubilation also confirmed that a number of Magaya's congregants possibly lived with the virus and that they were possibly taking anti-retroviral drugs. Zimbabwe is believed to have around 1,4 million people living with the HIV virus and 1,2 million are on ARVs. Magaya went further and claimed that,

> When I approached the government, their response made me feel that they were ready to support us. Government will carry out its own research and is summoning a local research board to bring in people who are HIV positive and take statistics on people taking Aguma. They will test it for any threats to health, its efficacy and side effects among many other things and have the final say. The government was set to announce the first public results on Aguma after 14 days. The herb had undergone the appropriate registration as a supplement in Zimbabwe. We have also approached the World Health Organisation. We wrote to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and they said they would work hand-in-hand with government rather than individual-to-individual (*Daily News* 31 October 2018).

Magaya's claims were quickly rubbished by the Zimbabwean government and the Medicines Control Authority of Zimbabwe (MCAZ). The Government Health and Child Care, Deputy Minister, John Mangwiro, warned Magaya that he risked facing the full wrath of the law if he goes ahead and sells Aguma. Mangwiro warned that,

> If he goes ahead and sells the drug ... we will stick to the Constitution of the country and the law in terms of drugs and sales. The law will definitely take its course if he breaches it as Magaya's herbal medicine was not registered, people should not buy it. I don't think people are going to be foolish enough to buy the drug on Saturday. From our research, we gather that the medicine costs $ 1 000.

The Minister of Information, Monica Mutsvanga, also weighed and dismissed Magaya's claims by encouraging all clients on treatment for HIV and Aids to continue with their prescribed medication, as any form of discontinuation or switch made without the guidance of medical professionals would lead to adverse consequences to their health status (*Herald* 30 October 2018). World authorities and organizations working with people living with HIV have for long accused faith healers encouraging people to dump medication on false claims that they had been miraculously healed. On most occasions the publicity stunt sought to market the prophets' healing powers at the expense of peoples' lives. Mangwiro, Deputy Minister of Health, felt people who would believe Magaya without putting to test his claims as foolish. He called upon people to question statements said on pulpits by pastors, lest their lives would be risked by accepting the unacceptable, especially coming from people who had no idea how research or medical tests are done, as they had never been trained as medical doctors.

Conclusion

The current developments in Christianity call for the power of both faith and reason to guard against abuses that emanate from the Church, and its pastors and prophets. The article sought to show that reason plays an important role in empowering both the laity and the clergy against teachings that mislead and divide communities on the basis of the rich and poor, or curses versus blessed.

References

Chan, F. 2009. *Forgotten God: Reversing our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit.* USA: David C. Cook Ltd.

Chimuka, T.A. 2013. Reflections on the Morality of some Prophetic Acts in

Zimbabwe's Pentecostal Movements. In Chitando, E., M.R. Gunda & J. Kügler (eds.): *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe.* Bamberg: University of Bamberg.

Chirisa, S. 2018. Prophet Makes Congregants Drink Jik in Church. https://iharare.com/prophet-makes-congregants-drink-jik/

Chitando, E. 2013. Prophets, Profits and Protests: Prosperity Theology and Zimbabwean Gospel Music. In Chitando, E. M.R. Gunda & J. Kügler (eds.): *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe.* Bamberg: University of Bamberg.

Cline, A. 2019. What is Religion? Defining the Characteristics of Religion. Available at: https://www.learnreligions.com/defining-the-characteristics-of-religion-250679

Cliteur, P. 2010. *The Secular Outlook in Defense of Moral and Political Secularism.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons Ltd Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444325324

Collingwood, R.G. 1968. *Faith and Reason: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion.* Rubinoff, L. (ed.). Chicago: Quadrangle Books.

Croteau, D.A. 2015. *Urban Legends of the New Testament: 40 Common Misconceptions.* Nashville: B. and H. Publishing Group.

Daily News 2018. Prophet Magaya Faces Arrest. *Daily News* 31 October 2018.

Freud, S. 1933. *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis.* Oxford: England Norton and Co.

Global Black History 2019. The Role Played by Missionaries in the Colonisation of Africa. https://www.lensshift.org/library/role-of-missionaries-in-colonization-of-africans (Accessed on 25 and 28 October 2019.)

Hargrove, B. 1979. *The Sociology of Religion: Classical and Contemporary Approaches.* 2nd Edition. Illinois: Harlon Davisson, Inc.

Herald 2018. Government Dismisses Magaya's Claims. 30 October 2018.

Hudson, Y. 1991. *The Philosophy of Religion.* Mountain View: Mayfield Publishing Company.

iHarare 2014. Prominent Zimbabwe Prophet Makes Congregants Eat Grass, Mud for Deliverance. https://iharare.com/prominent-zim-prophet-makes-congregants-eat-grass-mud-for-deliverance/

James, W. 1896. *The Will to Believe and Other Essays.* New York: Longmans, Green & Co.

Ismi, A. 2004. Impoverishing a Continent: The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Africa. https://www.google.com/search?ei=uBv WW73jFeXwgAaUiZ3YCw&q=International+Monetary+Fund+and+the+ World+Bank+impoverishes+frica&oq=International+Monetary+Fund+and+the+World+Bank+impoverishes+frica&gs_l=psy-ab.3...2474.9151.0.9398.19.18.0.0.0.0.594.2066.3-3j1j1.5.0....0...1c.1.64.psy-ab..14.4.1462...0i22i30k1j33i21k1.0.2H80CwCadng (Accessed on 28 October 2018.) https://doi.org/10.1144/geosci-28-9

Kügler, J. 2013. People with a Future: Jesus' Teaching on Poverty and the Role of Poor People in Christian Churches Today. In Chitando, E., M.R. Gunda & J. Kügler (eds.): *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe.* Bamberg: University of Bamberg.

Locke, J. [1689] 1894. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.* Volume II. Fraser, A.C. (ed.). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Mayrargue, C. 2008. *The Paradoxes of Pentecostalism in Sub-Saharan Africa.* IFRI.

Mbiti, J. 1969. *African Religions and Philosophy.* London: Heinemann.

McKay, B. & K. McKay 2013. A Man's Life: On Manhood, On Virtue, Personal Development. Available at: https://www.artofmanliness.com

Mitchley, A. & C. Schatz 2014. 'Snake Pastor' Feeds Dog Meat to Congregants for Communion. https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/snake-pastor-feeds-dog-meat-to-congregants-for-communion-20181016 (Accessed on 28 October 2018.)

Nehandara Radio 2014. Prophet Orders Congregation to Eat Live Snake, Tells them it will Taste like Chocolate. http://nehandaradio.com/2015/07/14/prophet-orders-congregation-to-eat-live-snake-tells-them-it-will-taste-like-chocolate/

Peterson, M., W. Hasker, B. Reichenbach & D. Basinger (eds.). 1991. *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to Philosophy of Religion.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Pink, A.W. 2012. *An Exposition of First John.* Prisbrary Publishing.

Reilly, J. 2014. South African Pastor Makes Congregation Eat Grass to be Closer to God. https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2537053/Lawn-

Christians-South-African-preacher-makes-congregation-eat-GRASS-closer-God.html (Accessed on 28 October 2018.)

Ruby, L. 1960. *Logic: An Introduction.* Chicago: J.B. Lippincott.

St. Thomas Aquinas [c. 1269] 1945. Summa Theologiae, II (Qu. 4, Art. 5). In Pegis, A.C. (ed.): *Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas.* Volume 2. New York: Random House.

The Nigerian Voice 2018. 6 Dead as Prophet Makes Congregants drink Jik in Church. https://www.thenigerianvoice.com/news/270602/marchant-of-death-6-dead-as-prophet-makes-congregants-drink.html (Accessed on 28 October 2018.)

Vengeyi, O. 2011. 'Zimbabwean Poverty is Man-Made': Demystifying Poverty by Appealing to the Prophetic Book of Amos. *Scriptura* 107: 223-237. https://doi.org/10.7833/107-0-138

Vengeyi, O. 2013. Zimbabwean Pentecostal Prophets: Rekindling the True and False Prophecy Debate. In Chitando, E., M.R. Gunda & J. Kügler (eds.): *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg, 2013

WHO Trashes Magaya HIV Cure Claim. The Chronicle 01 November 2018.

Youtube 2018. Prophet Magaya Claims HIV & Cancer Cure – 28 October 2018 Full Video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lm7BuuACUvI (Accessed on 28 October 2018.)

Youtube 2018. Government Speaks on Prophet Magaya's HIV Cure Claims. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEbDrROLUi0 (Accessed on 28 October 2018.)

ZIM Doctors 2018. Prophet Magaya must Stop! https://allafrica.com/stories/201810290299.html

Zimunya, C.T. & J. Gwara 2013. Pentecostalism, Prophets and the Distressing Zimbabwean Milieu. In Chitando, E., M.R. Gunda & J. Kügler (eds.): *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe.* Bamberg: University of Bamberg.

Dr. Joyline Gwara
Department of Philosophy, Ethics and Religion
University of Zimbabwe
Harare
joyandjay71@gmail.com

Impediments to Quality Education in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Prof. Francis Machingura
Biblical Studies
Curriculum and Arts Education Department
Faculty of Education, and
Acting Director of University of Zimbabwe Post-Graduate Studies
University of Zimbabwe
fmachingura@yahoo.com

Selling 'hot air': An Analysis of the Perceived Media Influence on Prosperity Gospel Related Gullibility in Zimbabwe

Wellington Gadzikwa

Abstract

The close to three-decade economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe, or what is commonly known as the 'Zimbabwean Crisis' (Raftopoulos 2009) has brought desperation to many Zimbabweans. In almost every facet of life the church has become a form of refuge. What has baffled many observers is the manner in which the populace has imbibed the Prosperity Gospel and its promises in a land that resembles a desert. The mushrooming of Prosperity Gospel churches in Zimbabwe, in which only the leaders of these churches have prospered materially, while congregants continued to live on faith and hope, demonstrates among other things how gullible our society has become. Through an analysis of selected print media articles on Prosperity Gospel in mainstream newspapers in Zimbabwe and structured key informant interviews, this article argues that the media, through mass manipulation, have to a large extent aided and entrenched religious gullibility in unprecedented ways even among the elite.

Keywords: media, agenda setting, social responsibility, magic bullet theory, gullibility, and prosperity gospel.

Pentecostalism as the Foundation of the Gospel of Prosperity

For a clear understanding of the media influence on gullibility in as far as Prosperity Gospel is concerned, Pentecostalism and the Pentecostal movement emerge as the key components. The gospel of prosperity is promoted by Pentecostal churches, or what is known as Pentecostalism. According to Chinkwo (2017), Pentecostalism has had a dramatic development over the

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a20

past century, greatly transforming Christianity. Pentecostalism has been described as a renewal movement within Christianity, a continuation of a series of revival movement from the earliest days of the church (Kay 2011). As noted by Block-Hoell (1964), the Pentecostal movement is rooted in the holiness movement and can be traced back to an 1886 holiness revival. It is said that groups and individuals scattered around the world experienced baptism by the Holy Spirit, which manifested by speaking in tongues (Bloch-Hoel 1964: 18). As Chinkwo argues, religious groups around the 19th century anticipated the return of Christ and revival meetings were held. Despite controversy of the root of the modern Pentecostal movement, two names stand out in the form of William Joseph Seymour and Charles Parham Fox as part of the roots (Hollenweger 1997).

Although Pentecostalism exhibits more complexities in terms of its definition, this article is informed by the one advanced by Asamoah-Gyadu (2005: 12), who defines Pentecostalism as,

> Christian groups which emphasises salvation in Christ as a transformative experience wrought by the Holy Spirit and in which pneumatic phenomenon including speaking in tongues, prophecies, visions, healing and miracles in general perceived as standing in historic continuity with experience of the of the early church as found in the Acts of the Apostles, are sought, accepted, valued and consciously encouraged among members as signifying the presence of God and experience of his spirit.

What is characteristic of Pentecostalism is that it is dynamic and can assume different colours in different parts of the world or what has been described as 'going native' (Kalu 2008: 21). Despite its fluidity and dynamisms, Pentecostalism generally has common characteristics as identified by Droogers (2001: 45–46) which include healing through exorcism, presence of the Holy Spirit experienced through the gift of healing and prophesy, glossolalia or speaking in tongues, conversion experience with a rebirth phenomenon. Pentecostalism also denounces what are called things of the world or one culture and the convert is said to have a new life.

Pentecostals have a dual world, new with God and the believer on the one hand, and the devil on the other side with his agents and followers. Pentecostalism is well established on the African continent and dates back to

1920 in Sub- Saharan Africa, with an explosive growth between the 1960s and the 1970s. Estimates are that Christians comprise 50 percent of the African population (Omenyo 2014). A point that must be noted in the discussion of Pentecostalism is that it is linked and is the proponent of the Gospel of Prosperity or Prosperity Gospel, terms which will be used interchangeably in this article.

Prosperity Gospel

This gospel, like Pentecostalism, which gives birth to it, has a plethora of names which include among others, 'wealth and health', 'faith gospel', or 'name it, claim it gospel'. Prosperity gospel is viewed as a radical departure from the 1970's mature churches that were more concerned with saving souls as opposed to financial achievements. The concern with saving souls has been described as poverty theology that did not encourage the craving for material possessions and viewed it as a curse and something that must be condemned. Thus, people were not supposed to have more attachments to the world (Adogame 2010). In brief, the prosperity theology points to faith for prosperity or the belief that the true faith should be acting on the world, projecting the world into reality and planting a picture of one's desired possession, not forgetting the fact that there is investing before reaping or sowing before harvesting (Kalu 2008).

Although there is disagreement on who began preaching prosperity gospel, E.W. Kenyon and Kenneth Hagin are credited for its invention (Kalu 2008). Kenyon is credited as the leading guide in the journey of Prosperity Gospel mainly through the use of radio where he urged Christians to use their faith to dominate life circumstances and the need to teach principles to allow Christians to rightfully use principles to unlock God's treasury of blessings (Bowler 2013). Prosperity theology has been also popularised by American pastors who were also seen as prophets and visionaries such as A.A. Allen, T.L. Osborn, Oral Roberts, Benny Hinn, Lester Sumrall, Myles Monroe, Creflo Dollar and Joel Osteen. These preachers are described as 'charming, polished if not effusive and slick' (Bowler 2013: 5). Another aspect of the Prosperity Gospel is that the prosperity preachers present themselves as entrepreneurs and stress a victorious or prosperous and healthy living both in the spiritual and physical realm. They also portray God as God of abundance who can provide abundantly, since silver and gold belongs to him. This view

is contrary to the Holiness movement, which believes that wealth is worldly and carnal; as such, the best designer dress or car or jet are not encouraged.

With its American roots, Prosperity Gospel is now firmly rooted in Africa and the resultant influences. A large segment of African Christian community was influenced by what took place in America and the emphasis on prosperity, and that every Christian must be prosperous. True Christianity warrants wealth and poverty is a sin, or is caused by lack of faith, or inability to understand biblical principles on prosperity.

The basis for these principles is derived from the Bible they use in their preaching such as Deuteronomy 28: 30, Malachi 3: 10, Galatians 3: 29, which are interpreted as saying God wants people to be wealthy. The lack of prosperity is attributed to failure to follow Biblical principles (Gifford 1990). When we look at the issue of prosperity gospel, critical aspects that need interrogation is the aspect of poverty and its eradication, which ultimately is the goal of most development actions and programmes by governments and international organisations such as the United Nations and its specialised agencies such as the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP). An example is the UN Millennium Development Goals 2010–2015 (MDGs) which had the goal of eliminating extreme poverty and its successor Social Development Goals (SDGs) are also directed towards ending poverty. Despite all these concerted efforts to eradicate poverty, success has been elusive and human suffering has increased (Eversole, McNeish & Cinada-moree 2005). Again, like Pentecostalism and Prosperity Gospel, poverty is also an extremely complex phenomenon in terms of its definition especially its multi-dimensional nature (Crawford & Hartman 2008; Adeyemi, Ijaiya and Raheem 2009; 2001; Hopper 2012).

Poverty prevents people from living long, healthy and fulfilling lives in terms of enjoying dignity, self-respect and respect from others (Kabuya 2015). The impact of poverty is buttressed by Adeyemi *et al*. (2009), who argue that poverty manifests a sense of 'lack of material well-being, insecurity, social isolation, psychological distress, lack of freedom of choice and action and lack of long term planning horizon'. From these two positions, poverty then is not just a lack of income and resources, but it entails hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and basic services, social discrimination and exclusion, lack of participation in decision-making. The United Nations estimates that approximately 836 million people worldwide still live in extreme poverty or on less than $1 USD per day. On the African

continent in the 1990s, almost half (270 million) of the population of 580 million lived in extreme poverty (White *et al.* 2001) and a least 250 million have no access to safe drinking water, 200 million with no access to medical facilities, and 140 million of the youth are illiterate (Hopper 2012).

Interestingly, statistics from the World Development Report in 1990 indicate that poverty increased dramatically in the 1980s at a time when Pentecostalism with its force for prosperity grew in Africa. The fact remains that the majority of Africans wallow in poverty economically and in terms of teething problems such as unemployment and inequality (Kabuya 2015). All these realities bring to question the perceived power of the Prosperity Gospel in fighting poverty.

Pentecostalism and Poverty

The Prosperity Gospel is hinged on eradicating poverty by applying Biblical principles. The link between Pentecostalism and poverty needs serious interrogation, especially as there are claims that the gospel can be used to deal with poverty by applying Biblical principles. Early Pentecostalism looked at poverty as a virtue, but today poverty is looked upon as a curse or an evil spirit that needs to be cast out. Poverty is viewed as the primary concern of Jesus Christ; Christians must look at poverty as a form of deprivation. Christians must thus look at the more material aspect of their lives such as shelter, food, and money, including the immaterial ones such as knowledge, skill, healthcare, education and access to opportunities, jobs, and participation in socio-economic life (Kalu 2006). The growth of Pentecostalism on an impoverished continent such as Africa is due to its promises of bringing prosperity to the poor (Togarasei 2011). In his optimistic thesis of the Prosperity Gospel, Togarasei argues that although Pentecostalism is viewed as the gospel of delusion, it has contributed to sustainable development through encouraging entrepreneurship, thereby contributing to poverty alleviation in Africa. According to Togarasei (2011), Pentecostals are encouraged to start their own business, which in turn creates employment; they are expected to pay money to the church every month in the form of seed sowing. It is this money which then enriches the churches and is invested in universities, schools, hospitals. The end result is that employment is created. This is argued to be in line with the Pentecostal doctrine, which does not encourage idleness but encourages them to come up with strategies

of poverty alleviation. The belief that Pentecostalism can be used to fight poverty has also been criticised for exacerbating the gullibility that manifests in the people in Zimbabwe, as shall be demonstrated in this article, especially on how the media have been a catalyst in sustaining and entrenching this gullibility.

