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Prosperity Gospel, a Pathway out of a Socioeconomic Crisis? The Case of the PHD Ministries of Walter Magaya, Zimbabwe

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Abstract: This study discusses the extent to which the gospel of prosperity can help people out of their socioeconomic misery. Using a case study of the Prophetic Healing and Deliverance (PHD) Ministries of Zimbabwe, it is argued that the gospel of prosperity can yield positive results in so far as it encourages innovation amidst a crisis. However, wealth accumulation appears to benefit the founder more than it does the majority of the crisis-ridden believers. In addition, prosperity gospel provides no clear model for upward social mobility but simply encourages a ‘spirituality of short-cuts,’ whereby people believe that they can get immediate tangible results. Against the tendency of ‘over-spiritualising’ the causes of the crisis by emphasising that behind every problem is a demon, this paper also argues that churches and religious movements have a call to go beyond charity and challenge social structures that perpetuate poverty in the society.

Keywords: socioeconomic crisis, prosperity gospel, Pentecostalism, prophecy, social justice

Background: Zimbabwe's socioeconomic crisis and the prosperity doctrine

A young Zimbabwean woman, Tambudzai Dube (not her real name), approached me as I waited for permission to carry out interviews at the Prophetic, Healing and Deliverance (PHD) Ministries' premises in Waterfalls, Harare. "Do you have any airtime in your phone?" she asked. I gave her the phone and she contacted her husband. "Come now so that we can go inside the Holy Ground," she urged him. The Holy Ground is a fenced yard filled with river sand. The place is believed to have been prayed for by Walter Magaya, leader and founder of the PHD Ministries. It is also believed that people have their prayers answered when they pray at this place. After her call, she turned to me and related her story as she handed back the phone:

My boyfriend and I were based in South Africa. We came back after we both failed to secure employment. We are still jobless and homeless. My aunt in Glenview has accommodated us temporarily. Our dream is that we get jobs, buy a residential stand and live a decent life. I have since got the anointing oil. I applied the oil on my phone so that I may get pleasing responses. Just this morning, I visited an owner of a restaurant opposite the PHD premises and he promised to employ me as a cook. I am so excited about this. My husband should join me for prayer in the Holy Ground so that evil spirits do not spoil this golden opportunity.

After a while the boyfriend arrived. They both walked towards the Holy Ground and disappeared through the many ushers who were carrying bricks for building pavement close to the 'durawall' – a high and thick wall built around the premises of the PHD Ministries. Among these volunteers were poor people who seemed to have travelled from faraway places, in search of deliverance from their many social ills (Field notes, 2 June, 2015).

The case of Tambudzai depicts the main problem addressed by this paper. To what extent can the PHD Ministries address the socioeconomic crisis in the country?

The crisis

The socioeconomic situation that has haunted Zimbabwe for over a decade is well documented. Patrick Bond, for instance, analyses the various competing explanations of the crisis (Bond 2007). The period of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) saw the economy recover but only to slide backwards, following the 2013 parliamentary and Presidential elections which ZANU PF and Robert Mugabe respectively won resoundingly. According to Raftopoulos, this not only marked the end of the Global Political Agreement, but also what he called *the end of an era* (Raftopoulos 2013). With the post-GPA came another crisis, which Eddie Cross summarised as follows:

The Ministry of Finance is grappling with an impossible situation - they simply do not have the money to meet the basic needs of the country. They cannot feed the army or prisoners in jail. They cannot provide drugs and cleaning materials in clinics and hospitals, they cannot fund water treatment chemicals. (Cross 2014)

In the post-GPA era, Zimbabwe has seen an increase of poverty levels. Though figures are unreliable regarding the unemployment rate in Zimbabwe (Chiumia 2014), the poor state of the economy indicates that unemployment levels are very high. The situation was also exacerbated by the closure of industries in the past years. A survey carried out by the Zimbabwe Commission of Trade Union (ZCTU) in 2014 revealed that over 75 companies had closed in 2013, leaving over 9000 people jobless, (Mtomba 2014). Investment is forthcoming neither at national nor international levels. The lack of clarity by government regarding its Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Act has also negatively impacted on investment. With little or no income, meeting basic needs obviously becomes a challenge. About 72.3% of the population was living below the poverty line in 2012 (World Factbook). In May 2015, ZimStat pegged the poverty datum line for an average of five persons at 494.16 USD (ZimStat 2015). Resilience has seen many surviving the hard times through different ways but at times via means that compromised their human dignity. A study by UNICEF reported that some strategies employed by Zimbabweans in order to cope with the crisis included early marriage, prostitution, begging and sale of