Pentecostalism and Prosperity Gospel in Zimbabwe

According to Chitando and Biri (2016), the Pentecostal prophetic movement led by young men with gifts of prophesy, healing and deliverance has expanded since 2009. One key attribute of these new and fast-growing religious movements is that they are growing fast and are initiated by young and predominantly male and charismatic leaders (Chitando, Manyonganise & Mlambo 2013). These movements have altered and changed the face of Christianity in Zimbabwe. Biri and Chitando (2016) maintain that these young prophets and their influence in the public space has heightened debate on prophesy, healing and deliverance, while noting that their main attraction is due to the emphasis on prophecy and prosperity. Like elsewhere in Africa, Pentecostalism grew in the context of socio-political and economic crisis (Zimunya & Gwara 2013), deliverance and healing being the factor that draws large crowds. The rise of Pentecostal movements led by young and charismatic leaders rose to prominence after the year 2008, which was the lowest point in the Zimbabwean crises punctuated by massive hyperinflation and unemployment. In terms of gullibility, Chitando and Biri (2016) make an interesting point in that these Pentecostal churches have a fair share of controversy, including strange healing miracles, although many Zimbabweans continue to flock to these news churches across class, age and gender. The analysis on whether or not the media can aid in gullibility is supported by that fact that one of the distinct feature of the emerging Pentecostal movements in contemporary Africa has been due to them being techno savvy (Hacket 1998). On the Zimbabwe scene, Biri and Chitando (2016) argue that, for example, the Prophetic Healing and Deliverance (PHD) ministries led by Walter Magaya, have become popular through the use of media technologies, including live coverage of its activities on Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC TV) and South African television channels such as eNCA. While churches can pay for live coverage, it is the uncritical stance that is associated with sponsored events that diminish the critical watchdog role of

the media. Viewers may assume that something on national television is without fault and take it as official, oblivious to the fact that there is sponsorship behind the event. This too can entrench gullibility that would have been created by other factors in society.

Media are key to the spread of messages and global communication. Globalisation has been made possible through the use of the mass media and in terms of the Prosperity Gospel, televangelists who popularised this gospel relied on the media, especially radio and television; hence he term televangelists (Beyer 2006). What is clear is that the spread of Prosperity Gospel world-wide has been helped by the media. The main question that this article tries to answer from a Zimbabwean perspective is whether on the Zimbabwean scene, the mainstream media have aided religious gullibility from a prosperity Gospel perspective where many believe in it, to the extent of parting with the last dollar in their pockets and to believe weird things like miracle money being deposited into their banks accounts on the condition that if they give the little they have to the 'men of God'. This gullibility is much more striking, especially when these people have full knowledge of how the banking system operates and that money does not grow on trees.

In questioning the role of media in aiding gullibility in terms of Prosperity Gospel, the expectation is that the media should test the basic premise of such a gospel. According to Gbote and Kgatla (2014), Prosperity Gospel is 'rooted in faulty interpretation of several Biblical passages' and this gospel portrays wealth and riches as a covenant and fulfilment of the divine promise of God to His people. What is critical in Prosperity Gospel is that God wants believers to get rich or healthy, but He cannot bless them unless they first send money known as 'seed faith' to their spiritual leader or pastor who tells them about their plan. The gullibility of their followers is perceived in their inability to question such teachings, regardless of their levels of education and knowledge of the Bible. It is this gullibility that the former president of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe questioned in relation to the Prosperity Gospel. A classic and dangerous example of this gullibility is noted by Bishau (2013: 69), who argues,

> We have quite some disturbing events especially in Zimbabwe with people believing that tree leaves can be converted into money. An able bodied woman, well in her senses had the audacity to fill a whole trolley with groceries in a respectable supermarket and even

> approach the till operator knowing fully aware that she had no money but tree leaves in her purse but gathered on the basis of 'faith' (or presumption) garnered at a session where the prosperity gospel was preached.

In Zimbabwe, Prosperity Gospel has attracted even those economically up as they seek to further and enhance their wealth. They are also not spared from the gullibility associated with it.

Theoretical Framework

In this article, the analysis of the media relies on the social responsibility theory and magic bullet to assess whether the media in Zimbabwe have aided religious gullibility or otherwise, and with what effects. Thus the analysis of the role of the media is made in the context that media have certain responsibilities in conducting its business on top of it being a business enterprise. In terms of social responsibility theory, the media should be socially responsible. A socially responsible press should provide,

> a full, truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the days' events in a context which gives them meaning, serve as a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism, a common carrier of public expression, provide a representative picture of constituent groups in society and present and clarify goals and values of society (McQuail 2010: 170).

From the above quote, it is clear that the media must try to explain a phenomenon in a way that allows readers and audiences to fully comprehend an issue, in this case the Prosperity Gospel as a way to enlighten them on its truthfulness so that they make informed decisions. The media are also expected to critically evaluate and offer a 'full, truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account', which means that it should not in any way aid gullibility but allow deeper and critical understanding of an issue.

The social responsibility theory is a normative theory, an ideal and an expectation for the media but the media should be judged even by what it does and not what it says it will do, as many media organisations offer lofty ideals in their mission statements but do the opposite, mostly in pursuit of

profit or due to other ideological influences. The media do have the power to mass spread its messages in ways that have the potential to influence audiences in an identical manner through the magic bullet theory. Magic bullet theorists believe that the media are all powerful and have the ability to shape public opinion or whip it. The belief is that witty messages reach individuals through the mass media and uniformly influence them to act in certain predictable manner. The media messages are seen as magic bullets like a bullet being fired. According to Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), there is an omnipotent media, on the other hand, sending forth the message, and the atomised masses, on the other hand, waiting to receive it and nothing in between. Receivers of media messages are seen as passive, who accept rather than reject media messages. Despite its criticism of exaggerating the power of the media and being based on flimsy evidence, the magic bullet theory is still relevant even today, as some people still believe in media messages and display a certain level of gullibility and uniformity in their responses to media messages.

The alleged power of the media to influence audiences in terms of Prosperity Gospel is analysed in line with this theory especially as the Prosperity preachers rely on the media to spread their activities and market themselves on various media platforms, especially the print and electronic media in Zimbabwe.

Methodology

To assess the perceptions on whether the media aided gullibility in terms of Prosperity Gospel, I relied on two qualitative methods in the form of a textual analysis of purposely selected newspaper articles from two writers who in my opinion tried to question the gospel of prosperity, and in-depth interviews with people who follow the media closely and could give a fair assessment on the topic under study. The in-depth interviews asked the one question 'In terms of the Prosperity Gospel, do you think the media in Zimbabwe have aided gullibility, or the unquestioning acceptance of any notion legitimated through an appeal to the Supernatural?'

Four newspaper articles were selected and analysed. More could have been analysed but the themes of the two writers had minor differences and the three that were picked summarised the most critical views of the two writers. The two writers were selected because they offered a critical stance

that revealed the shortcomings of the media in questioning the deception in terms of the Prosperity Gospel and, more specifically, the two writers sought to expose the fallacy of the Prosperity Gospel. They made specific references to how Prosperity Gospel entrenched gullibility and how the media were complicit in the process. Ten (10) structured interviews were also conducted with people who closely followed the media and were also conversant with Prosperity Gospel. They were asked a similar question as a starting point. The results were analysed and major issues are summarised in the results analysis.

Findings

Results from Interviews

There is a general consensus among respondents that the media have aided gullibility in reference to prosperity gospel, although this gullibility is not entirely located in the media itself. It is a combination of the media, political economy and the religious organisation themselves. In terms of the media, respondents were quick to create an easy link between the pervasive use of the media by the prosperity preachers and prophets and gullibility as one asked the question, 'The media has helped to create gullibility. How do you explain a situation where Star FM, Power FM all broadcast the service of PHD Ministry' (Interview 28/07/18).

These sentiments also correspond with conclusions by Chitando and Biri (2016) that PHD ministries managed to establish and entrench itself through the use of live broadcast on ZBC TV and eNCa, respectively. While some respondents believed that the media have its fair share in aiding gullibility, they also pointed to other factors at play, such as pure greediness. As one media analyst noted,

> Also coming with this upsurge in religious content from the Pentecostal movements that preach prosperity gospel were shocking incidences of gullibility, people doing the unthinkable in pursuit of prosperity. The case of a Harare man who lost his Bentley to Urbert Engel and the couple that lost houses to Makandiwa as seed for prosperity are just but a tip of the iceberg. The media's involvement in this should be understood from the political economy perspective where media ended up turning to these prosperity preachers as the only reliable source of revenue since the economy was on a down-

> ward spiral and traditional sources of advertising revenue (companies were closing. Because of the faith people have in the media, the prosperity movements gained traction with many people in Zimbabwe, who ended believing that anything was possible with prosperity churches (Interview 25/07/18).

Economic hardships were also blamed for contributing to the rise in gullibility, as people flocked to these churches in search of economic answers on issues such as employment, business fortunes, health, and many others. These hardships are thought to have driven people more to believe in Prosperity Gospel when compared to the media.

Some journalists strongly believe that the media promoted gullibility around Prosperity Gospel when they published stories of high-profile people, complete with pictures of their spiritual deliverance and results. One such example is a government Minister Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri, who claimed that she got married after attending TB Joshua's church. Her testimony was publicised in the press. Another high-profile figure like former Minister Saviour Kasukuwere was also pictured in Bulawayo seeking divine help from prophet Blessing Chiza when he was facing deep political challenges as there were nationwide demonstrations against in his party. After the meeting with the prophet, his fortunes changed for the better. These were singled out as some of the examples that could aid gullibility among the people into believing in anything that prosperity prophets would say.

A journalist said that at a certain media house where she worked, stories of Prophets Emmanuel Makandiwa of United Family International Church (UFIC) and Walter Magaya of PHD were given prominence and placed on page one of the newspaper. Some stories were extensively written to promote the major programmes of these churches. One such example was Magaya's *Night of Turn Around* where there were reports that people were being delivered. The journalist believed that the publication of pictures and success stories at churches, especially those of congregants being healed of diseases like cancer led the nation to be gullible (Interview 20/07/18).

Again, the broadcast media were described as worse, especially the national commercial radio stations such as Star FM, which carry adverts of prophets making people believe without thinking or considering whether this was true or not. The overall impression from a journalistic point of view is that the media in Zimbabwe are guilty of causing a national gullibility to the

Prosperity Gospel and philosophy of quick returns (Interview 20/07/18).

Media-aided gullibility was also perceived to be in the form of the media failing to play its watchdog role and socially responsibilities, but instead played a catalytic role in being an unquestioning conveyer belt in mass manipulation. The media were accused of failing to question the 'miracle-money' phenomena (where airtime appeared mysteriously in congregant's phones, cash in wallets and deposits into bank accounts), which was purportedly 'pioneered' by one Prophet Uebert Angel around the year 2012 and 2013. The accusation was that by the time media practitioners reported on the phenomenon, they were joining a discussion that has already been framed on social media platforms and the public. As one media academic noted,

> They were (mainstream media) 'scooped' as it were and without sound knowledge of Biblical Theology, media practitioners were reduced to gossip mongers, effectively making them as gullible as other members of the public. It was left to social commentators like Zimdancehall artists Cello Culture and Soul Jah Love (see their track 'Minana' and Winky D (see his track 'Mumba Mababa') to interrogate the phenomena by juxtaposing it against traditional Zimbabwean as well as Christian values. The whole phenomena was also interrogated more robustly by bankers and sceptics. What are the implications on the fiscus? Is this money being deducted from the Central Bank's vaults, etc? Some media practitioners argued and acted like *vanavaPapa*, loosely translated into 'children of the prophet' with more robust debate taking place in the comments sections of online articles. The more they purportedly 'covered' the story the more they provided public relations for the proponent. It was also alleged that compromised media practitioners had been 'captured' as they were alleged to be on the payroll of prosperity gospel (the purveyors of miracle money) proponents (Interview 19/07/18).

The above sentiments point to an equally gullible media which failed to play their role in society and thus aided gullibility. Gullibility associated with Prosperity Gospel was perceived to thrive in an environment where the material conditions of the population are at its worst. The rise of the Prosperity Gospel was described as being diametrically linked to the fall of the

economy and that its demise will directly be linked to the rise of the economy. In the scheme of things, the media were accused as being a willing partner in the spread of this gospel, because of the media's intention to tap into the revenues being generated through advertising by the prosperity preachers. Thus, the media found themselves in fierce competition to showcase prosperity pastors in order to generate as much revenue as possible through advertising.

A tabloid newspaper in Harare, the *H-Metro,* was cited as one example of a newspaper that has continuously given prosperity pastors columns in an attempt to get advertising money. The other accusations are that the newspapers also follow these pastors, because sometimes they make some ludicrous claims, which happen to make news, such as making miracle babies, miracle money and organ enlargement, among others (Interview 19/07/18). Instead of questioning these claims, the media actually popularised them as juicy stories in order to increase newspaper sales, thereby contributing to the trivialisation and uncritical approach to such issues.

The relationship between the media and these prosperity preachers becomes so intricate and resultantly aids and entrenches gullibility. By giving space to these prophets, the media are believed to lend them some credibility, which acts as magic bullets to promote gullibility as some spaces, especially in *The Sunday Mail* as one respondent noted that,

> In *The Sunday Mail* we have a particular lady columnist who has become a de facto mouthpiece of the prosperity prophets instead of questioning them or simply being objective. On one station, Makandiwa actually preaches every 5:30 am to 6am spewing gospel of prosperity philosophy (Interview 19/07/18).

As a result of the seemingly evident successes through the use of the media, preachers have also invested in modern media technologies, establishing television stations, recording and posting content on social media because they have realised that exposure to any kind of media enhances their reputation and credibility among the citizens.

While there is consensus that the media in Zimbabwe have been complicit in promoting the unquestioning acceptance of any notion legitimated through an appeal to the supernatural, there are several reasons which predispose Zimbabweans to be susceptible to this gullibility. As one respon-

dent argued, Zimbabweans have for the past three decades been so proud to call themselves a Christian nation/society, which on its own forms a baseline for unquestioned belief in supernatural powers. Thus the society does not question supernatural powers and accept supernatural powers at face value. They only mock outcomes such as those of Rotina Mavhunga, a traditional witchdoctor who made sensational claims that diesel could flow from rocks in Chinhoyi. Then President Robert Mugabe sent a cabinet taskforce that confirmed the story's claims, rewarding Mavhunga with huge sums of money, although the story turned out to be fake. In this case, the Zimbabwean society can be characterized more as a spiritual society that assumes traits of the dominant or accepted religion at any given time. During the war it was *midzimu* (spirit mediums) and after the war, with the adoption of modernity, it became Christianity.

In such a scenario, as one media analyst observed, individuals brought up in such a society unquestionably assume the same beliefs in their professional work, which includes journalists, editors and media owners. Both the practice and media ownership are thus driven by people with allegiance to some form of religion and for this reason, Prosperity Gospel found a fertile ground to grow, albeit largely unquestionably. One such aspect is a case where prosperity gospel prophets were in the habit of giving prophesies on the yearly outlook. They were given acres of space in newspapers, even when some of the prophecies were out of this world, including the raining of gold and diamond from the skies, the miracle money from Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), miracle babies and many others. In all this, the media and journalists did not ask what happened to these miracles, but merely acted as conveyer belts.

Some of the reasons for the gullibility and fear of questioning have been summed up by one media analyst who believes that it is fear of the supernatural that prevents people form questioning some of these Prosperity Gospel-related gullibility because,

> Prosperity gospel as a concept is built on the belief that worship leads to emancipation. If you believe, you will be saved. During Zimbabwe's liberation war, it was the same. If you worship Nehanda, you will conquer. It is a belief that diminishes or fails to acknowledge human effort from outcomes and attributes all the good outcomes to superpowers and all the bad things to the devil. It takes

> away responsibility and allocate it somewhere else which allays human fears for blame or guilt. If poor, it means you are not blessed and you need prayers. If you are rich, it means you have been blessed and therefore you need to give more to the church of God. And those who do not comply to this mode of thinking are seen as heretical who shall suffer in the hands of God in heaven. Because we fear hell and suffering, no one wants to take the risk of questioning our churches and for that reason, the prosperity gospel has grown and continues to grow to the detriment of our economy (Interview 20/07/18).

The fears expressed in the quotation above resonates with the backlash that writers such as Wafawarova and Guvamombe (see next section) claimed to face when they dared to question the Prosperity Gospel. It also shows the violence that is associated with attempts at criticizing this gospel and how it capitalizes on the beliefs in not questioning the supernatural and the helplessness that individuals feel about the power of the supernatural. More specifically, the fear of hell and suffering enhance the gullibility in the form of failure to question. Even those materially rich end up giving because of fear, while the poor give, thinking that they will get more. Journalists as members of society may as well fear to go against strong societal conventions and fears, especially when the owners of the media houses are cashing in on this gospel through advertising revenue. This greatly diminishes the power of the media to play its social responsibility role as watchdogs especially in a comatose and moribund economy like Zimbabwe. In the end, the media by default or design, end up aiding religious gullibility especially in terms of Prosperity Gospel.

In the next section, I examine the perceptions the works of two media critics who offer a critical stance to Prosperity Gospel by exposing its ills and showing that to some extent the media have not unwittingly aided gullibility and have acted in a socially responsible way.

Textual Analysis of Newspaper Articles

The Prosperity Gospel has not been without critics. Among the most consistent critics of this gospel in the print media include two columnists from the Zimpapers group (State-controlled media group and the largest in the

country), Reason Wafawarova and Isdore Guvamombe, who also revealed that they had been vilified for expressing their views that sought to expose the deceptive nature of this gospel. What their writings reveal is the fact that the media have not unwittingly aided gullibility, but have tried to expose it, in a sense acting responsibly as watchdogs in society.

Gospreneurship, Christianity and Churchianity

In an article entitled 'Cow dung naturally attracts flies' (Guvamombe 2015a). Guvambombe likens Prosperity Gospel to cow dung and refers to it as fetid, something abnormal, arguing that 'in the abnormal, the fetid is more attractive than delicious'. In his analysis, Guvamombe believes that in Zimbabwe, there exists what he describes as Churchianity and Christianity, arguing that most people in Zimbabwe practise Churchianity instead of Christianity. For him Christianity is where,

> Jesus Christ is the life, the principal, the harbinger of life and love, the embodiment of righteousness: the visionary and cleanser of all evil. Jesus Christ is the moralist, the epicentre of everything,

while in Churchianity,

> The church is the cynosure, the pastor, prophet and prophetess is the supreme epicentre — the all-important. The pastor, prophet and prophetess — usually smartly dressed and living larger-than-life but has another earthly 'godfather' in Ghana or Nigeria, who ironically is not Jesus Christ or God. It is from the earthly godfather that the prophet, pastor or prophetess derive their powers. Every year, they religiously go back to their godfathers for more powers. They pay for the powers. Is this Christianity? No, never!