productive assets. Unfortunately, most of these strategies are negative as they are likely to continue the cycle of poverty (UNICEF 2014). The harsh economic conditions have led some to migrate from rural areas to cities, leading to the over-population of urban areas. This has precipitated into various social problems ranging from housing, marital problems, drug addiction to prostitution. About three to four million Zimbabweans (a quarter of Zimbabwe's population) are estimated to have migrated to other countries since the decline of the country's economy (UNDP 2010).

The health sector has not been a sacred cow either. The delivery of health care services remains scanty in the country due to lack of adequate medical facilities, shortage of drugs as well as lack of trained medical personnel. Many health professionals have left Zimbabwe in search of greener pastures either in neighbouring countries or overseas. According to the World Health Organisation (2012), HIV and AIDS was the leading cause of death, killing about 37 thousand people in 2012. Other leading death causes included lower respiratory infections (11.5 thousand deaths) and preterm birth complications (6.4 thousand deaths). Government has improved HIV and AIDS treatment programmes and this has helped to reduce prevalence of the diseases. Nonetheless, drugs are not very effective if people taking them do not have any nutritious diet. Cases have been reported of some sufferers selling their medication in order to buy food (Our Africa 2015). Due to poverty, many of the poor cannot afford hospital fees and die as a result of otherwise preventable diseases. Women and children are usually the most vulnerable.

The gospel of prosperity doctrine

This crisis period has also witnessed a proliferation of gospel of prosperity preachers and self-proclaimed prophets claiming to solve most of the above-listed problems. It is such promises that have ignited hope in people such as Tambudzai. Globally, these churches can be classified under a new Pentecostal movement, distinguished from the classical or old Pentecostalism such as the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM). AFM was founded in South Africa in 1908 and then it spread its wings to Southern Rhodesia in 1916. However, classical

Pentecostalism is a global experience whose origins trace back to the Azusa Street Revival that took place in North America in 1906, an event that marked the birth of the Pentecostal movement. The Pentecostal movement quickly spread across the globe, courtesy of various means, which included missionary work, networks, conferences, print and Television (Maxwell 2006). Some have also referred to it as modern Pentecostalism, (Togarasei 2005), contemporary Pentecostalism (Maxwell 1998); others have classified its adherents as the Third Wave of Pentecostals (FINX 2013). This new wave of Pentecostalism is characterised by its appeal to urban middle class, elite and educated (Togarasei 2005). It emphasises what is referred to as ‘power evangelism’, which underlines that the preaching of the gospel must be accompanied with signs and wonders in order for people to respond in faith. Much focus is then placed on miracles, speaking in tongues, healing and prophecy (FINX 2013). It also carries messages of the prosperity gospel.

The Prosperity Gospel can be looked at from both theological and historical perspectives. The prosperity theology maintains that a believer can possess anything they want. Both spiritual and material fortunes are believed to be dependent on one’s faith and on how much one gives spiritually and materially to God and his representatives (Marshall 1992). This perspective implies that one’s economic condition depends on how one relates with both God and his representatives on earth. Thus, if one just believes and gives God and church leaders material gifts such as money, then one shall get anything that one so wishes. Put differently, “you prosper by planting a seed in faith, the return on which will meet all your needs” (Akoko 2002). Anything that is spent in the Lord’s service is believed to have rich returns. This has led to what is understood as ‘the law of increase’, or the ‘law of sowing’ (Gifford 1998). This theological perspective is based on some selected biblical texts, some of which include the following biblical ideas: knock and the door will be opened for you (Matthew 7:7-8); whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive it (Mark 11:23-24); the measure you receive is the measure you get back (Luke 6:38).

Its historical origins can be traced back to the Healing Revivals of the 1950s in the United States of America (Harrel 1975). During their deliverance and healing service sermons in the 1940s and 1950s, Pentecostal evangelists put emphasis on what was later on known as ‘the laws of faith’ or ‘the laws of divine reciprocity’ (Bishau 2013), based on preceding biblical texts. According to Paul Gifford, the prosperity gospel was popularised by evangelists such as Oral Roberts, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland. The establishment of the empires of media evangelists characterised by building of churches and great capacity to fundraise was also a result of this gospel, even though the economic boom in the United States created an enabling environment (Gifford 1998). Due to televangelism, prosperity gospel spread faster and wider than before, as it crossed American borders, landing in places as far as Africa. The gospel also spread widely in Africa as it was not only embraced by Pentecostals but also by the mainline churches (Marshall 1992).

Several studies of prosperity gospel churches and movements in Africa have since been carried out and we shall look at some of these in more detail later on. The Prophetic Healing and Deliverance (PHD) Ministries is one of the latest movements to arrive on the scene in Zimbabwe. Earlier but also recent ones include the United Family International Church in Zimbabwe and the Spirit Embassy, founded by Emmanuel Makandiwa and Uebert Angel respectively. While Walter Magaya, the founder of PHD Ministries does not emphasise the gospel of prosperity, his approach is, nevertheless, rooted in prosperity gospel theology. Despite the fact that some have considered him to be a saviour to deliver Zimbabweans from their hardships, others have accused him of commercialising church items in order to amass wealth.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative methodology whose data collection methods entailed carrying out semi-structured interviews with followers of the PHD Ministries. It also involved visiting the churches of the PHD Ministries and mixing with congregants in order to acquire an in-depth understanding of the experience of the believers. Other sources of data that proved useful included the following: field

notes, the church's international TV channel, DVDs, the official website of the PHD Ministries and unpublished printed documents of Prophet Magaya. Interviews were transcribed and verified through triangulation. The data was then coded and analysed according to emerging themes, drawing out lessons learnt in relation to the extent that the PHD Ministries could be considered as a pathway out of the socioeconomic crisis in the country.

Findings: PHD Ministries as a needs-based ministry

PHD Ministries focuses on meeting 'the point of need' (Prophet Walter Magaya Exclusive Interview, eNCA, e-sat TV 2015). Unemployment, housing problems and diseases are some of the issues that the movement claims to solve. As confirmed by one believer, "everyone who comes here has a particular problem that s/he wants the prophet to address" (Daniel Gumbo, personal interview, June 2, 2015). Evil spirits are believed to be the root cause of many problems people face and that Prophet Magaya can cast them out. Thus, he delivers people from both the spirits of poverty and diseases. In this way, his church is believed to address socioeconomic issues affecting Zimbabwe's crisis-ridden population. Before we discuss these needs in further detail, we shall examine the founding and organisation of this ministry.

Foundation

The Prophetic Healing, Deliverance Ministries (PHD) was founded by Walter Magaya in 2012. It is believed that it was Temitope Balogun Joshua (popularly known as TB Joshua), a self-acclaimed and controversial prophet from Nigeria (Ezugwu 2014), who catapulted him to the level of a 'great' prophet when he anointed him. According to Magaya, what he founded was not yet a church but a ministry whose main focus was on prophecy, healing and deliverance (*NewsDay Zimbabwe*, 4 July, 2015). Born in Mhondoro Ngezi, Walter Magaya grew up in Chitungwiza where he was a member of a Catholic charismatic group. He is married to Tendai Magaya (nee Katsiga) and the couple has two children, Yadah Makanaka and Walter Junior (Zuze 2014). Magaya had visited T. B. Joshua, his mentor, in order to seek advice regarding running his 16 business projects when the latter asked

him to leave everything and assume the role of a prophet. He also regards Zimbabwean self-acclaimed prophets such as Emmanuel Makandiwa and Uebert Angel as his seniors in the field from whom he learnt a lot by attending their services before he started his own ministry (Prophet Walter Magaya Exclusive Interview, eNCA, e-sat TV 2015).

The PHD Ministries started with only 45 members but gradually grew bigger and bigger such that Magaya had to constantly shift in search of bigger venues to accommodate the swelling numbers (Prophet Walter Magaya Exclusive Interview, eNCA, e-sat TV 2015). The first place of worship was Chitungwiza Unit L but the church continued to relocate as the number of congregants kept on increasing until it finally settled along Simon Mazorodze Road opposite Zindoga Shopping Centre in Waterfalls (Munyanyi 2015). The services are attracting an average of 350000 congregants (Kamhungira and Chaya 2014). The PHD Ministries is planning to build a church in Waterfalls, believed to accommodate about 200000 worshippers (Chaya 2014). Congregants come from all walks of life and from various other churches in search of ‘deliverance’ from various social and economic problems. Deliverance entails being freed from any problems that one has (Munyanyi, personal interview, June 1, 2015).