Guvamombe makes interesting points in terms of gullibility in that Churchianity is cashing on what he calls the 'poor, troubled and gullible'. What he is critical of is this Churchianity in which the whole setup is a family business and the prophet and the family become 'gospreneurs'. They abuse Christ by using His name as a smokescreen to hide the systematic fleecing of the 'poor, troubled and gullible'. The sermons by these preachers whom he

describes as 'gospreneurs' is described as 'the sort of hullabaloo that makes the poor part with the last cent as they seek deliverance'. From the above quote, the picture that emerges is that instead of this gospel empowering, it is actually impoverishing and cashing in on the poor whose prospects for deliverance drive them more into dire situations.

Another critical aspect that characterises the prosperity preachers in Zimbabwe, as Guvamombe notes, is the large entourage of security personnel that the prophets and prophetesses have and the tricking of congregants that anointing oil and wristbands would protect them when the leaders who give these do not put them on and seek protection from bodyguards. Guvamombe makes interesting comparisons between the prophets and prophetesses and spirit mediums that do not need protection because they are not business people. For him, the prophets who need protection show that they are in business disguised as Christianity or simply Churchianity. In the same vein, he alludes to the fact that spirit mediums are not 'gospreneurs', as their protection comes from the spiritual realm. He gives examples of spirit mediums such as Karimatundu, Dumburechuma, Dandajena, Chingowo, Mutota and Kangamiti, who do not need that kind of physical security.

Another factor that Guvamombe points out is the violence associated with prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe, which has also aided gullibility. He points out that genuinely upright people have ideas and reservations about Churchianity, but are afraid of speaking out, due to retribution and fear that one should not attack the anointed ones. Thus, Churchianity ends up attracting more people than Christianity because the spiritual realm is now filled with fly-by-night prophets who are making money and building big business empires and who should be taxed by the authorities in Zimbabwe. Guvamombe's analysis, which is mainly centred on the Pentecostal churches such as UFIC, PHD and Spirit Embassy directly challenges Togarasei's (2011) assertions that these movements have had an impact on alleviating poverty as he argues,

> Gone are the days when our people and Government should not be hoodwinked into thinking the Pentecostal churches are charitable organisations. Unlike the conventional churches that built schools and hospitals that have saved millions of people, these ones specialise in false prophecy and lure people with a hodgepodge of miracles. Most of the miracles like refuelling cars, miracle money,

> miracle babies and many nonsensical things are used as baits to gullible people who end up paying through their nose.

Again, Guvamombe is critical of the miracles performed by these prophets as 'silly miracles that sire babies in three days when Jesus Christ himself was born on normal gestation'. This kind of analysis is critical in dealing with gullibility of those who believe in such miracles, and in a way the media are questioning these miracles and exposing their fallacies.

Again, another aspect that could have contributed to the gullibility associated with Prosperity Gospel is that those who question it are chided. Guvamombe claims that he has lost friends for being critical through his writings on Prosperity Gospel and he was called names like (*Mhondoro*) or spirit medium, meaning that he was fighting on the dark side or evil in the dichotomy of the good versus bad that characterises Pentecostalism.

Guvamombe claims that he was persecuted and stopped from writing his column by powerful politicians when he challenged prophets Emmanuel Makandiwa and Eubert Angel Madzanire on some of their healing claims and differentiated between what he termed 'religion and religiosity or the art and the belief: the belief and the execution of the belief'. His challenge was that,

> gospreneurship was an art of making money versus seeking God and he questioned if God anointed between the sheets or whether prophetic powers were sexually transmitted in that a prophet's wife becomes a prophetess (Guvamombe 2015b).

These are some of the aspects that most people do not question and this represents some kind of gullibility. For Guvamombe, these Pentecostal churches must be taxed, because they fleece the poor and makes millions out of what he calls 'troubled' souls. These prophets are described as 'business people whose business model is to milk the poor, the troubled and the gullible'. In a sense, Guvamombe seems to locate this gullibility somewhere else as something that exists out there and he does not specifically accuse the media of aiding this gullibility. For him, the fear in criticising the so-called men of God creates a perception which becomes real. This fear of the unknown, he argues, 'transforms gullibility and the very little that one has can easily be given away to the few who are enterprising and claiming to have access to God' (Guvamombe 2015b). It seems that it is this fear that

prophets use to hoodwink people that they are investing in God. Again Guvamombe does not dispute their miracles, because he believes that both evil and holy people can perform these. His bone of contention is that in Zimbabwe, Pentecostal prophets do not want the authenticity of their miracles to be challenged and they use their supposedly express access to God to induce fear in the minds of the 'poor and gullible to part with the little money they have'. For him this gospel is impoverishing and deceptive. In one of his critical articles, Guvamombe (2014) argues that the prosperity prophets capitalise on antics such as enlargement of tiny manhood, raising the dead, selling anointed water and bricks, anointed condoms, pens and soccer results prediction. He claims that people have become gullible to these antics and are like sheep without a clue to survive – 'they sheepishly flock there' – and that his writings are a way to challenge this gullibility. To expose some of the false prophets, Guvamombe gives an example of a Bulawayo-based prophet Blessing Chiza, who mis-predicted a win for the Zimbabwe senior men's soccer team and later admitted that he had not seen well and that his prophecies were not 100 percent accurate, because he was not God. For Guvamombe then it seems many people are making money out of religion by hoodwinking Zimbabweans into believing in even some of the silliest of all things. His major contention is that prosperity gospel has not enriched those who sow, as they remain poor and are getting poorer socially and financially, and that the government must intervene to stop this phenomenon, which he describes as some form of cultism.

Prosperity Gospel as a Curse and Media Culpability

Another critic of Prosperity Gospel, Reason Wafawarova (2015), describes this gospel as one that is cursed. For him the Prosperity Gospel is a curse which is threatening what he calls 'the nobility and integrity of the Christian faith today … fuels greed, and it focuses on getting as opposed to giving. It is a selfish materialistic faith with a thin veneer of Christianity' Wafawarova exposes the pitfalls of the Prosperity Gospel in that instead of being a blessing, the gospel is a curse, because it encourages shortcuts where people are promised instant results and overnight success, including securing husbands for the desperate unmarried and ageing ladies. And when these promises fail to materialise as is the case most of the time, the follower is simply blamed for not giving enough money in offerings, or for lacking in

faith. For Wafawarova then the Prosperity Gospel has actually kept people in poverty by promoting false hope to the masses, pacifying them not to question those in power for laziness and corruption. Like Guvamombe, Wafawarova believes that the claims that Prosperity Gospel can help to alleviate poverty is faulty, as he argues that,

> in the past 25 years Sub Saharan Africa is the only place on earth where poverty has been on the increase, and clearly the much hailed Prosperity Gospel is not bringing prosperity to the continent.

In terms of the role of the media in aiding gullibility, Wafawarova (2014) believes that the media are complicit and guilty of aiding gullibility as he argues that the media have failed to question it as one of its expected roles in society, arguing that 'it is surprising that well trained editors in our media fraternity allowed the nonsense to pass for news'. In so doing he accuses the media for an uncritical stance in merely reporting news about the prosperity gospel and miracles without questioning their authenticity, which can point to a marriage of some sort. Wafawarova (2015) also echoes the violence that those who dare to criticise the Prosperity Gospel face, as alluded to by Guvamombe in that: '… and when sober minded people questioned the logic of honouring this gospel … they are met with the fury of expectant follower'. What these two columnists have managed to do is to show that the gullibility associated with Prosperity Gospel has been questioned and exposed in the media and the media have in this way been a leading light to fight gullibility insofar as Prosperity Gospel is concerned. There are thus very few writers who have the courage to openly challenge this gospel and its practices, although they claim to have drawn the ire of those who follow the gospel.

Conclusion

While there can be disagreements on whether Prosperity Gospel is good or bad, the consensus is that to a certain extent the media have aided gullibility instead of being the society's watchdog against false and inaccurate discernment of prosperity according to Bible. The media's role in aiding human gullibility in terms of the prosperity gospel cannot be underestimated.

It seems the prosperity preachers understood the power of the media to mass spread their messages and they invested heavily in such programmes

to reap huge rewards, while the media houses also cashed in, especially in an economy where the industry is almost in a state of being comatose. Also, the choice of radio and television meant that the message would reach most people, and because radio does not require the audience to be literate but only to understand the language. Radio is a cheap and accessible medium with the potential to spread the messages faster. Television has the advantage of liveliness, and through motion pictures people can give testimonies, and the 'healing' can be performed for all to see and be convinced.

The use of media such as television has enhanced gullibility on Prosperity Gospel, since their content has been presented in an unquestioned stance as either advertisements or sponsored programmes. People who are overwhelmed by the messages in both electronic media tend to believe the wildest of those messages and throng these churches, expecting instant financial miracle. In this way the media messages function as magic bullets that produce an almost uniform response, as people assume that if something has been published by the media it will necessarily be authentic.

To play their social responsibility role, the media should be critical and abandon the linear, inert approaches that only end with narratives that perpetuate gullibility and offer no alternative narratives. It is also disheartening to note that the media have aided gullibility due to its homogeneous, monotonous tone, which ends with mere reportage, glorification and defence of trends, rather than offering empowering and critical views that enlighten citizens.

The media have thus aided gullibility in the Zimbabwean society, a society that has nothing to look forward to. Drained of material resources, afflicted by joblessness, bleak economic prospects can only hope in the possibility of a miracle. Desperate to escape their poverty and a need for encouragement, people were also quick to accept Prosperity Gospel and the media have come in handy as a mobilisation tool.

References

Adeyemi, S.L., G.T. Ijaiya & U.A. Raheem *et al.* 2009. Determinants of Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa. *African Research Review: An International Multi-Disciplinary Journal, Ethiopia* 3,2, January: 162–177. https://doi.org/10.4314/afrrev.v3i2.43617

Adogame, A. 2010. How God became a Nigerian: Religious Impulse and the

Unfolding of a Nation. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28,4*:* 479-98. https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2010.512742

Asamoah-Gyadu, J.K. 2005. *African Charismatics: Current Developments within Independent Pentecostalism in Ghana*. Leiden: Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047406303

Beyer, P. 2006. *Religion in Global Society*. London: Routledge.

Bloch-Hoell, N. 1964. *The Pentecostal Movement: Its Origin, Development, and Distinctive Character*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Bishau, D. 2013. The Prosperity Gospel: An Investigation into its Pros and Cons with Examples Drawn from Zimbabwe. *International Open and Distance Learning Journal* 1,1, June: 65 -75.

Bowler, K. 2013. *Blessed*: *A History of the American Prosperity Gospel*. New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199827695.001.0001

Chinkwo, R.N. 2017. *Poverty, Prosperity and Faith: An Analysis of the Prosperity Gospel in the neo-Pentecostal Church Winners Chapel International in Bamenda, Cameroon.* Unpublished M.A. Thesis, MF Norwegian School of Theology.

Chitando, E. & K. Biri 2016. Alter Magaya's Prophetic Healing and Deliverance (PHD) Ministries and Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe: A Preliminary Study with Particular Reference to Ecumenism. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 42,2: 72–85.

Chitando, E., M. Manyonganise & O.B. Mlambo 2013. Young, Male and Polished Masculinities: Generational Shifts and Pentecostal Prophets in Zimbabwe. In Chitando E., M.R. Gunda & J. Kügler (eds.): *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.

Crawford, H. & C. Gordon (eds.). 2008. *Decentralization in Africa: A Pathway out of Poverty and Conflict?* Amsterdam: University Press. https://doi.org/10.5117/9789053569344

Droogers, A. 2001. Globalization and Pentecostal Success. In Corten, A. & R.M. Fratani (eds.): *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America.* London: Hurst & Company.

Eversole, R., J.A. McNeish & A. Cimadamore 2005. *Indigenous Peoples and Poverty - An International Perspective.* London: Zed Books. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350220751

Gbote, E.Z.M. & S.T. Kgatla 2014. Prosperity Gospel: A Missiological Assessment. *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 70,1: Art. #2105, 10 pages. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2105 (Accessed on 19/08/2018). https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2105

Gifford, P. 1990. Prosperity: A New and Foreign Element in African Christianity. *Religion* 20,4: 373–388. https://doi.org/10.1016/0048-721X(90)90119-Q

Guvamombe, I. 2014. Welcome to Zimbabwe's Gospreneurship Buffet. *The Herald* 30 January.

Guvamombe, I. 2015a. Cow Dung Naturally Attracts Flies. *The Herald* 09 July.

Guvamombe, I. 2015b. Why Churches must Pay Tax. *The Herald* 03 July.

Hackett, R. 1998. Charismatic/ Pentecostal Appropriation of Media Technologies in Nigeria and Ghana. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28,3: 258–277. https://doi.org/10.1163/157006698X00026

Hollenweger, W.J. 1997. *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide.* USA: Hendrickson.

Hopper, P. 2012. *Understanding Development.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kabuya, F.L. 2015. Fundamental Causes of Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa. IOSR *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* (IOSR-JHSS) 20,6: Ver. V (Jun.): 78–81.

Kalu, O. 2006. *Power, Poverty and Prayer: The Challenges of Poverty and Pluralism in African Christianity: 1960–1996*. N.J: Africa World Press.

Kalu, O. 2008. *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction.* New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195340006.001.0001

Katz, E., & P.F. Lazarsfeld 1955. *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communication.* Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Kay, K.W. 2011. *Pentecostalism: A Very Short Introduction.* New York: Oxford. https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780199575152.001.0001

McQuail, D. 2010. *Mass Communication Theory.* London: Sage.

Omenyo, C.N. 2014. African Pentecostalism. In Robeck, C.M. (Jnr) & A. Young (eds.): *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism.* New York: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CCO9780511910111.011

Raftopoulos, B. 2009. The Crisis in Zimbabwe 1998-2008. In Raftopoulos, B. & A. Mlambo. (eds.): *Becoming Zimbabwe: A History from the Colonial Period to 2008*. Harare: Weaver Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvk3gmpr.15

Togarasei, L. 2011. The Pentecostal Gospel of Prosperity in African Contexts of Poverty: An Appraisal. *Exchange* 40,4: 336–360. https://doi.org/10.1163/157254311X600744

Wafawarova, R. 2015. The Curse of the Prosperity Gospel. *The Herald* 12 February.

White, H., T. Killick, S. Kayizzi-Mugerwa & M.-A. Savane 2001. African *Poverty at the Millennium*: *Causes, Complexities and Challenges*. Washington DC: World Bank. https://doi.org/10.1596/0-8213-4867-1

Zimunya, C.T. & J. Gwara 2013. Pentecostalism, Prophets and the Distressing Milieu. In Chitando E., M.R. Gunda & J. Kügler (eds.): *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.

Interviews

28/07/2018 (with a media and political analyst)
25/07/2018 (with a media analyst in Harare)
20/07/2018 (with a journalist in Harare)
19/07/20/18 (with a media lecturer/researcher in Harare)
20 /07/2018 (with a media critic in Bulawayo)

Dr. Wellington Gadzikwa
Journalism and Media Studies
University of Zimbabwe
wmgadzikwa@yahoo.com
wmgadzikwa@gmail.com

The Church and New Media Technology: Communicating and Sharing Faith through the WhatsApp Media Platform

Josephat Mutangadura
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4197-1041

Itai Offat Manyanhaire

Abstract

The Church finds herself in the midst of a technological revolution, the biggest communication shift since the advent of the printing press, leaving it at a crossroad. The need for believers to use new media outlets for communication is increasingly becoming a reality because church members are ever embracing new media outlets in other spheres of their lives and moving away from traditional forms of media. This transition is filtering phenomenally into the church and the religious life of its members. The intention of this research was not only to reveal how the believers could exist in the digital era, but to also show how they could proclaim the gospel today effectively, exploiting all that the new age has to offer. Particular attention was given to the generation, content and target audiences of Christian WhatsApp 'chat' messages. Of note was the net effect of such messages on the wider consumers whilst at the same time raising concern over the issues of security and privacy as enshrined in the use (or abuse) of WhatsApp on mobile and other computer gadgets. The

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a21

WhatsApp platform was selected for study because of its prevalence and accessibility among the majority of members in the Zimbabwean congregations. The paper therefore extracted WhatsApp chat messages that were faith related and analysed them in the light of new media technology and the spread of the Christian faith. Messages received and forwarded through the WhatsApp platform were reproduced as evidence of new media utilization in evangelizing and Christian community building. If the church's missions of evangelization, formation, community-building, and social relevance are to continue in future generations, church members must harness these tools and utilize them now.

Keywords: chat, smartphone, digital era, WhatsApp messenger

Introduction

The Church finds herself in the midst of a technological revolution, the biggest communication shift since the advent of the printing press, leaving it at a crossroad. The need for believers to use new media outlets for communication is increasingly becoming a reality, because church members are ever embracing new media outlets in other spheres of their lives and moving away from traditional forms of media. This transition is filtering phenomenally into the church and the religious life of its members. How do churches remain relevant to their constituents in an age where the communications landscape is now characterized by connectivity, mobility, and immediacy? How do they preserve the core values of the church and keep her integrity intact when daily communication increasingly takes place in a disruptive and distracting bazaar of digital sounds and sights? (Baron 2010). How can they avoid becoming marginalized and lose credibility in a world which now straddles both geographic and digital spaces? Such are the emerging questions and challenges encountered by the church situated in the digital communications era. The study is therefore starting off from this position as it seeks to uncover the net benefit of using the WhatsApp messaging platform as one of the digital age technologies the church has had to face and make use of.

Methodology

The research undertook to analyse the WhatsApp messaging facility on An-

droid smartphones as an evangelisation tool. The WhatsApp platform was selected for study because of its prevalence and accessibility among the majority of members within the Zimbabwean Christian congregations. A WhatsApp account was therefore opened using the Bluestacks application and installed on the laptop of the researchers. It was installed on the laptop so that it would be easy to reproduce chat pages in the study without having to download them from the mobile handset, which would compromise the picture appearance and readability. Links were purposively sought with wider Christian friends and groups so that the account would engage in participant observation of the facility use. Ten WhatsApp extracts were therefore picked and have been reproduced in this paper for use in the study under various subtopics as set out in the research agenda. The study therefore extracted WhatsApp chat messages that were faith related and analysed them in the light of new media technology and the spread of the Christian faith. Messages received and forwarded through the WhatsApp platform were reproduced as evidence of new media utilization in evangelizing and Christian community building. This was done with a view to show the positioning of the church in the digital age as both a survival and exploitative strategy to maximize its outreach and influence.

Theoretical Framework

A growing development of 21st-century life is that mobile communication devices have become inseparable companions and indispensable personal valets. If one needs to understand the impact of WhatsApp on the digital generation it is vital to look at how media can influence human life and their activities. Media effects represent one of the core ideas of communication research from the beginning. Elihu Katz (2001: 472) characteristically posits that all communication research 'is about effect'. In this study two media effects theories are used as framework for understanding the effect of WhatsApp as a media platform, namely the Media Dependency Theory and Hypodermic Needle Theory (or magic bullet theory).