The hierarchy of PHD Ministries is gradually shaping out. Magaya, affectionately addressed by the movement’s followers as ‘the Prophet’ or the ‘man of God,’ is both the founder and leader of the PHD Ministries. He is assisted by pastors, whom he gave power to pray over people. Under these are various ministries commissioned to do different but specific tasks in the church. Some of these ministries include security, medical, cleaning, house décor, international relations, choir, counsellors, sales and ushers (Munyanyi, personal interview, June 1, 2015).

Deliverance from the ‘spirit of poverty’ - Addressing the economic need

Magaya considers poverty to be a spirit that possesses poor people and which needs to be cast out in the name of Jesus. Such spirits are linked to tradition. Generally, people are asked to cut ties with tradition

so that they are freed from such spirits. Some of the spirits are believed to be the cause of failing business, lack of employment, lack of housing and many challenges related to one's economic life. This understanding of the cause of poverty is reflected in Magaya teachings. In one session he prayed:

Poverty spirits come out...in the name of Jesus Christ. I command every poverty spirit to come out right now...I speak the blood of Jesus on that project...finance...area of your finances...bank account...I protect your finances...by the blood of Jesus. Let your car be protected. Let your properties be protected. Let your house be protected. Let whatever is yours be protected. Let your business be protected, money be protected, business be protected...everything that is yours be protected (Pray along with Prophet W. Magaya).

Since the ministry of Magaya pays significant attention to economic hardships, many people flock to the PHD Ministries hoping to find solutions to their social problems. They hope to find jobs, secure stands, boost or protect their businesses. In other words, they are in search of prosperity. Themes of financial security, acquiring and protection of money, properties, cars and businesses often come up in his teachings, preaching, prayers and services. In one of his lessons on faith, Magaya made constant references to money and business and emphasised that if [he] a prophet declared anything, one should believe even if there was no sign.

Whenever I declare you a millionaire, don't look at yourself. Listen to the voice of God. Start to search around for projects worth millions and say I am a millionaire. No matter I am staying in a ghetto, but the word of God is telling me tonight that I am a millionaire...If God says 'yes' no man can say 'no' (Prophet W Magaya Teaching Faith, Corrected).

The PHD Ministries maintains that the 'poverty spirit' takes many forms. During one of his deliverance sessions, Magaya singled out from the congregation a man whom he declared that his economic hardships were being caused by a 'spirit of debts.' He prophesied: You are surprised by yourself. You are surprised by your finances. You are

always borrowing. It's a spirit which wants to take all your properties. It can make you commit suicide...God will deliver you, (Prophet W. Magaya Prophecy Time).

The man then confessed that he owed the bank 20000 USD. According to this testimony, the man, who had travelled all the way from Kwekwe to Harare, was delivered from the 'spirit of debts' – the spirit that caused him to be addicted to borrowing throughout his life. In a separate but related incident, a woman then based in South Africa claimed to have been miraculously delivered from economic hardships after she joined the PHD Ministries in 2014. The testimony has it that an evil spirit which tormented her life and business manifested and was cast out of her in the name of Jesus Christ. The hardships had seen her live in such debt that she could not afford to pay fees for her daughter. All this changed after her deliverance: the daughter was invited to come and write examinations without settling the outstanding school fees balance; unexpectedly, a friend offered her R6000 for rentals; she started a successful business in Zambia where she started flying often and she got married to one of her business associates in Zambia. During a prophesying session, Emmanuel Mlambo, a young man from Chipinge was given hope that he was finally going to have his dream of excelling in a computer business a reality (45 Year-Old Given Katuta).

According to Magaya, people are born to be prosperous but can be held down by what he called a 'limitation spirit'. If this spirit is not destroyed, then one shall never enjoy the God-designed prosperity. In one of his sermon booklets sold at 1USD per copy, he explains:

You can be rich but not for many years. Own a business but not for long. You buy household furniture today but come the next night it is stolen. You can be employed but the spirit limits you on the number of years your job should last...be brilliant in your academics but become dull after a specific period or make no productive use of the education..." (Magaya [n.d.], 2).