The hypodermic needle theory is a model of communications, also referred to as the 'magic bullet', or the 'profound effects' theory. Essentially this model holds that an intended message is received directly and wholly accepted by the receiver. The phrasing 'hypodermic needle' is meant to give a mental image of a message's direct infusion into an individual. The 'hypoder-

mic needle theory' implies that mass media have a direct, immediate and powerful effect on its audiences. The mass media in the 1940s and 1950s were perceived as a powerful influence on behavioural change. The hypodermic theory by Harold Lasswell (1979) suggests that the mass media could influence a very large group of people directly and uniformly by 'shooting' or 'injecting' them with appropriate messages designed to trigger a desired response. The 'magic bullet' theory graphically assumes that the media's message is a bullet fired from the 'media gun' into the viewer's 'head' (Berger 1995). Several factors contributed to this 'strong effects' theory of communication, including the fast rise and popularization of radio and television which, for example, led to the emergence of the persuasion industries, such as advertising and propaganda. The hypodermic theory expresses the view that the media are a dangerous means of communicating an idea because the receiver or audience is powerless to resist the impact of the message. There is no escape from the effect of the message in these models. The population is seen as a sitting duck. Media dependency theory is also significant in this study, as WhatsApp users are seen to depend so much on this application for most of their communication. WhatsApp users spend much of their time on the application, resulting in them depending on it for much of what they learn and believe in each day. The degree of dependence, according to the media dependency theory, can be directly proportional to individuals as the media have the ability to satisfy the audience needs. An individual will become more dependent on media if the medium satisfies their needs. WhatsApp users tend to have their needs satisfied by the application as they chat with others; the way WhatsApp users constantly check messages, anticipate messages, check who is online and get affected when there is no response from other users is clear evidence that WhatsApp satisfies their needs and hence the degree of dependence is heightened.

Review of Related Literature

Overview of WhatsApp and its Main Features

WhatsApp Messenger is a proprietary, cross-platform instant messaging subscription service for smartphones and selected feature phones that uses the internet for communication. In addition to text messaging, users can send each other images, video and audio media messages as well as their location using

> integrated mapping features. One major driver for WhatsApp to function successfully for communication is that one has to persuade their most frequent texting peers to download and install the application too.

WhatsApp Inc. was founded in 2009 by US citizens Brian Acton and Jan Koum (also the CEO), who are both former employees of Yahoo!, and is based in Mountain View, California (Jackson 2012). The company employs 55 people (Albergotti, MacMillan & Evelyn 2014). The company is currently in the process of takeover after Facebook Inc. announced its acquisition of WhatsApp Inc. for US$19 billion on 19 February 2014 (Albergotti *et al.* 2014). In a December 2013 blog post, WhatsApp claimed that 400 million active users use the service each month (Koum 2014). As of 22 April 2014, WhatsApp had over 500 million monthly active users, 700 million photos and 100 million videos being shared each day, and the messaging system handles more than 10 billion messages each day (Chowdhry 2014). If WhatsApp had been a country, it would have been the third-largest in the world after China and India.

As part of its features, WhatsApp Messenger shows one's chats in little text bubbles, gives a time stamp for messages, notifies when a text has been viewed by a recipient, and lets users include photos, audio notes, and videos as part of their conversations. With WhatsApp Messenger you can also change your background and send a GPS location to an interactive map. Pre-made status statements such as 'I'm busy', 'WhatsApp only' or even 'My battery is about to die', are used as users' status.

The status can be personalized with Christian believers making evangelical wonders in this section. Examples that have been picked include '*Zvikasashamisa haasi mwari', 'NaJesu Tinovimba',* among others. In the extract below, check the status 'faith accepts, believes, endorses and confesses God's Word' (Gal. 3: 6; Rom. 10: 8). The page even indicates the dates such that statuses can be changed according to the season in the interest of the account holder or religious festivals at hand. Check the status of the two figures below. Faith accepts, endorses and confesses God's Word' (Gal. 3: 6; Rom. 10: 8), 'Commit your way to the Lord, trust in him and He will act'. These two statements are in themselves statements of faith.

They inspire the account holder and any other of the group or contact list member. The evangelization becomes ripple factor within the group or contact list.

Figure 1: WhatsApp extract with biblical citations

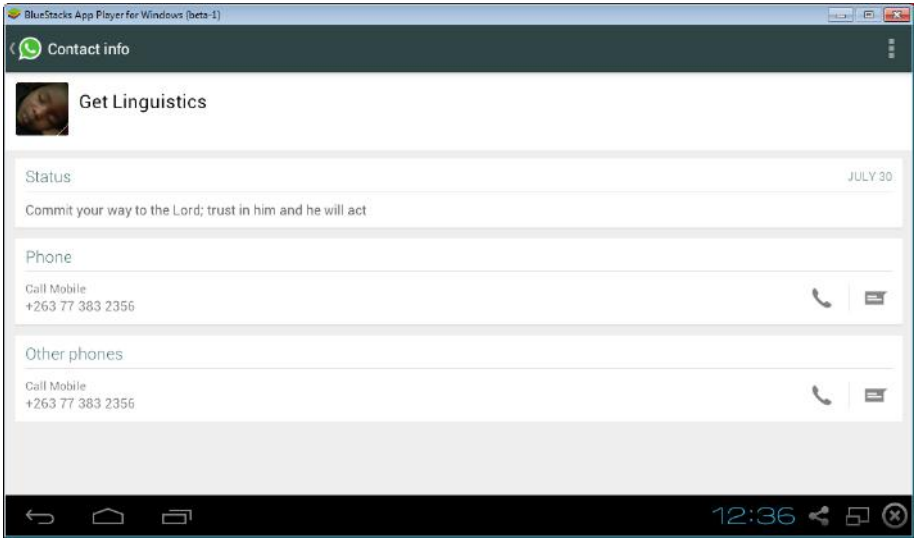


Figure 2: WhatsApp extract with Biblical citation

It is possible to block specific contacts from within the app for whatever reason if one feels like stopping the incoming chats from that direction. These are some of the nice extra features on this application.

One thing WhatsApp does exceptionally well is group messages. Users can use the Broadcast Message feature to bring up their entire list of contacts then click radio buttons to quickly add contacts for a message blast. There's also a new group feature, which lets one add contacts for a group message. The study is interested in both group and peer utilization of the WhatsApp messaging for the purposes of faith distribution. Users have the ability to also look back over the group messages and list just the locations or just the media added to the group chat by all members. These are not amazing or ground-breaking features, but they are a bit more than what one can get with the standard messaging features on most phones.

Saving money is one biggest advantage of using WhatsApp, even when communicating internationally. In other words, with ***WhatsApp Messenger***, and a little cooperation from the most-texted friends and family, one could easily get the lowest-cost texting plan and save some money every month on their smartphone bill. This ideally fits in well with evangelical messages that do come in tonnes at next to nothing in terms of costs. The gospel would not spread without restrictive costs.

Overall, ***WhatsApp Messenger*** is not much different from the text-messaging services one gets on one's smartphone; however, WhatsApp offers a few neat extras that make it a little more fun and useful. This is the other reason why it works well in Christian evangelism as composers can utilize all sorts of additives to make it more appealing. If one does a lot of texting, this application is a must-have, giving users unlimited free texts with all their peers without having to worry about extra charges, even internationally.

The Church and New Media Technology

The mandate of Christ is clear and unambiguous: proclaim the Gospel to the nations and invite everyone to share Christ's life in his Church. Contemporary media technologies offer not only priests, but all the faithful, a means to fulfil this mandate in an unprecedented way (Baron 2010).

As churches and believers alike consider new opportunities introduced by new communications technologies and environments like WhatsApp and others, it is worth remembering that one of the key defining features of

humanity is the ability to communicate. All aspects of human activity, including the accomplishment of the principal tasks of the church, involve a communicative dimension. Consequently, whether proclamation (*kerygma*), community (*koinonia*), services (*diakonia*), advocacy (*propheteia*), or worship (*leitourgia*) (Pazmiño 2008: 46–55), all these tasks involve communication acts and events that are integrally linked to communications media and technologies. It is also worth remembering that many of the high points in the life of God's people were intricately linked to historical developments in human communications.

Encoding the spoken Word in written form helped to preserve both Testaments over the ages. Having *koine* Greek as a common lingua franca enabled the spread of early Christianity across a much larger ethnic and geographic extent than would otherwise have been possible. Circulating written gospels and dictated epistles proved instrumental to the evangelism and discipleship efforts of the apostles. Mechanically inking pages using movable types put the Word of God into the hands of the literate masses. Transmitting radio waves across political borders birthed and nurtured churches under conditions of oppression and persecution. These examples from history serve to illustrate the very intimate, though sometimes overlooked relationship between developments in communications history and the life of the church.

The revelations above are reminders that encourage us to take note of the fact that the church can make a difference at a time of rapid global adoption of digital communications technologies and increased communication within digital spaces.

Absence of Clear Laws Governing Mobile Licensing and Usage of the WhatsApp Media Messaging Platform

Security

How secure are WhatsApp accounts? In May 2011, a security hole was reported which left WhatsApp user accounts open for session hijacking and packet analysis (McCarty 2011). WhatsApp communications were not encrypted, and data were sent and received in plain text, meaning that messages could easily be read if packet traces were available (Brookehoven 2011). That means it is possible that WhatsApp can leak username, mobile numbers and messages. In September 2011, WhatsApp released a new version of the Messenger application for iPhones, closing critical security holes that allowed

forged messages to be sent and messages from any WhatsApp user to be read (Kurtz 2011).

On 6 January 2012, an unknown hacker published a website (Malekhosseini 2018) that made it possible to change the status of an arbitrary WhatsApp user, as long as the phone number was known. To make it work, it only required a restart of the app. According to the hacker, it is only one of the many security problems in WhatsApp. On 9 January 2012, WhatsApp reported that it had resolved the problem, although the only measure actually taken was to block the website's IP address. Does this pose any challenge to the spread of faith-related messages? I suppose not. The word of Jesus Christ needs no privacy nor security as it is secure by itself. Satanists as a new phenomenon against the spread of the word would spread counter messages as seen in the chat below but to no avail in this crusade.

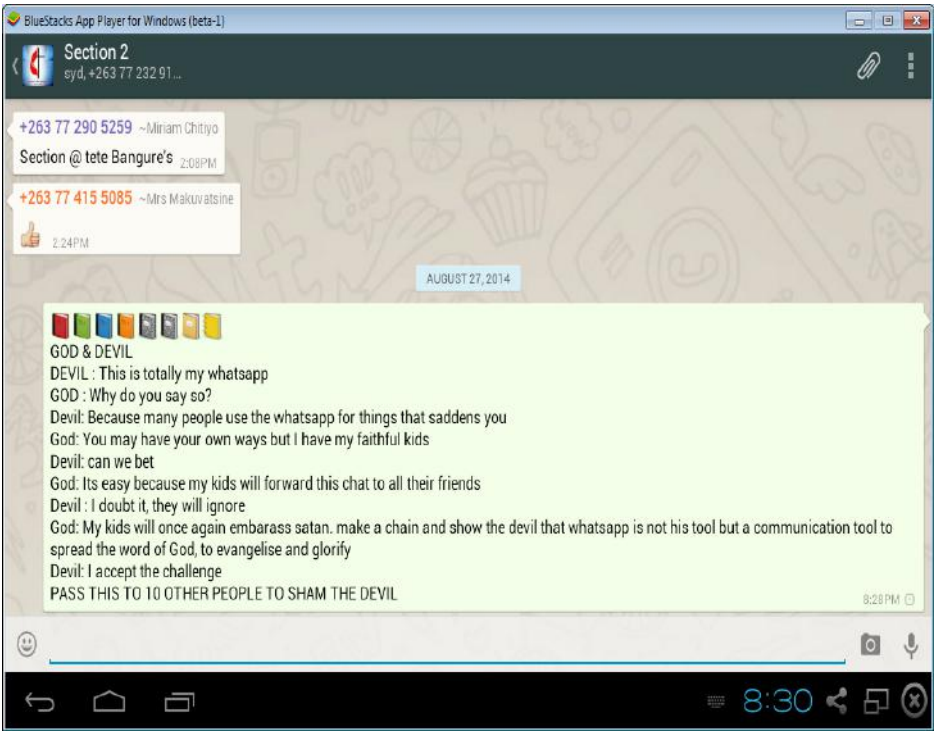


Figure 3: WhatsApp extract showing social media threats

Privacy

On top of being a fully registered mobile phone user, WhatsApp demands that you upload your number prefixed with your country code. What that means is the user is now identifiable through their mobile number and network as well as by their country. A major privacy and security problem has been the subject of a joint Canadian-Dutch government investigation. The primary concern was that WhatsApp required users to upload their mobile phone's entire address book to WhatsApp servers so that WhatsApp could discover who, among the users' contacts, is available via WhatsApp. While this is a fast and convenient way to quickly find and connect the user with contacts who are also using WhatsApp, it means that their address book was then mirrored on the Whats-App servers, including contact information for contacts who are not using WhatsApp. This information was stored in hashed, though not salted form and without 'additional' identifying information such as a name, although the stored identifying information is sufficient to identify every contact (Privacy Commissioner of Canada 2013). On 31 March 2013, the Saudi Arabia telecommunications authority, the Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC), made a statement regarding possible measures against WhatsApp, among other apps, that the service providers needed to take steps to comply with monitoring and privacy regulations (Quadri & Khan 2019).

According to features of WhatsApp, a user does not need to send a friend request to send messages to another user. However, users can block numbers on WhatsApp but they still show their presence to the blocked peer. As a result, a public corporation of the state of Schleswig-Holstein has advised against using WhatsApp, as the service lacks privacy protection such as end-to-end client-side encryption technology.

WhatsApp and the Gospel Evangelical Super Highway

> **THE GREAT COMISSION [Matthew 28: 18-20]**
> 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age'.

The history of human communication is marked by significant turning points which have reconfigured the way people think, order their lives, and relate to one another. Whether as a result of the invention of computers, or the Internet, these communication technologies have introduced deep and irrevocable societal level changes over the course of human history. Digital spaces are presently undeniable extensions of human sense of place and are significant habitats in today's expanded global communications ecosystem. Although only in its early years, the innovations of the present digital age have already transformed the speed, scope, and scale of everyday human communications. All this has left a profound impact on contemporary life, with new conditions and common spaces introduced that are consciously as well as unconsciously shaping communications habits, behaviours and lifestyles. These characteristics of hyperconnectivity have thus dramatically reshaped the landscape of politics, economics, media, arts and entertainment, religion, law, and education, and have reordered work, social, family, and personal life. Indeed, this form of radical, non-hierarchical connectivity has now become a given in mainstream culture. With these shifts, the benefits of hyperconnectivity offer new opportunities to be harnessed and profited from.

The challenge to participate in building this new world at the digital frontier calls for a radical rethink of the *how*, *where*, *who*, and *with what* of Christian ministry. Effective participative presence in this new world will require those in traditional ministry roles to recognize the wide range of new communications genres, move out of their comfort zones, and interact regularly on popular communications platforms.

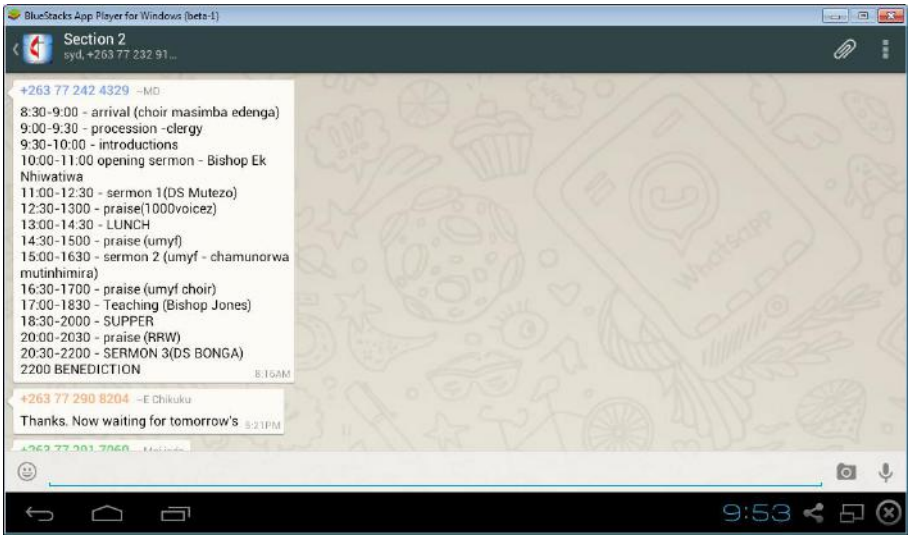
In terms of scope and reach, however, the vision of participative presence can only be advanced through the active involvement of the net generation believers in whom reside native intuitions in digital environments, expert knowhow, and the ability to exploit the affordances of digital technologies for Kingdom purposes.

Discussion of Findings

Who are the Originators of WhatsApp Faith-related Chats?

It was established that individuals subscribe to the WhatsApp service as individuals, but can form groups later. The originators of faith-related messages on WhatsApp are the individuals who then feed into the channel of others. An individual believer will have an inspiration to pick and share in the

same way they have been sharing the word in sermons and prayers daily and traditionally. Initially one would expect Christian leaders to be fronting the composition of faith-related chats. It should not be surprising, however, to note that the messages are emerging from all angles.



Extract 4: Section 2 Chat group

The extract above is a single chat by a member of the group 'Section 2' of the United Methodist Church, Cold Comfort Circuit. The individual with the name and number captured had something to share, in this case, programme of events for the 'Ebenezer' event which was held at the national sports stadium. This chat is being fed into a group and all members in the group can then view and comment on the posting.

Who are the Distributors, and Beneficiaries/ Intended Audiences?

The distributors of faith-related Christian messages on WhatsApp are neither restricted nor prescribed in any way. The originators extend from individuals who are preachers, evangelists, pastors to organizations like churches and their

subsidiary organs. In like manner, the same are the distributors of that form of communication to beneficiaries. In the extract below, the formation of a group is indicated with all the numbers shown being those of group members. The administrator is the one who has the power to name the group as well as to recruit members. Besides the administrator, members can opt out of the group if they no longer want to continue membership. Once one is a member of a group, one can then originate and distribute messages in line with the founding purpose of the group.

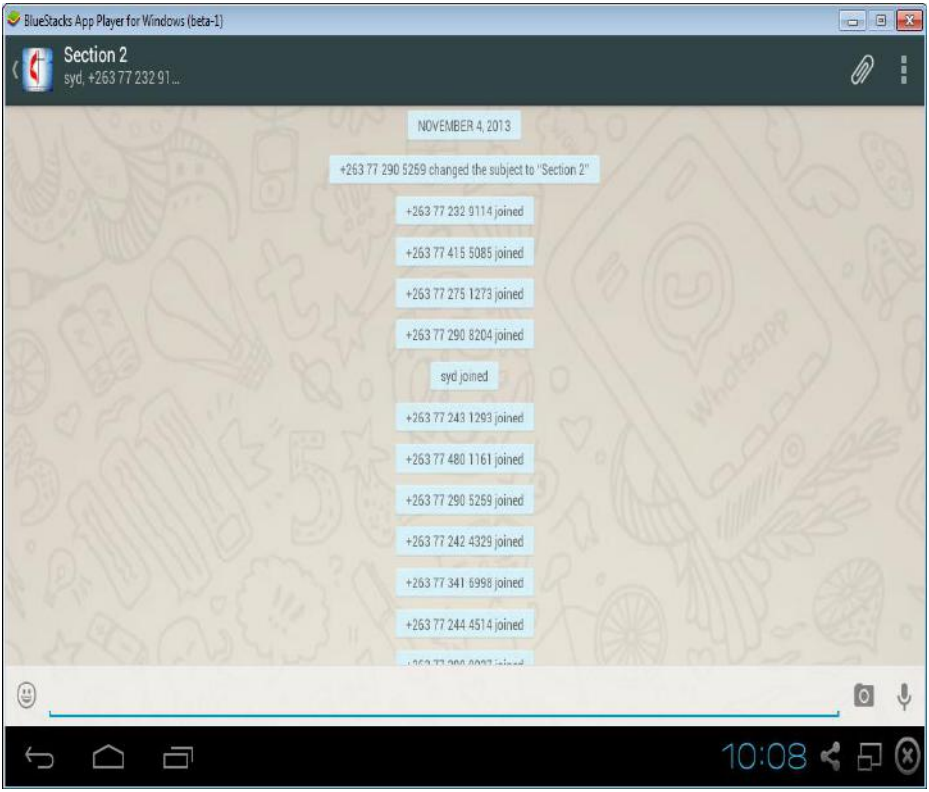


Figure 4: WhatsApp page showing how members are enrolled into a group

The audience of these WhatsApp faith-related messages are varied. In the case of individuals exchanging chain messages, the target audience are determined

by the sender. In the case of groups, it then extends to all those registered in the group. For me to benefit from messages passing through 'Section 2' of the Cold Comfort United Methodist Church, I must ask the administrator of the group to include my number. Then only will I be able to interact with the messages and group members.

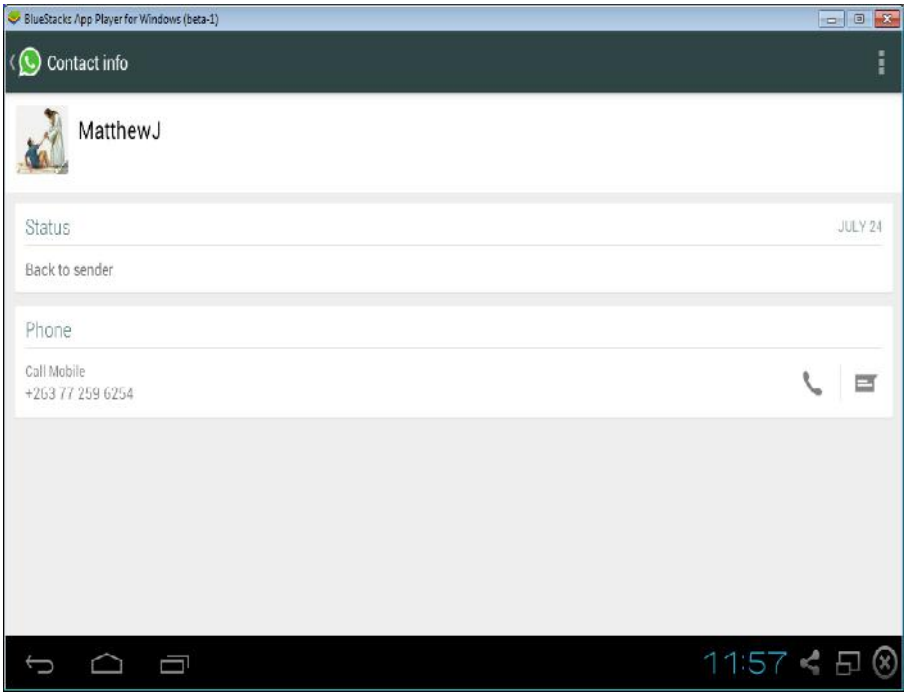


Figure 5: WhatsApp extract showing Christian status

The status of the WhatsApp subscriber is the Christian message in itself. The image in the status above represents common pictures associated with Jesus Christ. The posture displayed reveals the desire of every Christian believer to have Jesus offering them a hand to stand upon. The status message '*Back to Sender'* was a popular expression after one gospel musician composed a song that appeared to suggest any bad spells cast by enemies should be sent back to the sender in the name of Jesus.

The extract below has chats and live images of believers in symbolic

state. The choral '*Amen'* and the woman dressed in church attire are all inspireing for Christians. Congratulatory and motivational statements are seen in the use of '*celebrate Harvest*, and *Ebenezer*' themselves, important terms in the United Methodist calendar and vocabulary.

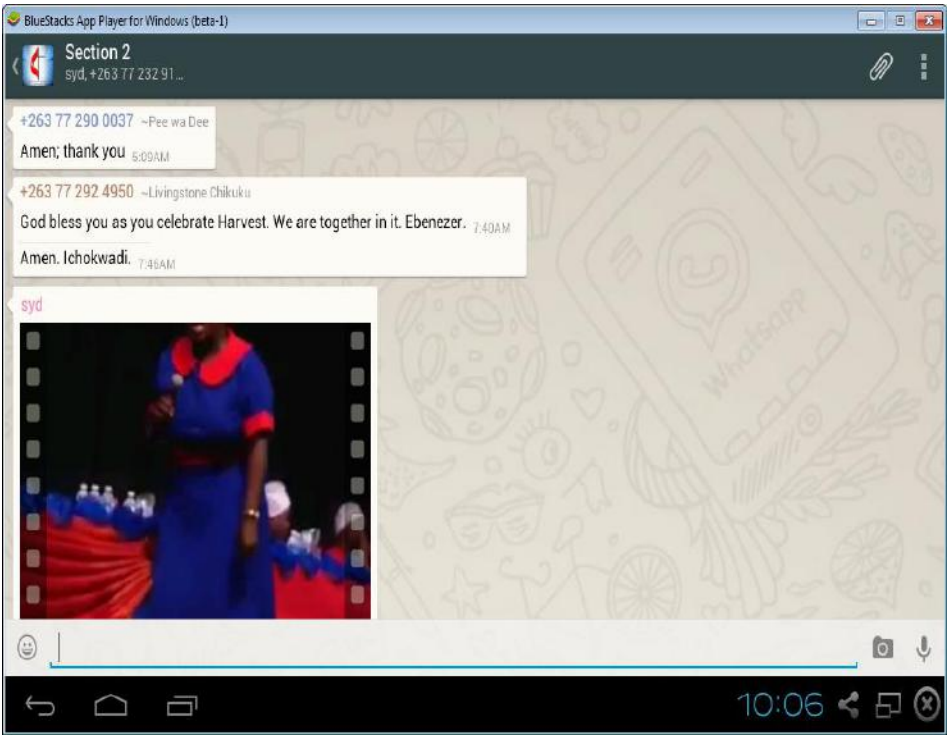


Figure 6: WhatsApp page showing faith chats and images

Composition and Content of Message

The messages carry all forms of faith expression, from direct biblical quotations to sermon like expressions with Christian meaning. The WhatsApp technology is not just a novelty or idiosyncratic, but integral to an emerging global culture that offers not just an effective means of communication, but the possibility of new Christian communities being formed that can transcend the limits imposed by geography and denominational borders. Because of these new technologies, the Church is now able to share the Gospel with many who

would never enter the doors of religious institutions or who might never meet a preacher or pastor face to face. The content type of messages range from plain text to pictures, to audio and video messages.

The study has managed to reproduce some of the texts and images but could not do the same with audio-visuals. Audio visuals can form another study and its novel impact on modern-day faith messages and evangelization. In the area of media studies, this would incorporate citizen journalism where members of the congregation are able to capture and broadcast videos and images in real- time.

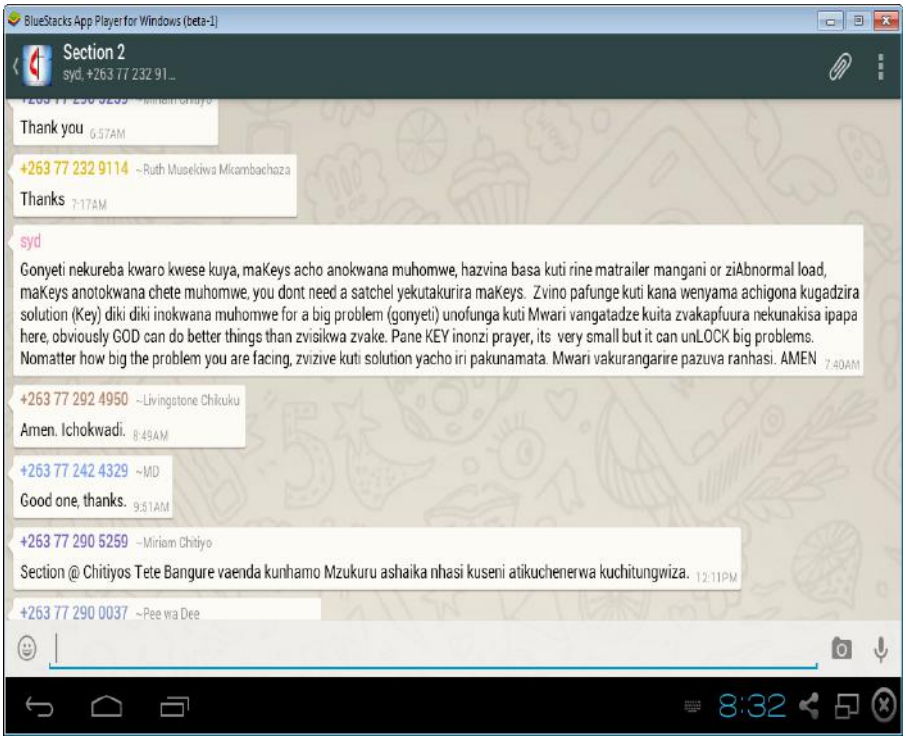


Figure 7: WhatsApp page showing member interaction on posting

When a member posts something onto the group, members are persuaded to respond by way of commending or acknowledging the post. Evangelization then moves fast on high interaction among members on group chats. The con-

cept and theory of 2 ***Step flow*** in media studies can influence reactions here.

The **two-step flow** of communication model hypothesizes that ideas **flow** from mass media to opinion leaders, and from them to a wider population. It was first introduced by sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld et al. in 1944 and elaborated by Elihu Katz and Lazarsfeld in 1955 and subsequent publications. Church leaders in the name of clergymen and lay leaders are assumed to have access to relevant religious messages and their word is authoritative. A post initiated by the pastor or any of the leadership is likely to get more reactions, thereby pushing the effect of the chat wider than when initiated by ordinary group members. Pastors and leaders have an immediate following in whatever they initiate or direct. This study will actually be extended in the next articles to focus on the effect of Twitter as a tool for evangelization. The Twitter arrangement works on followership, and the 2-step flow concept will make more sense and have more influence in spreading Christian messages.

The sermon above immediately attracted responses from members with *'ichokwadi'* (that is true) and '*amen'*. Something posted at 7:40 AM attracted two responses within the next hour, all acknowledging and approving.

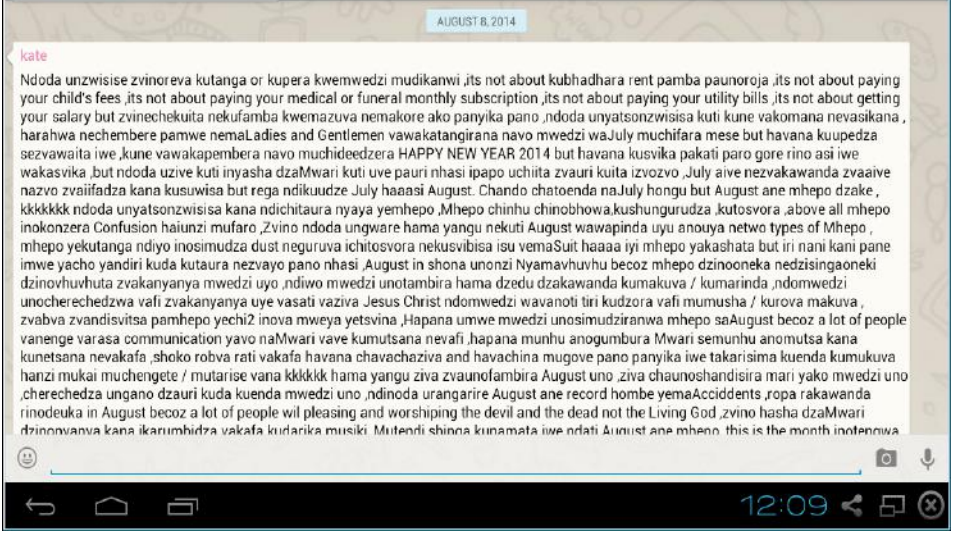


Figure 8: WhatsApp page with full sermon

Elaborate sermons and any other message compositions are shared throughout the group chats. Above is a group formed as a family chat group. A lengthy message is exchanged in the local Shona language that all the members share. The impact of language is also crucial and would require a separate investigation into the use of new media technology in evangelization.

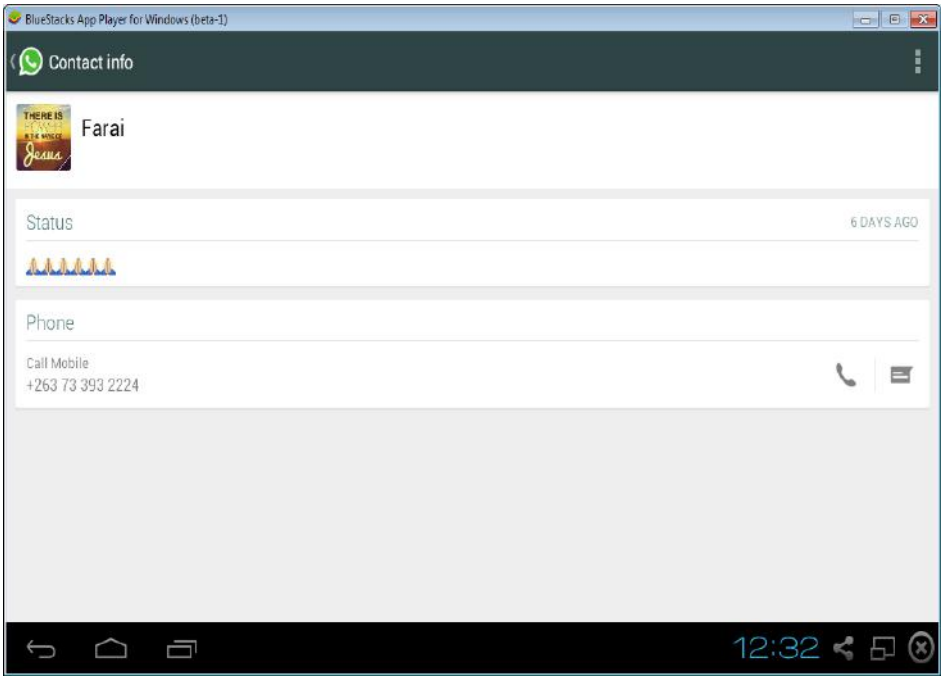


Figure 9: WhatsApp visual faith messages

The extract above utilizes visual evangelization in its outlook. The WhatsApp facility allows for subscribers to import and install their personalized images or to make use of pre-installed emojis. The praying hands can be used to make all relevant kind of impressions on those sharing the group chat. The one below captures the subscriber's personal perception of living a religious life. '*Nguva haisi yedu'*, the Christians are always reminded that God's time will control and determine everything. A true believer will always pay reverence to his/her God since anytime one can die and be called to account before the Lord.

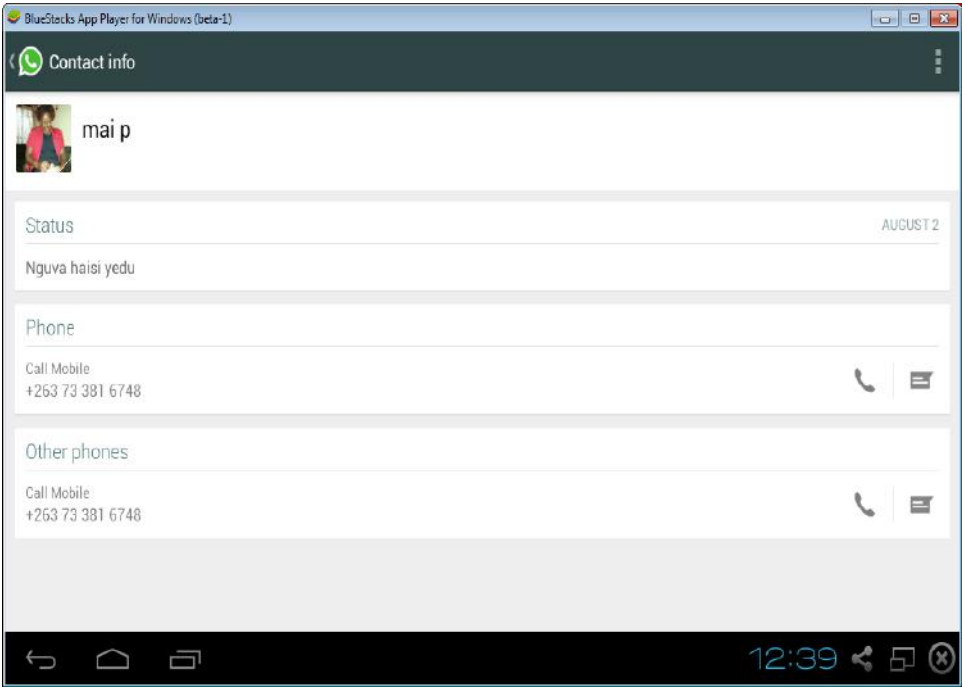


Figure 10: WhatsApp faith status

The Blind Side of New Communication and Media Technologies

One of the important theses forwarded by Marshall McLuhan a media guru is that media technologies are both extensions of human abilities as well as amputations of human capacities (McLuhan 1965). Gordon illustrates and explains McLuhan's thesis of extensions and amputations in this way:

> Whether you are pedaling a bicycle or speeding down the freeway in your car, your foot is performing such a specialized task that you cannot, at that moment, allow it to perform its basic function of walking. So, although the medium has given you the power to move much more quickly, you are immobilized, paralyzed. In this way, our technologies both extend and amputate. Amplification becomes amputation (Gordon 2010: 109).

McLuhan's thesis is of critical importance as it uncovers the lesser examined underside of a two-sided coin. While the enabling upper side of the technological coin is celebrated, its disenabling, pathological underside is minimized or overlooked. This is the blindside accompanying the increasing technologization of society that is captured in the saying 'The fish is least able to describe the water it lives in!' This lack of awareness is commented on by Turkle in her insightful, cautionary accounts of the use of emerging technologies in contemporary society (Turkle 2011).