Do you think you are limited somehow financially? If so, then you need to break the chains of limitation out of your life. Today is your day because our God is one of no limits, Jehovah Jirreh the Giver, Provider

and Blessor of our lives in the Mighty name of Jesus Christ. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work (Magaya [n.d.]b, 8).

Magaya believes that both individuals and society at large should be pro-active in terms of promoting wealth by venturing into business. According to him, business venture is important because it supplements salaries. During one of his question-and-answer sessions with his congregants he stated that not going into business was tantamount to stupidity. “If you are a member of PHD and you rely on your salary then you are daft,” he said. For him, every individual has the capacity to run a profitable business (Mataire 2015). In his view, there is no salary that will ever be enough for anyone. Instead, if anyone wanted to be rich, they should create their own empires. This route to prosperity also demands one to save money in order to invest, not in cars and luxurious things, but in houses and properties (Magaya [n.d.]a).

In an environment of a macroeconomic crisis characterised by lack of foreign direct investment and other social ills, Magaya believes his business initiatives can provide a solution. In 2015, he announced to the media that he had opened a \$10 billion business company which would carry out various projects, including mining and construction. This company, named Planet Africa, would be funded by his other various investments such as Yadah TV (a Christian television channel founded by W. Magaya in order to televise his expansively growing Prophetic, Healing and Deliverance Ministries) and Tahila Praise in South Africa (<http://www.tadagtv.org/>). In a country starved of foreign direct investment, Magaya promised that his company would be a vehicle through which foreign business could invest in Zimbabwe (Mushava 2015). This announcement ignited hope in some sectors in the society as some group representatives showed up at the PHD Ministries to find out where they could submit their proposals for forging partnership with Planet Africa (Field notes, 2 June, 2015). Planet Africa was also reported to be venturing into housing and has since triggered the launch of a construction of 236 cluster homes project. The project was officially launched by the Local Government, Public Works and National Housing Principal Director Colonel (Retired) Joseph

Mhakayakora. Mhakayakora promised to provide the church-based company with more land at low cost because its project was in line with the Zim-Asset dream of coming up with 300000 houses (Sunday Mail Reporter 2015). Zim-Asset is a Zimbabwean economic agenda earmarked for promoting empowerment of the indigenous people. The acronym stands for Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Social Economic Transformation.

Thus the PHD Ministries promises to pull people out of poverty and to protect people's wealth against evil spiritual forces. It maintains that poverty is a result of the works of evil spirits, namely the 'poverty spirit,' which is viewed to take many forms. The ever-swelling numbers coming to attend PHD Ministries services indicate the extent to which this message has appealed to many Zimbabweans struggling to find answers to their socioeconomic problems. While the poor seek deliverance from poverty, the rich seek to secure their wealth. Amidst hard times characterised by high unemployment levels and inadequate salaries, Magaya encourages his followers to be innovative by starting businesses to make ends meet.

Deliverance from the Spirit of Diseases: Addressing the health need

Many also visit the PHD Ministries in search of spiritual healing, hoping to find solution to various diseases they suffer from. Testimonies point towards healing from a range of physical ailments such as disabilities, HIV and AIDS, cancer, barrenness, and all types of diseases. As in the case of the cause of poverty, the PHD Ministries also portrays the understanding that diseases are caused by demons or evil spirits.

Among people who turned up for spiritual healing at PHD Ministries were people who could afford neither hospital consultation fees nor medical drugs in general and those with incurable diseases. A radio personality of one local radio station was prematurely discharged from hospital because he did not have any money to undergo medical processes. It is claimed that he was miraculously healed when Prophet Magaya prayed for him, (Munyanyi 2015). A snake-bite patient who could not raise money for consultation fees at the Chitungwiza

Government Provincial Hospital was advised by one nurse to visit the PHD Ministries (Maphosa 2015). In an almost similar circumstance, Erina Mutombo from Gokwe North District, then a pregnant woman, visited the PHD Ministries after her baby had bridged. She said that she opted to seek help at the PHD Ministries because she could not afford fees for a possible caesarean operation. However, she discontinued visiting the PHD Ministries after some relatives assured her that they would meet the hospital fees if need arose (Mutombo 2015). Rachel Maredza (2015), a cancer patient and a nurse by profession went to seek assistance from the PHD Ministries but discontinued the visits after it dawned to her that she too could pray for her own healing.