Combining insights as a clinical psychologist and an ethnographic researcher, Turkle addresses how the benefits of interactions on networks bring with them hidden personal and social costs too. Two quotes will serve to surface her concerns about the impact of new communicative technologies on personal, work, and social life:

> It might seem intrusive, if not illegal, that my mobile phone would tell me the location of all my acquaintances within a ten-mile radius. But these days we are accustomed to all this. Life in a media bubble has come to seem natural. So has the end of a certain public etiquette: on the street, we speak into the invisible microphones on our mobile phones and appear to be talking to ourselves. We share intimacies with the air as though unconcerned about who can hear us or the details of our physical surroundings (Turkle 2011: 16).

> Young people are among the first to grow up with an expectation of continuous connection: always on, and always on them. And they are among the first to grow up not necessarily thinking of simulation as second best. All this makes them fluent with technology but brings a set of new insecurities …. Their digitized friendships – played out with emoticon emotions, so often predicated on rapid response rather than reflection – may prepare them, at times through nothing more than their superficiality, for relationships that could bring superficiality to a higher power, that is, for relationships with the inanimate (Turkle 2011: 17).

It is for these reasons that as individuals and their societies increasingly embrace connective, enabling, and formative communications technologies, the question, 'What does technology do *for* me?' must also be accompanied by

the other question, 'What does technology do *to* me?' Otherwise, under the illusion of human advancement, uncritical users will glorify in countless extensions and overextensions, while at the same time remaining ignorant of the severe amputations and erosions of critical facets of our humanity.

The Gospel cannot be reduced to a sound bite in a WhatsApp chat. The tradition of the Church should be made accessible, but cannot be made easy (Baron 2010). Many of the opportunities afforded by social networking are dreadfully self-referential, which is in sharp contrast to the Lord's missionary mandate that insists we not proclaim ourselves, but Christ the Lord. Also, there is a temptation to view the identity and relationships mediated by technology as more virtual than real, invented by human wilfulness, rather than grounded in truth and in love, a fact that we can see in the cruelty and coarseness that pervades so many Internet conversations. Therefore, let us use all these new media technologies to advance the mission of the Church, but let us not allow ourselves to be used by them.

References

Albergotti, R., D.R. MacMillan & M. Evelyn 2014. Facebook's $18 Billion Deal Sets High Bar. *The Wall Street Journal* 20 February: A1, A6.

Baron, R. 2010. Turn to the Spiritual Masters to Overcome Internet Superficiality (9323) 'Priests Online' — A Register. Experts Forum, Part 7.

Berger, A.A. 1995. *Essentials of Mass Communication Theory*. London: SAGE Publications.
https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483345420

Brookehoven, C. 2011. WhatsApp Leaks Usernames, Telephone Numbers and Messages. *Your Daily Mac* 19 May. Archived from the original on 23 May 23.
(Accessed on 18 July 2011.)

Chowdhry, A. WhatsApp Hits 500 Million Users. *Forbes.* (Accessed on 14 May 2014.)

CITC warns Skype, Viber, and WhatsApp 2013. *Saudi Gazette* (Jeddah). 31 March.

Gordon, W.T. 2010. *McLuhan: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York: Continuum.

Jackson, E. 2012. Why Selling WhatsApp To Facebook would be the Biggest

Mistake of Jan Koum's and Brian Acton's Lives. *Forbes* 3 December. (Accessed 3 May 2013.)

Katz, E. 2001. Media Effects. In Smelser N.J. & P.B. Baltes (eds.): *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. Oxford: Elsevier.

Koum, J. 2013. 400 Million Stories. *WhatsApp Blog*. WhatsApp 19 December (Accessed on 17 January 2014.)

Kurtz, A. 2011. Shooting the Messenger. 8 September. (Accessed on 11 September 2011).

Lasswell, H.D. 1970. *Propaganda Technique in World War I.* Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press.

Malekhosseini, R. 2018. Evaluation of Users' Privacy Concerns by Checking of their WhatsApp Status. *Software-Practice & Experience* 48,5: 1143–1164. https://doi.org/10.1002/spe.2565

McCarty, B. 2011. Signup Goof Leaves WhatsApp Users Open to Account Hijacking. *The Next Web*. McGraw-Hill. (Accessed 29 January 2013.)

McLuhan, M. 1965. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York.

Pazmiño, R.W. 2008. *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Privacy, Commissioner of Canada 2013. Investigation into the Personal Information Handling Practices of WhatsApp Inc. 2013. *Findings Under the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)*. Report of Findings. 15 January 2013. (Accessed on 29 January 2013.)

Turkle, S. 2011. *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. New York: Basic Books.

WhatsApp 2016. B2B Survey – External Customer and Supplier Communications. *Survey of WhatsApp Users*, February 2016.

Dr. Josephat Mutangadura
Language, Media, and Visual Communication
Tshwane University of Technology
Pretoria
josemuta@gmail.com
mutangaduraj@tut.ac.za

Itai Offat Manyanhaire
Geography and Environmental Studies
Faculty of Science
Zimbabwe Open University
offatmanyanhaire@gmail.com
offatmanya@yahoo.com;manyanhaireo@zou.ac.zw

‘Come and receive your miracle today!’ Advertising and ‘Gullibility’ in Selected Pentecostal Churches in Harare, Zimbabwe

Ezra Chitando
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2493-8151

Advice Chimbarange

Newturn Maidza

Abstract

The religious sector in contemporary Harare, Zimbabwe, is characterised by intense competition, rivalry and jostling for a share of the spiritual market. The emergence of ‘mega prophets’ who run ‘mega churches’ has changed the religious sector in Harare in a definite way. Whereas the historic mainline churches (also known as mission churches) did not advertise themselves in the media, the newer Pentecostal churches are quite adept at and aggressive in advertising themselves. This article examines the advertising strategies used by selected Pentecostal churches in Harare, Zimbabwe. It analyses the content of the messages in order to identify how the prophets seek to attract new members. Further, the article explores the role of television stations owned by particular prophets/ministries in the expansion of the same ministries. Overall, the article contends that advertising is central to the phenomenal growth of newer Pentecostal churches in Harare, Zimbabwe. It maintains that understanding the advertising strategies adopted by Pentecostal churches is central to appreciating their growth. This advertising often feeds on the ‘gullibility’ and desperation of clients who face pressing existential issues. The article concludes that the concept of ‘gullibility’ is problematic, as it overlooks or downplays the combined power of advertising and serious challenges that clients who patronise Pentecostal churches face.

Keywords: Advertising, Gullibility, Harare, Pentecostal Churches, Zimbabwe.

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a23

Introduction

The concept of 'gullibility'[1] is as important as it is controversial to the study of religion. In the specific context of the phenomenal rise of Prophetic Pentecostal Churches in most parts of Africa, it requires careful analysis and interpretation. Prophetic Pentecostal Churches have become a significant feature of Christianity in Africa. They are characterised by young, charismatic prophets who are associated with the gifts of healing, prophecy and powers to assist members or clients to access prosperity. Summarizing their presence in Southern Africa, Chammah J. Kaunda writes that the young prophets,

> … 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 … (Kaunda 2016: 67).

In countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, Zimbabwe and others, Prophetic Pentecostalism has become a major player on the spiritual market. It has attracted millions of adherents (that is, individuals who have become members) and clients (that is, individuals who utilise services offered by prophets, but who belong to other religious traditions, or none). Central to the appeal of Prophetic Pentecostal Churches are the promises of prosperity (broadly defined). In this article, we contend that the quest for prosperity in Prophetic Pentecostal Churches increases 'gullibility', as individuals, families and communities seek to improve their situations in life.

The need to address 'gullibility' and its impact on clients of Prophetic Pentecostal Churches extends beyond Zimbabwe. For example, in South Africa, the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission) had 'Hearings on the Commercialisation of Religion and Abuse of People's Belief Systems' (2017). There is a growing concern that some Prophetic Pentecostal Churches are subjecting their clients to different forms of exploit-

[1] We shall use the term 'gullibility' in quotes throughout this article, as we do identify with its connotative meaning.

tation. Chimuka (2018) charges that Southern Africa needs to address 'religious gullibility' as a matter of urgency. On our part, we hesitate to accuse religious people of lacking intellectual rigour or sophistication to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Instead, we contend that the very phenomenon of 'gullibility', or religious people subscribing to beliefs and practices that do not immediately come across as making 'sense' from a (Western) rational perspective, is an expression of lived religion. Therefore, we are convinced that studying the advertising strategies employed by Prophetic Pentecostal Churches and responses by clients present us with an opportunity to study lived religion. Lived religion is different from reified, theoretical religion that is found in books. Instead, lived religion is what flesh and blood human beings do in their quest to make sense of their lives. Thus, this article enables us to appreciate that:

> The study of lived religion focuses most intensely on places where people are wounded or broken, amid disruptions in relationships, because it is in these broken places that religious media become most exigent. It is in such hot cultural moments – at the edges of life, in times of social upheaval, confusion, or transition, when old orders give way and what is ahead remains unclear – that we see what matters most in a religious world (Orsi 2003: 173).

In this article, we problematize and relativize the concept of 'gullibility' by highlighting the effectiveness of the advertising strategies that Prophetic Pentecostal Churches deploy. Instead of regarding adherents and clients of Prophetic Pentecostal Churches as greedy, undiscerning and easy to manipulate, we place emphasis on the sophistication and appeal of the advertising strategies of Prophetic Pentecostal Churches. In the first part of the article, we discuss the concept of 'gullibility' in the context of Prophetic Pentecostal Churches in Harare, Zimbabwe. In the second part of the article, we examine the meaning of advertising and the strategies employed in advertising in general. In the third part of the article, we focus on how selected Prophetic Pentecostal Churches in Harare utilise the different advertising strategies to attract followers and clients. In conclusion, we argue that instead of dwelling on 'gullibility', scholars must invest more in understanding the 'push-and-pull' factors in studying Prophetic Pentecostal Churches in Africa.

Prophetic Pentecostal Churches in Harare, Zimbabwe and 'Gullibility'

After an initial hesitancy or paralysis, scholars of religion in Zimbabwe and from elsewhere have begun reflecting on Pentecostalism in general and Prophetic Pentecostalism in particular. Although a detailed review of the sources, approaches and challenges of historiography lies beyond the scope of this article, we shall draw attention to some of the key developments. First, the initial intervention by Paul Gifford (1988), who proceeded to become one of the leading commentators on African Pentecostalism, tended to focus mainly on ideological issues. Gifford regarded Pentecostalism in Southern Africa as a direct product of the religious right in the United States of America. Secondly, the study on the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) by David Maxwell (2006), offered a detailed and informative account of one of the leading Pentecostal movements. More recently, overviews by Chitando, Gunda and Kügler (2013), Machingura *et al.* (2018) and Togarasei (2018) have brought Prophetic Pentecostal churches into greater focus. Thirdly, the focus on women's experiences in Prophetic Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe is another important development. Reflections by, among others, Mapuranga (2013) and Biri (2013) have helped to underscore the distinctive experiences of women within the movement under study.

While the works summarized above have contributed towards appreciating the significance of Prophetic Pentecostal churches, they have not grappled with the theme of 'gullibility' in a more direct or sustained way. Although they do address it in some ways, for example, by exploring reasons for the popularity of Prophetic Pentecostal churches, they have generally been influenced by a 'religionist' approach to the phenomenon. The 'religionist' approach tends to be gentle, sensitive, considerate and respectful when approaching religion. It is predicated on the integrity of religious people. It assumes that religion is a positive social force and that religious people are mature, serious and reasonable when they make their choices. Further, scholars operating within this paradigm make a claim about the uniqueness of religion (Fitzgerald 2000: 4) and regard the discipline of religion as special and not requiring non-religious factors to explain it (Capps 1995). Consequently, they have tended to minimise discussions on 'gullibility' or advertising.

While some contributors to the Chitando, Gunda and Kügler (2013) volume were willing to go beyond the religionist stance and ask difficult

questions about why some people end up utilizing the services of the prophets, there is need for caution. The tendency to regard individuals, families and communities that utilise the services of prophets (or traditional healers) as naïve, simple, unsophisticated, pre-modern, etc. runs the risk of placing the researcher above study participants. Consequently, we are quite hesitant to embrace the concept 'gullibility', as it suggests that religious people are not as mentally alert as they ought to be. It is quite telling that in one of the most informative reflections on gullibility, Stephen Greenspan (2008: 32) concedes that 'gullibility often occurs in a complex and demanding micro-context, where various cognitive, emotional, and other challenges come together'. That is, we are convinced that instead of regarding those who patronise Prophetic Pentecostal churches as 'gullible/s', we should rather invest more energy into exploring the factors that propel them towards such movements, as well as the forces that attract them. In this article, we have chosen to dwell on the power of advertising demonstrated by Prophetic Pentecostal churches.

One recurrent feature of critiques of 'gullibility' in relation to Prophetic Pentecostal churches is that adherents and clients are attracted by the promise of prosperity and success. In this scheme, adherents and clients are enticed/induced/compelled to part with their resources (for example, time and money) for the sole benefit of the 'big man of God', or the prophet. Thus, some Zimbabwean biblical studies scholars such as Zorodzai Dube (2015) and Nyasha Madzokere (2018), as well as theologians such as Takesure Mahohoma (2017) charge that Prophetic Pentecostal churches generate false hope, capitalize on 'gullibility' and must be understood within the context of hope deferred and a problematic economy. Essentially, they contend that clients of Prophetic Pentecostal churches have suspended the power of reason and have allowed themselves to be vulnerable to the promises made by the modern-day prophets. On the other hand, philosophers such as Tarisayi A. Chimuka and Lesedi Mashumba-Paki (2016) insist that critical thinking skills are vital. According to them,

> The general goal of critical thinking is to free a person from dogma, superstition, and intellectual laziness, and this task demands a stringent, isolated effort of thought (Chimuka & Mashumba-Paki 2016: 124).

A longer narrative is required to probe why scholars of religion, biblical studies

scholars, theologians and others in Zimbabwe have been generally critical towards Prophetic Pentecostal churches. Here, we seek to identify two of the main probable reasons why a negative stance towards Prophetic Pentecostal churches has tended to be dominant in scholarly literature. These factors could also account for why the term 'gullibility' has found traction among Zimbabwean scholars at the same time that Prophetic Pentecostal churches have increased in popularity. First, we surmise that most of the scholars who critique peoples' 'gullibility' in relation to Prophetic Pentecostal churches are predominantly members of the historical mainline Protestant churches and the Catholic Church. Therefore, they hold theological positions that do not put emphasis on miracles, prosperity, 'breakthroughs' and related concepts. We argue that the scholars' own theological positions might be influencing the emphasis on 'gullibility'. Secondly, the scholars' academic and class backgrounds might be responsible for their critique of the rise of Prophetic Pentecostal churches. Although there are, indeed, some scholars on Zimbabwean Pentecostalism who are themselves members of Pentecostal churches, the majority of scholars belong to older Pentecostal churches. They tend to regard the newer churches as being too centred on individuals and catering for a 'troubled and emerging' social class. They share this position with church leaders belonging to mainline churches. For example, the South African Catholic Archbishop and black theologian, Buti Thlagale (n.d.), accounts for the rise of Prophetic Pentecostal churches in Africa by culling the socio-economic and political context in which they have emerged. We cite him at length below, as he provides a detailed sociological (and not religious) explanation. Thus:

> There is a general consensus that the new religious movements place a heavy emphasis on *success*. Success refers to good health, good personal relationships, successful career, overcoming the odds etc. But the emphasis invariably falls on material prosperity such as big houses, luxury cars etc. It is said that God blesses a cheerful giver beyond his or her wildest dreams. But first, a worshipper must give before God can respond generously. The message preached in these churches is positive. They highlight progress, success, breakthroughs, victory, triumph, achievement, open doors, abundant blessings etc. They build confidence and self-pride in people. They create hope. They enhance the values of self-respect and personal dignity. They engender a positive attitude among the congregants. In these church

> es, size counts. Hence the mega-churches. Numbers count. Hence the use of stadiums and cinema halls for worship. High modern buildings and the presence of thousands of worshippers are evidence of success.
>
> People are attracted to the new churches because they respond to the aspirations of people. The poor are anxious to escape their abject poverty. The unemployed search eagerly for employment. Many are looking for new opportunities in life. Africans are a cure-seeking people. These churches promise a break-through in every aspect of life. To the upward socially mobile Africans, sermons of wealth are music to their ears. The African continent in general is in a sorry state. Years of neglect have crippled the infrastructure. Shortages of food are not uncommon. The political elite have stolen the resources of their own countries. Poverty is rife. The new churches offer an escape route; hence their popularity (Tlhagale n.d. Italics original).

The foregoing citation is helpful in terms of highlighting the context in which Prophetic Pentecostal churches have emerged in African contexts. These factors are also applicable to the popularity of these churches in Harare. Appreciating these factors is critical to questioning the applicability of the term 'gullibility' in explaining the popularity of Prophetic Pentecostal churches. However, the challenge with these explanations is that they do not probe the strategies that Prophetic Pentecostal churches employ to attract adherents and clients. Further, they tend to minimise the religious or theological appeal of these churches to adherents and clients. They concentrate on the overall context within which the phenomenon has developed. Thus, there is a need to appreciate how, for example, advertising promotes the growth of Prophetic Pentecostal churches and sustains membership.

At any rate, it is extremely difficult to expose 'gullibility'. Teunisse (2015: 3) makes the telling observation that, 'In defining gullibility, there are two elements to consider: (a) cues indicating an untrustworthy situation; and (b) the ability and willingness to detect those cues'.

In the case of clients of Prophetic Pentecostal churches in Harare (and, we would argue, elsewhere in Africa and globally), it is not possible to meet the requirements of these two elements.

First, the faith setting makes it difficult to detect an untrustworthy situation. Prophets operate within sacred space and time. They present

themselves within a setting that makes it difficult for clients (or anyone else) to be on high alert. Across history, sacred practitioners or holy persons have been treated with respect and trust.

Second, it is difficult to subject the claims made by Prophetic Pentecostal churches to critique, as there are individuals who give testimonies (putatively) confirming the claims made by the prophets. As we shall highlight below in relation to 'gullibility', clients are persuaded to utilise the services of the prophets due to the effectiveness of the advertising strategies adopted by the churches.

The emphasis on 'gullibility' glosses over the capacity of the creativity of the churches to attract clientele. Unfortunately, this tends to understate the various strategies that Prophetic Pentecostal churches have employed in order to attract their millions of followers. Thus,

> Some unscrupulous Pentecostal pastors take advantage of African's predisposition to believe in God's miracles to expand their churches and extort money from their loyal and gullible faithful as they promise them cures to their illnesses as well as economic prosperity (Ndemanu 2018: 83).

Although the author has been careful to qualify his claim by making reference to 'some', it is important to acknowledge that the abuse of religion is not restricted to the new, Prophetic Pentecostal churches, but that it is found in all forms of religious expression.

Advertising in Prophetic Pentecostal Churches: An Overview

Advertising church activities is a relatively new phenomenon in Zimbabwe though it is acknowledged to be an over a century old practice (Okwuchukwu 2018). Church organisations in Zimbabwe are increasingly finding marketing their churches an invaluable tool for disseminating church messages. Over the years, churches in Zimbabwe and elsewhere the world over have become big business despite the traditional tag of being non-profit organisations. In Zimbabwe, churches are now contributing millions of dollars to business through billboard evangelism. It is quite interesting to explore the various reasons that have compelled or are compelling church organisations to adopt, some with reservations, this phenomenon.

Research indicates that advertising or church promotion activities and strategies are becoming part and parcel of church organisations, with some churches employing personnel in public relations departments to promote their images. This growing interest in deliberate promotional activities seems to be a way of adapting to the realities of the environments churches are now operating in. Angheluta, Strambu and Zahara (2009) observe that the environment calls for newer strategies of survival in an environment that has become too competitive and characterised by a waning interest in traditional approaches to the gospel. We argue that, while the traditional churches were, and some still are, premised on the promise of a blissful life in heaven that corresponds with frugal earthly living, modern upcoming churches seem to shift from this ideology, to embrace an earthly life that seems to have abandoned the poor church minister mentality. 'Men of God', the young pastors of today, wear designer suits, drive expensive cars and live in million dollar mansions which previously had been the preserve of those who had made it in the business world. According to Angheluta *et al.* (2009), the world has become more and more secular, making achieving mission objectives difficult. This requires that churches change tact to grow and retain membership, and being business oriented for survival.

Scholars proffer various motivations for more and more churches adopting marketing activities previously considered to be a preserve of profit making organisations. According to existing research, churches adopt advertising to help the church in image building through increasing public perception of the church. The other cited reasons are to attract new members and hence grow the church in terms of numbers, retain current members and reactivate dormant members (Garrison 1996; Joseph & Webb 2000). The other reason which churches seem to down play are the financial benefits that accrue from a larger membership (Iheanacho 2013). This, however, seems to dovetail with the drying sources of funding for churches. For instance, in Zimbabwe, traditional (mainline/mainstream) churches used to receive funding from capitals in the Western world where they originated. It is in that environment of diminishing external funding that churches increasingly have to devise means of attracting people to their churches, including those that were previously frowned upon. Media has become very helpful in that regard; hence the growth of billboard evangelism.

Churches use a variety of media to carry out promotional or advertising activities (Onwukwa 201; Eze 2011 and Okwuchukwu 2018). These range

from unobtrusive to obtrusive platforms, which include the television, the radio, newspapers, billboards, door-to-door campaigns, fliers, direct mail to non-members, events such as crusades and conferences, stickers, fliers, banners and posters (Webb *et al.* 1998). These media channels target the already converted and those that can be converted. In this article, however, we focus on Billboard Evangelism to explore the notion of gullibility and church marketing activities.

Billboard Evangelism refers to the spread or religious messages a billboard medium, a billboard being a large board on which the message is written. Church entities disseminate church related messages through these billboards that are strategically positioned on such public spaces as; sides of roads, at intersections, traffic lights and highways and entrances into towns and cities. It is a form of advertising that has been traditionally used by business. Members of the public read the messages as they go about their daily business. The communicative intent is that the public becomes persuaded to respond positively to the messages. Churches make use of the normal media organisations or own media departments in their churches.

When billboards are used for the spread of the word of God churches adopt advertising strategies that are used to achieve communication purposes that have similar promotional purposes as those deployed to market products and services. This makes the advertising strategies similar, though churches tweak them to suit their specific evangelistic purposes. A number of these strategies are evident in the billboard messages sampled in this article. These include graphics, images, celebrity endorsement and linguistic strategies such as naming, titles, biblical quotations and choice of themes/issues. This article considers the linguistic and rhetorical aspects of ten selected religious advertisements to analyse a sample of the advertisements displayed in Harare between 2011 and 2017. The advertisements carry messages that communicate church events such as conferences, celebrations, and prayer meetings. Below are the messages contained in the selected adverts:

Church	**Advert**	**Event**
1. UFI (United Family International)	*Freedom at last* **Judgement night 2** *Power! Power!* *As God judges poverty* *Lack sickness*	Prayer night

	Disease *Barrenness* *Usaita zvekuudzwa* (Authors: 'Do not be told', literally, 'Come and see for yourself') 28 Aug 2015 National Sports stadium	
2. PHD (Prophetic Healing and Deliverance)	All-night Prayer **Night of turnaround** 2 Chronicles 20 Acts 1:3	Prayer night
3. Heartfelt International Ministries	**Miracle night** 20 December 2011 *7 days revival starting 2–6 January 2012* Apostle T and Pastor C Wutabwashe	Service and Conference
4. Seventh Day Adventist Dr Teddy Wilson and team	**Revelation of hope** A message of peace, health and wellness from the last book of the Bible Your health is your wealth	Conference
5. UFI Emmanuel Makandiwa Victor Kusi Boateng	**Two-week prophetic Conference** *Breaking the cycle of negativities* *Biblical father of our father* *With father Prophet victor Kusi Boateng* Don't miss out!	Crusade
6. UFI Emmanuel Makandiwa Victor Kusi Boateng	**Passover Conference** 14–16 April 2017	Conference
7. Bethel Worship Centre of	**Tiyambuke Conference International Christian Convention** *Legends quotes*	Prayers

Glory Ministries	*Footprints of legends* *Today Jesus is calling millions of people to come unto His and he will give you rest* **Apostle Dr Ezekiel Guti H Guti** *Your story has already been written*	
8. Enlightened Christian Gathering	**Black Billionaire** **Breakfast meeting** *With special guest speaker* *Billion dollar impartation investment* *Business interests mobile network, mines, universities, hotels, agricultural college Mumbai, UK USA attendees government ministers, millionaires, influential people billionaires* *Guest of honour Hon E.D. Mnangagwa vice President of the republic of Zimbabwe* 10 Nov Stewart Rum Meikles Zimbabwe *Reg. Fee 2000 for table of ten* *US 250 for individuals* *Register today space is limited*	Breakfast Prayer Meeting
9. Heartfelt Internal Ministries	**Catch the fire** *Supernatural overflow* Apostle T Wutabwashe Prophet E Makandiwa, Apostle Robert Kayanja Uganda Mon 15–Sun 21 August	Conference

One of the strategies utilised in the adverts above to attract audience attention and participation and attendance is naming of the religious events. The events are named thus so as to catch the attention of the audience. Heartfelt Ministries names its August 15–26 Conference as 'Catch the fire supernatural overflow'

conference. Pastor Chris's Assemblies of God church calls its 15 May Sunday service as a 'Worship and Communion service', while Makandiwa terms his 22–26 May 2017 and the 16–17 April Passover Conference and 21–30 October 'Two weeks of Prophetic Conference'. The Heartfelt International Ministries refers to its 20 December 2017 service as a 'miracle night' and 2–6 January 2012 service as '7 days of revival'. Makandiwa calls his 15 August 2015 service 'Judgement Night'. Prophet Bushiri's Conference on a cruise ship to the Portuguese Islands is a 'Prophetic cruise with Major 1'. The Seventh-day Adventists call their conference 'Revelation of Hope Conference'. The reaction by mainline churches such as the Seventh-day Adventist Church confirms the tension and competition within the religious sector. There is the realisation that it can no longer be, 'business as usual', since the new Pentecostal churches are increasing their market share through aggressive and creative advertising. If the established denominations have been forced to join the competition, is it fair to still talk about the 'gullibility' of individual believers?

Topicalization or branding the various conferences is not incidental, but calculated to entice and thematise the events in a way that promises spiritual change after attending the event. The Heartfelt Ministries International promises miracles to those who will attend its conference. Miracles serve as attractions as they bring the audience closer to the spiritual realm as they are privileged to witness the power of God on display through the pastor or man of God. Such an experience is arguably proof that those who witness have walked in God's presence. Through miracles, the Bible is made alive as there is implicit reference to Jesus' miracles to those who may want to doubt their veracity, such as the infamous biblical Thomas. The promised miracles are therefore persuasive to members and visitors to the conference. Bushiri's cruiseship conference is quite enticing as it demonstrates those who have been blessed to afford it. Associating with the few who can afford to pay for the Cruise Conference puts the individual in a class of his or her own. Here, the advert seems to prey on people's desire to be different and being closer to the Pastor who is evidently rich. Hope in the attendees is ignited the belief that maybe cruise boating with those who have made it, such as Bushiri, will open doors for those whose prayers have not yet been fully answered.

The adverts also use titles to attract audiences to the respective churches' prayer meetings, services and conferences. Bushiri is 'Major 1', Pastor Boateng is referred to, as 'Father and Prophet', and 'Biblical father of our father', Makandiwa, host and Prophet E Makandiwa. A church leader from

Uganda is 'Apostle Kayanja'. These are calculated titles that in adverts are not just titles but are meant to achieve specific communicative purposes. Titles play similar communicative functions as names. Bushiri takes a military rank as his title. This speaks to power as imbued in military titles, subtly emphasising that he is a prayer warrior who commands respect and power in matters related to prayers. Victor Kusi Boateng's title, 'Father to our father' positions him closer to God. He has a rank above that of Emmanuel Makandiwa, who himself is a prophet, indicating that Makandiwa is above the other members of his church, as he can see where ordinary believers cannot see. The communicative intent of the advert is very clear here, that is, to entice through promise of God's presence and the presence of his able disciples at the Conference.

The adverts use metaphor to attract the public to the church events. A metaphor as a cognitive linguistic tool depends on comparison to encourage a language user to see an event or object in terms of another (Charteris-Black 2004). Advert 1 tells that attendees are 'getting freedom at last, power as God judges poverty, lack of sickness, disease and barrenness', 'A message of peace, health and wellness from the last book of the Bible, Your health is your wealth'. Another advert refers to 'Breaking the cycle of negativities'. Metaphors are subtle tools of persuasion in that the audience may not be aware that they are being persuaded to view an object or event from a preferred perspective. Statements such as 'getting freedom at last, power as God judges poverty, lack of sickness, disease and barrenness' force one to think of the conference in terms of the biblical freedom accorded the children of Israel after suffering under the rule of Pharaoh. The claim that the conference is designed to solve a number of problems that trouble people is both literal and metaphorical. God here is metaphorically presented as a judge who has to sift through evidence to arrive at a verdict. It is such persuasive strategies that lead some clients to become 'gullible' as they anticipate their own breakthroughs.

Literally, the messages from the adverts suggest that those physically suffering from sickness or disease or conditions such as barrenness can be healed. At another level, barrenness is used metaphorically to suggest lacking spirituality as poverty, some kind of malaise and a condition that the conference can remove through spiritual empowerment. The reader is persuaded to think the conference as where the power of prayer is utilised to 'free' those who attend. It promises a new beginning that is devoid of suffering. Considering the socio-economic and political environment during which these were displayed, the designers of the billboard may have been promising even

economic freedom. What is ingenious here is that the freedom could be anything; spiritual, economic, social or political. This, therefore, preys on the reader's beliefs; therefore the church cannot be accused of misleading the-would-be attendees as it is possible to argue for the metaphorical meaning. We argue, therefore, that when an issue assumes double meaning and is ambiguous, then it is difficult to prove 'gullibility'.

The messages in the adverts show strategic thematization of issues to focus readers and potential attendees on the benefits that would accrue to them for rhetorical purposes. The messages purport to present the church activities as spiritually designed to address what can be regarded as pressing issues. UFIC promises (Advert 6) that the 2011 Conference would heal poverty, sickness and barrenness. This is a practical and very pertinent issue to a variety of audiences. It was in 2011 and Zimbabweans had just emerged from a rollercoaster economic meltdown characterised by hyper-inflation. At this time, most people were battered financially and were therefore desperate to reclaim their lives. The theme or subject is just what the doctor ordered, how to get out of the abject poverty brought about by the 2007–2008 widespread impoverishment that left the majority of Zimbabweans surviving on less than two dollars per day (Tawodzera 2014). Coupled with that were the perennial problems of unaffordable health services which most people could not afford. The promise of protection against sickness, disease and conditions such as barrenness is attractive, as it persuades people experiencing such problems to seek the help of prophets or men of God who are a welcome alternative to an exorbitant health system. In such contexts, it is unfair to make references to 'gullibility'.

Conclusion

In this article, we have questioned the applicability of the concept of 'gullibility' in reference to the quest for miracles, healing and prosperity in Zimbabwean Pentecostal churches. Due to innovation and competition on the spiritual market, Pentecostal churches have utilised the media in order to attract clients and members. Testimonies by individuals who claim to have benefited from the services of the men of God serve to entice many people to attend their services. Further, we maintained that the advertising strategies adopted by Prophetic Pentecostal churches are quite effective. When it is considered that these strategies are employed in trying socio-economic conditions, it is

possible to understand why individuals would strive to 'receive their miracle' on specific occasions. While the concept of 'gullibility' suggests that individuals who patronise Prophetic Pentecostal churches are motivated by greed and lack of critical analysis, in this article we have highlighted the problematic aspects of the concept, as well as highlighting the effectiveness of the advertising strategies employed by the media and publicity departments of the new churches.

References

Angheluta, A.V., A. Strambu-Dima & B. Zahara 2009. Church Marketing – Concepts & Utility. *Journal for the Study of Religions & Ideologies*. Available at: http://www.marketingpower.com/Layouts/dictionary.aspx?dletter=M (Accessed on 13 October 2018.)

Biri, K. 2013. Jesus' Wives? Pentecostalism and the Discourse of Singlehood in Zimbabwe. *Zambezia* 40,1 & 2: 63–76.

Capps, W.H. 1995. *Religious Studies: The Making of a Discipline*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Charteris-Black, J. 2004. *Corpus Approaches to Critical Metaphor Analysis*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave-MacMillan.

Chimuka, T.A. 2018. The Threat of Gullibility: Faith and Christian Behaviour in Southern Africa. *Oral History Journal of Southern Africa* 5,1: 15 pages. https://doi.org/10.25159/2309-5792/2641 (Accessed on 14 October 2018.)

Chimuka, T.A. & L. Mashumba-Paki 2016. The Indispensability of Critical Thinking Skills (CTS) to Management and Leadership. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 18,1: 117–132. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230000612

Chitando, E., M.R. Gunda & J. Kügler (eds.). 2013. *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe: Festschrift for Aynos Masotcha Moyo*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press. https://d-nb.info/1058949144/34

CRL Rights Commission 2017. *Report of the Hearings on the Commercialisation of Religion and Abuse of People's Belief System*. Johannesburg: CRL Commission.

Dube, Z. 2015. Jesus and Afro-Pentecostal Prophets: Dynamics within the Liminal Space in Galilee and in Zimbabwe. *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 71,1: Art. #2748, 6 pages. Available at:

http://dx.doi.org/ 10.4102/hts.v71i1.2748 (Accessed on 15 October 2018.) https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i1.2748

Eze, P. 2011. Church Marketing & Promotion. A Growing Phenomenon in Nigeria and what Companies can Learn. Available at: http://nairabrains.com/ 2011/09/church-marketing-and-what-companies-can-from-churches/ (Accessed on 13 October 2018.)

Fitzgerald, T. 2000. *The Ideology of Religious Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Garisson, G. 1996. Regular Church Attendance still Declining, Poll Shows. Available at: http://community.seattletimes.neosource.com/archive/?date= 19960831&slug=2346722 (Accessed on 14 October 2018.)

Gifford, P. 1988. *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications.

Greenspan, S. 2008. *Annals of Gullibility: Why We Get Duped and How to Avoid It*. London: Praeger.

Iheanacho, N.N. 2013. A Critical Look at Contemporary Nigeria Christianity. Available at: http://www.academicexcellencesociety.com/criticallook-at-contemporary. nigerian.christianity (Accessed on 13 October 2018.)

Joseph, W.B. & M.S. Webb. 2000. Marketing your Church with Advertising Promotion Strategies that Work. *Journal of Ministry Marketing & Management* 6,1: 19–33. https://doi.org/10.1300/J093v06n01_03

Kaunda, C.J. 2016. Neo-Prophetism, Gender and 'Anointed Condoms': Towards a Missio-Spiritus of Just-Sex in the African Context of HIV and AIDS. *Alternation* 23,2: 64–88. https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2019/sp24.2a10

Machingura, F. *et al*. (eds.). 2018. *Pentecostalism and Human Rights in Contemporary Zimbabwe*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press.

Madzokere, N. 2018. Prophets or Profiteers? An Interrogative Study of Contemporary Pentecostal Prophets in Zimbabwe in the Context of Development. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 20,1: 276–289.

Mahohoma, T.C. 2017. A Theological Evaluation of God Business: A Case Study of the Prophetic Healing and Deliverance Ministries of Zimbabwe. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 73,2: a4529. Available at: https://doi.org/10.4102/ hts.v73i2.4529 (Accessed on 13 October 2018.)

https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i2.4529

Mapuranga, T.P. 2013. Bargaining with Patriarchy: Women Pentecostal Leaders in Zimbabwe. *Fieldwork in Religion* 8,1: 74–91. https://doi.org/10.1558/firn.v8i1.74

Maxwell, D. 2006. *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism and the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement*. Oxford: James Currey.

Ndemanu, M.T. 2018. Traditional African Religions and their Influences on the Worldviews of Bangwa People of Cameroon: Expanding the Cultural Horizons of Study Abroad Students and Professionals. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 30,1: 70–84. https://doi.org/10.36366/frontiers.v30i1.405

Okwuchukwu, M.A. 2018. Advertising Motivations of Advertising in Nigeria. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development* 5,1: 192–199.

Onwuka, P. 2010. Era of Religious Marketing: In *Today's Religions, Image is a Great Asset*. THISDAY Online.com. Available at: http://www.thisdayonline com.html (Accessed on 12 October 2018.)

Orsi, R.A. 2003. Is the Study of Lived Religion Irrelevant to the World We Live in? Special Presidential Plenary Address, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Salt Lake City, 2 November 2002. *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion* 42,2: 169–174. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5906.t01-1-00170

Tawodzera, G. 2014. House Hold Food Security and Survival in Harare 2008 and Beyond. *Urban Forum* 25: 207–216. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12132-014-9221-9

Teunisse, A. 2015. *Gullibility: A Review of the Literature and Devising a Self-Report Measure.* Thesis presented to the Faculty of Human Sciences Department of Psychology, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Research. Macquarie University.

Togarasei, L. (ed.). 2018. *Aspects of Pentecostal Christianity in Zimbabwe*. New York: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78565-3

Tlhagale, B. n.d. New Religious Movements in Africa: A Catholic Perspective. Available at: https://weltkirche.katholisch.de/Portals/0/ Dokumente/DBK_NRB_Tlhagalge_New_Religious_Movements_in_ Africa.pdf (Accessed on 30 September 2018.)