Televised ceremonies of the PHD Ministries reveal several testimonies of people that claimed to have been healed from various diseases and disability after Magaya had prayed for them. Tatenda Mandeya, a 33 year-old lady said she was healed from a chronic coughing disease by merely stepping onto the Holy Ground (Prophet W. Magaya Testimony, n.d.). One woman related that she was healed of continuous bleeding after using anointing oil of the PHD Ministries. Another woman testified that she was healed of HIV and AIDS after using the same oil. She displayed prior healing medical documents which showed that she was HIV positive and post healing medical report which indicated that she had become HIV negative. Masego Ookeditse Mercy from Botswana testified that she was healed from several diseases including migraine headaches, asthma, gout and irregular menstrual cycle. Addressing audience on his Yadah TV, Walter Magaya encouraged viewers to use his anointing oil. He asserted that it was a powerful mantle which could break the yoke of the devil and cure people of any disease, including HIV and AIDS. It is believed to be a multipurpose oil which did not only lead to healing but which was also capable of destroying all forces of evil that blocked one's path to prosperity (Prophet W. Magaya Anointing Oil Testimonies, n.d.). The following biblical texts were cited in support of the use of anointed oil:

“Is there anyone sick among you? 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,” James 5:14.

“Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever,” Psalms 23:5.

Discussion: Is PHD a pathway out of Zimbabwe’s Crisis?

We draw several lessons from studying the PHD Ministries in relation to the socioeconomic crisis in the country.

Nurturing a culture of innovation

In so far as it encourages a spirit of innovation and resilience in the face of economic hardships, the PHD Ministries is a positive response to the socioeconomic crisis in Zimbabwe. In an environment characterised by high unemployment and inadequate salaries, the PHD Ministries has encouraged people to start their own businesses. It has also encouraged entrepreneurship among its followers to the extent that none of its followers are expected to be cry babies that wait for the Government to provide answers. This approach to the crisis makes people optimistic and innovative. Magaya has also led by example with his business oriented initiatives. In fact, it is often agreed that the optimism so characteristic of Pentecostal churches works independently to energise the congregants with positive material consequences (Schlemmer 2008, 17). Besides that, when it comes to accumulation, Pentecostals generally have an advantage over non-Pentecostals. As Akoko (2002) observed, one of the reasons is that by breaking away from tradition and ties with the extended family, Pentecostals also increase their chances of accumulation.

PHD Ministries as gospelneurship

Magaya has afforded to build himself an empire – a clear evidence of material prosperity, even amidst the current socioeconomic crisis. He owns several assets, including the Yadah TV Channel for televangelism, guest houses for congregants, a residential estate and a soccer team, among others (Prophet Walter Magaya Exclusive interview). The guest houses are located in Harare’s low density

residential areas such as Belvedere, Marlborough and Borrowdale. These houses have come to play a significant role not only in terms of facilitating accommodation for congregants who want to see their prophet, but also in terms of fundraising for the PHD Ministries. One has to book oneself in at the guest houses in order to see the prophet in person. Bookings cost 250 USD during the weekdays (Wednesday to Thursday) and 300 USD during weekends (Munyanyi, personal interview, June 2, 2015). Meeting Walter Magaya in person is gradually becoming a challenge as some people cannot afford the required booking fees. At a function for raising funds for the Yadah TV at City Hall in Bulawayo, Magaya's followers who could not afford an entrance fee of 20 USD were disappointed because they were denied entry. Among them was a woman who had difficulties in conceiving and had hoped that the prophet would bring an end to her problem (Bepete and Gagare 2015). The sales of various church products together with 'seeding' money have also contributed towards the building of the empire. The products include clothing with the PHD Ministries branding, printed documents, bangles, stickers and digital video discs (DVDs). Even though the anointing oil, which is packaged in commercial style and has a picture of Magaya labelled on it, is said to be distributed freely, it is only given to those who would have purchased a DVD, which costs 10 USD (Field notes, 3 June 2015). Osgood Tafira critiqued that it was subtle of Magaya to claim that the oil was free when he was actually selling it. "It is like a Kombi [taxi] conductor telling commuters that the ride is free but the tickets each passenger is required to acquire upon entry cost a dollar!" (Tafira 2015).