Webb, M.S., W.B. Joseph, K. Schimmel & C. Mwoberg 1998. Church Marketing: Strategies for Retaining and Attracting Members. *Journal of Professional Services Marketing* 17,2: 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1300/J090v17n02_01

Prof. Ezra Chitando
History and Phenomenology of Religion
University of Zimbabwe
Theology Consultant on HIV and AIDS
World Council of Churches
chitsa21@yahoo.com

Advice Chimbarange
University of Zimbabwe
Researcher, Editor, Academic and Professional Communication Consultant
achimbarange@arts.uz.ac.zw
addie.chims@gmail.com

Newturn Maidza
Academic and Professional Communication Skills
University of Zimbabwe
maidzaweshungu@gmail.com

Contributors

Dr. David Bishau is the Director of the Institute of Theology and Religious Studies at Africa University. He is a holder of a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Biblical Studies, Master of Arts in Religious Studies, Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Religious Studies and a Diploma in Religious Studies all from the University of Zimbabwe. He also holds a Diploma in Pastoral Ministries from the United Methodist Zimbabwe East Conference Course of Study. Rev. Dr. David Bishau is an academic and an Ordained Minister in full connection in the United Methodist Church. His specialization is in Biblical Studies including Biblical Languages. However, he has carried out inter-disciplinary research and has published articles in refereed journals and books in Family and Religious Studies and other areas Religion and the natural environment as well as conflict management. tarebishau@gmail.com; https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2245-4911

Tabitha Bishau is a senior lecturer at the Mutare Teachers College and an adjunct lecturer at Africa University teaching Introduction to the Study of Religion and African Traditional Religion. She is a holder of a Master of Arts in Religious Studies, Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Religious Studies and a Diploma in Religious Studies, all with the University of Zimbabwe. She is studying for a doctoral degree with the Zimbabwe Open University. bishaut@gmail.com

Advice Chimbarange is a Lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe, researcher, editor, Academic and Professional Communication Consultant. He holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics (UNISA), Masters in Language for Specific Purposes (UZ) and a BA in English and Communication (ZOU).
achimbarange@arts.uz.ac.zw; and addie.chims@gmail.com

Margret Chinyadza is a Part-time Lecturer at Africa University teaching Church History. She holds a Master of Arts in Religious Studies (Africa University, Zimbabwe), a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) with Education degree (Af-

rica University, Zimbabwe) and a Diploma in Education (Hillside Teacher's College, Zimbabwe). chinyadzam@africau.edu

Ezra Chitando is a Professor in History and Phenomenology of Religion at the University of Zimbabwe, and Theology Consultant on HIV and AIDS for the World Council of Churches. chitsa21@yahoo.com; https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2493-8151

Caroline Dimingu is Lecturer in the Department of Humanities and Social Science at Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University. She holds a Master of Arts in Religious Studies (UZ, 2013), BA Hons in Religious Studies (UZ, 2011) and a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (LSU, 2015). Her *Research Area is Religion, Gender and Sustainable Development*. carolinedimingu@yahoo.com

Wellington Gadzikwa (PhD) is a Senior Lecturer, in Journalism and Media Stu-dies at the University of Zimbabwe, Harare. His research and publication interests are in journalism standards and practices, media framing, tabloids and tabloidization. wmgadzikwa@yahoo.com; and wmgadzikwa@gmail.com

Dr. Joyline Gwara is in the Department of Philosophy, Ethics and Religion, at the University of Zimbabwe, Harare. joyandjay71@gmail.com; https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2245-1171

Elias G. Konyana (PhD) is a Senior Lecturer and Chairperson of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Great Zimbabwe Univer-sity. He teaches Logic, Ethics, Philosophy of Religion and Philosophy of Education at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Dr. Konyana's research interests are in Ethical Philosophy, unpacking ethical issues from law, culture, religion and development. To date, Dr. Konyana has published several book chapters and journal articles as well as presenting papers at regional and international conferences on the link between ethics, culture and the law. He is also a non-executive member of CODESRIA and ACLARS. konyanaeg@gmail.com

Dr. Nhlanhla Landa is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Fort Hare in South Africa. His research interests include multilingualism, language and politics, higher education reform, gender justice, as well as onomastics. He has

published vastly on these and other Sociolinguistic subjects in the past few years. Dr Landa teaches courses in Applied Linguistics within the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. nlanda@ufh.ac.za; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0037-0218

Vincent Mabvurira is an Associate Professor of social work in the School of Psychosocial Health (Lifestyle Diseases Research Entity) at North-West University. He holds a PhD in social work from University of Limpopo and a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Zimbabwe. His research focus is on indigenous knowledge systems, child welfare, climate change and religion spirituality and social work. vinmabvurira@gmail.com; https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0960-230X

Prof. Francis Machingura is an Associate Professor (Biblical Studies) at the University of Zimbabwe, Curriculum and Arts Education Department, Faculty of Education. He is currently the Acting Director of University of Zimbabwe Post-Graduate Centre. He is a specialist in Biblical Studies. His areas of special interest are on the: Interaction of the Bible and Gender, Bible and Politics, Bible and Health, Bible and Inclusivity, Bible and Sexuality, Music and Pentecostal Christianity in Africa. He has published books, several articles and book chapters. fmachingura@yahoo.com; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5161-5369

Newturn Maidza is a lecturer in Academic and Professional Communication Skills at the University of Zimbabwe. He holds a Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in English, a Master of Arts (Applied Linguistics) Degree, a Graduate Certificate in Education (all from the University of Zimbabwe). In addition, he has a Diploma in Marketing from the Southern Africa Institute of Marketing. maidzaweshungu@gmail.com

Prof. Peter Maiko Mageto is the Deputy Vice Chancellor of Africa University. He is a holder of a PhD specializing in Ethics, a Master of Theological Studies (both from Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary in Illinois, USA) and a Bachelor of Divinity degree. Professor Peter Maiko has published three books and has many journal publications in reputable publications in a number of thematic areas including Theology, Education, Peace, and Reconciliation. magetop@africau.edu

Prof. Jabulani Calvin Makhubele holds a Doctoral degree from the North West University and a Master's degree in Social Work (cum laude) from the University of the North. He is currently a researcher, professor in the Department of Social Work at the University of Limpopo. Professor Makhubele has extensive research, and supervision experience as well as significant experience in managing research projects. Prof Makhubele has supervised more than 10 doctoral students and more than 30 master's students and his publiccations span more than 50 in accredited and refereed journals.
Jabulani.Makhubele@ul.ac.za; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0192-573X

Itai Offat Manyanhaire is a holder of a Master of Arts in Environmental Policy and Planning (MEPP) and Bachelor of Science Honours in Geography from the University of Zimbabwe and a Bachelor of Science Education from Instituto Superior Pedagogico Enrique José Varona-Cuba. A Senior Lecturer in Geography and Environmental Studies in the Faculty of Science at the Zimbabwe Open University. He has extensive research and publication experience. offatmanyanhaire@gmail.com or,
offatmanya@yahoo.com;manyanhaireo@zou.ac.zw

Dr Gift Masengwe is a graduate of the University of South Africa in the School of Philosophy, Systematic and Practical Theology. He is a researcher in contemporary studies and a President of the Church of Christ in South Africa. He has published on environmental ethics, religion and politics, human health (HIV and AIDS and disability) and gender in the field of religion and theology. masengweg@gmail.com;
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1222-9067

J.D. McClymont is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Philosophy, Ethics and Religion at the University of Zimbabwe. He has a Doctorate in Theology from UNISA and an MPhil in Classics from the University of Zimbabwe, and has lectured in Classical Philosophy, Classical Mythology, Greek and Latin. He is interested in philosophy and religion and has published an article on the character of Circe in the Odyssey for *Akroterion*, and on Aristotle's views on religion for *Acta Classica*, as well as having published book chapters on tradition and objectivity and also on misconceptions concerning culture in publications issued by the Council of Research in Values and Philosophy.
marmack@africaonline.co.zw

Henerieta Mgovo is a New Testament Studies lecturer in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Great Zimbabwe University. She holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (ZEGU, 2017); Master of Arts in Religious Studies (UZ, 2011); a BA Hons in Religious Studies (UZ, 2008); and a Diploma in Religious Studies (UZ, 2004). Her area of research interest is Religion, Gender and Political Transformation. She is currently studying for a Ph.D. in New Testament Studies with the University of Zimbabwe.
henerietamgovo@yahoo.com

Milcah Mudewairi is a holder of a Diploma in Religious Studies (UZ), BA Hon (UZ), PGDE (ZOU) and MA (UZ). She is currently a Lecturer in Old Testament Studies at the Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University (ZEGU) and PhD student with the University of Pretoria. Area of specialisation: Religion and Environment. samude35@gmail.com; https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4968-0206

Dr. Josephat Mutangadura holds a Bachelor of Arts, honour's degree in Philosophy, Classics and Religious Studies obtained in 1999 from the University of Zimbabwe. In 2002, he graduated with a Master of Arts Degree in Language for Specific Purposes from the same University, majoring in Language, Media, and Advertising. He completed his 1st Doctoral degree in October 2016 with Tshwane University of Technology's Department of Applied Languages. His 2nd PhD was obtained with the University of South Africa in September 2020 in Communication Science. He has published several articles and book chapters in Language, Media, and Visual Communication, which happens to be area of his research interest. His university teaching experience spans over 16 years across 6 universities in Zimbabwe and South Africa. He assisted in the Teaching of Intensive English and English as a Second Language to students of French and Portuguese background at Africa University for more than 8 years. josemuta@gmail.com or,
mutangaduraj@tut.ac.za; https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4197-1041

Tenson Mabhuya Muyambo is a holder of Doctor of Philosophy (Gender and Religion) in the Department of Teacher Development at Great Zimbabwe University in Masvingo, Zimbabwe. He is an alumni of University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. His research and publication interests include Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Religion, Identity, Education and Gender.
tmuyambo@gzu.ac.zw; https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6765-5034

Dr. Canisius Mwandayi is currently a senior lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies, Midlands State University, Zimbabwe. He is also an Academic Associate/ Research Fellow at the Re-search Institute for Theology and Religion (RITR) in the College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa (UNISA). His research interests include: Inculturation, Death and after-life, Cultural Hermeneutics & Old Testament Interpretation. canisiusm@gmail.com or mwandayic@staff.msu.ac.zw

Nomatter Sande holds a PhD in Religion and Social Transformation (UKZN). He is an African Pentecostal Practical Theologian. His research interests include African diaspora, social transformation and engagement, disability and gender issues. He is affiliated to Apostolic Faith Mission International Ministries UK (AFMIM UK). pastornomsande@yahoo.com; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4177-8391

Dr. Tabona Shoko is full-time permanent lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ), Harare since 1st January 1993. He holds a D. Phil (1994), M.A. (1988) and BA Dual Hons. shokotab@yahoo.com; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0093-4570

Fairchild Siyawamwaya, is a holder of an Honours degree in Theology and Religious Studies (Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University) and a Master of Arts in Religious Studies (University of Zimbabwe). His research interest is in the area of Bible and Social justice issues. Currently, he is a lecture at Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University (ZEGU) in the department of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences. His area of Specialization is the Old Testament and Hebrew. fsiyawamwaya@zegu.ac.zw,cell

Beatrice Taringa is a coordinator and lecturer in Research Methods and Indigenous Languages at Belvedere Technical Teachers' College in the Department of Professional Studies. She is a holder of a PhD from the University of Zimbabwe, MEd, BEd and a DipEd Curriculum and Arts Education from the University of Zimbabwe. taringabeatrice@gmail.com

Dr. Sindiso Zhou teaches Applied Linguistics in the Department of English in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Fort Hare in South Africa. She does research in the fields of language contact, language

pedagogy, multilingualism, multilingual writing, translanguaging, higher education, onomastics, and interconnections of discourses of gender and communication in society. szhou@ufh.ac.za; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4267-8456

*Alter*nation
Guidelines for Contributors

Manuscripts must be submitted in English (UK). If quotations from other languages appear in the manuscript, place the original in a footnote and a dynamic-equivalent translation in the body of the text or both in the text.

Contributors must submit one computer-generated copy of the manuscript to the editor(s). The computer-generated copy must be in Word for Windows, and must have an Abstract and Keywords. It must also be submitted in the Alternation style.

Manuscripts should range between 5000-10000 and book reviews between 800-1200 words. However, longer articles may he considered for publication.

Attach a cover page containing the following information: The corresponding author's full name, address, e-mail address, position, department, university/ institution, and telephone/ fax numbers. A brief summary of the biodate of all authors must be attached too.

Maps, diagrams and posters must be presented in print-ready form. Clear black and white or colour digitised photos (postcard size) or diagrams in pdf or jpeg may also be submitted.

Use footnotes sparingly. In order to enhance the value of the interaction between notes and text, we use footnotes and not endnotes.

Authors may use their own numbering systems in the manuscript.

Except for bibliographical references, abbreviations must include full stops. The abbreviations (e.a.) = 'emphasis added'; (e.i.o.) = 'emphasis in original'; (i.a.) or [...] = 'insertion added' may be used.

The full bibliographical details of sources are provided only once at the end of the manuscript under **References**. References in the body of the manuscript should follow the following convention: Mkhize (2017:14) argues .... or, at the end of a reference/quotation: .... (Ngwenya 2017:20f).

The surname and initials of authors as these appears in the source must be used in the **References** section.

Review articles and book reviews must include a title as well as the following information concerning the book reviewed: title, author, place of publication, publisher, date of publication, number of pages and the ISBN number.

In the text as well as the **References**, all book, journal, newspaper and magazine titles must be in italics.

The format for the References section is as follows:

Journal article by one author

Fulela, B. 2008. Checking the Post: Derrida and the Apartheid Debate. *Alternation* 15,2: 11 – 37. Available at: http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/Files/docs/15.2/02%20Fulela.pdf. (Accessed on 08 May 2017.)

Journal article by two authors

Mkhize, N. & N. Ndimande-Hlongwa 2014. African Languages, Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), and the Transformation of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Higher Education. *Alternation* 21,2: 10 – 37. Available at: http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/Files/docs/21.2/02%20Mkh.pdf. (Accessed on 08 May 2017.)

Book by one author

Moran, S. 2009. *Representing Bushmen: South Africa and the Origin of Language.* Rochester: University of Rochester Press. (Rochester Studies in African History and the Diaspora, Book 38.)

Book by one editor

Smit, J.A. (ed.) 1999. *Body, Identity, Sub-cultures and Repression in Texts from Africa.* Durban: CSSALL.

Book by two editors

Dhunpath, R. & R. Vithal (eds.) 2012. *Alternative Access to Higher Education: Underprepared Students or Underprepared Institutions?* Cape Town: Pearson Publishers.

Chapter in an edited book

Smit, J.A. & J. van Wyk 2001. Literary Studies in Post-apartheid South Africa. In Zegeye, A. & R. Kriger (eds.): *Culture in the New South Africa after Apartheid.* Volume 2. Cape Town: Kwela Books & History on Line.

Translated book

Foucault, M. 1977. *Discipline and Punish.* Sheridan, A. (trans.). New York: Pantheon.

Online resource

Jansen, J. & P. Vale (Co-chairs.) 2011. *Consensus Study on the State of the Humanities in South Africa: Status, Prospects and Strategies.* Pretoria: Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf). Available at: https://www.assaf.org.za/files/2011/09/2011-Humanity-final-proof-11-August-2011.pdf. (Accessed on 08 May 2017.)

***Alter*nation Special Edition 35, 2020**
Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN 2519-5476

Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa

ARTICLES

Johannes A. Smit Preface 1
David Bishau and *Nisbert Taisekwa Taringa* Editorial: Religion and Gullibility in Zimbabwe 2

Definitions, Explanations and Contestations of Religion and Gullibility
Tenson Mabhuya Muyambo Material/ Spiritual Seeding? Problematising Religion and Gullibility in Zimbabwe 18
Beatrice Taringa Wailing More than the Bereaved: Afrocentric Reflections on Gender Issues in Shona Traditional Religion and Culture 35
Tabitha Bishau Gender, Religion and/ or Culture and Academic Gullibility in Zimbabwe 49
J.D. McClymont Religion, Science and the Paranormal 69
Margaret Chinyadza Political Theology and Gullibility in Zimbabwe: The Cases of Ralph Dodge (1956 – 1964), and Pius Ncube (1997 - 2007) 85
Francis Machingura and *Nomatter Sande* 'It is the gullible ones that survive': Amrour Bearers and Bodyguards in New Pentecostal Movements in Zimbabwe 103
Gift Masengwe 'Crossing Over' from an Ideal to a Real Church: Journeying from Gullibility to Responsibility 122

Gullibility in African Traditional Religion and Health
Tabona Shoko Religion, Gullibility, Health and Well-being: The Case of Traditional Healers in Harare, Zimbabwe 146
Canisius Mwandayi The Concept of *Shiringoma* among the Manyika People of Mutasa – Navigating the Misty Horizon between Reality and Gullibility 160
Milcah Mudewairi Religion, Gullibility, Health and Well-being: The Paradox of Faith Healing in Zimbabwe with Insights from the Levitical Priestly Code 174
Peter Maiko Mageto Spiritual Gullibility in Search of Health: Tragedies of Scarcity and Sanctity in African Contexts 196
Vincent Mabvurira and *Jabulani Calvin Makhubele* Religious Gullibility, Health and Wellbeing among Epilepsy Patients in Zimbabwe 213

The Bible and Gullibility
Fairchild Siyawamwaya Sickness and Healing in the Old Testament and Pentecostalism: Then and Now 235
Henerieta Mgovo A Socio-political Analysis of Pentecostalism and Political Passivity in Zimbabwe 252
David Bishau The Bible and Gullibility among the Johanne Masowe WeChishanu in Zimbabwe 275

Pentecostalism and Gullibility
Henerieta Mgovo, Elias G. Konyana and *Caroline Dimingu* Religious Gullibility and Female Leadership in Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe: A Feminist Inquiry 302

Media and Gullibility
Nhlanhla Landa and *Sindiso Zhou* Media Engagement with the Abuse and Deception Narrative in the Church in Zimbabwe: A Critical Discourse Analysis 315
Joyline Gwara and *Francis Machingura* 'Accepting the unacceptable': The Clash between Faith and Reason in New Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe 340
Wellington Gadzikwa Selling 'hot air': An Analysis of the Perceived Media Influence on Prosperity Gospel Related Gullibility in Zimbabwe 362
Josephat Mutangadura and *Itai Offat Manyanhaire* The Church and New Media Technology: Communicating and Sharing Faith through the Whatsapp Media Platform 386
Ezra Chitando, Advice Chimbarange and *Newturn Maidza* 'Come and receive your miracle today!' Advertising and 'Gullibility' in Selected Pentecostal Churches in Harare, Zimbabwe 409

Contributors 428

PRINT CONNECTION Tel (031) 202-7766; 202-7766