Despite the flood of testimonies, it is difficult to establish how many people have materially prospered or got healed after joining the PHD Ministries. Instead, there has been much scepticism over "...miraculous healings, gold falling from space, and all sorts of wonders [and] several people have questioned the source of such power" (*The Zimdiaspora*, 29 July 2013). The media has some reports of people complaining that the money they seeded had not yielded anything positive. *The Standard* of 3 May 2015, for instance, had a story of a couple that claimed to have been duped by Magaya. It was alleged that Magaya prophesised

that the couple, Upenyu and Blessing Mushangwa, would own an airline. For this prophecy to be fulfilled, the couple had to ‘seed’ something, of which it did. Under the instruction of Magaya, it bought a Land Rover valued at R890000 and imported it in the name of Magaya’s wife. In addition, the couple claimed to have paid the prophet 15000 USD in order to fulfil the additional prophecy that their future airline would partner with the Emirates Airline. Such allegations portray the picture that the seeded money is benefiting Prophet Magaya more than it does the believers.

PHD Ministries seems to confirm the observation of Paul Gifford that the prosperity theology does not revive the Eighteenth-century Protestant ethic advocated by the Methodist theology (Gifford 2001, 337), but has, instead, led to its decline (Freston 1995, 131-132). While Protestant theology emphasised individual investment through hard work, prosperity theology has no emphasis on investment even though it considers riches to be a right for every Christian. However, these riches are not for investment but for evangelism. Even though faith gospel preachers do not always say it, they are real entrepreneurs, even from the social scientific perspective (Gifford 2001, 337). *Gospelneurship* is a term usually used to refer to such a practice. Walter Magaya had gone to pursue advice on his business projects when T. B. Joshua advised him to start a prophetic ministry. This route seems to have made him a successful entrepreneur, given the empire that he has so far managed to build regardless of the harsh socioeconomic situation in the country. This then begs the question of whether the initiative to found the PHD Ministry was not, in fact, meant to help the founder cope with the socioeconomic crisis in the country.

A spirituality of ‘short-cuts’

The PHD Ministries and the new Pentecostalism in general portray a shift from anti-materialism and the struggle against worldliness to the emphasis on salvation in the here and now (Marshall 2009, 173). On the one hand, this is understandable given the general criticism levelled against the missionaries that they taught Africans to endure hardships in this life in exchange for happiness hereafter. On the other hand, the emphasis placed on achieving almost everything one wants through

miraculous ways is problematic. This goes against the grain of hard work and the development of a transparent and tested mode of wealth accumulation. It encourages what may be described as a spirituality (or a culture) of ‘short-cuts’. A spirituality of ‘short-cuts’ dispenses the society from giving a scientific and systematic account of its value production as wealth is instantaneously created through miracles. It encourages a miraculous way of moving up the social ladder. In the final analysis, the society aspires for a miracle economy whose model would not require any scientific explanation. As Ruth Marshal observed in her study of Nigerian Born-Again Christianity, while it may promote emancipation of individuals from old forms of social control and obligation, this type of Christianity, whereby wealth is instantaneously produced through miracles, “...fails to create the basis for a distinct identity or new modes of sociability in which trust and promises may find their guarantees” (Marshall 2009, 173).

Furthermore, the spirituality of short-cuts resonates with what Casaldaliga, a Brazilian Bishop, called an ‘immediatist disillusion’. This is a result of a culture of pretending to create immediate and tangible outcomes and victories. The ‘immediatist disillusion’ leads to a crisis, not only in Christianity, but also in politics and civilization (Casaldaliga 2003, 132). Zimbabwe might as well, unfortunately, have already reached the phase of Casaldaliga’s ‘immediatist disillusion.’ The excitement of Zimbabwean government officials at the apparent discovery of diesel oozing out from a rock by a traditional healer is one example of ‘immediatist disillusion’ in the political realm. It was only later that the officials realised that the traditional healer had tricked them, (Matshazi 2010). Corruption and other non-transparent ways of wealth accumulation are some of the examples that demonstrate the extent to which the Zimbabwean society has adopted a culture of ‘short-cuts’. It is probably such ‘short-cuts’ that have perpetuated ‘short-circuits’ in the country’s economy. The prosperity gospel, which is also reflected in the PHD Ministries of Magaya, has encouraged this spirituality of ‘short-cuts’ by emphasising instantaneous accumulation of wealth through miracles. This does not seem to be a long-term pathway out of the country’s socioeconomic crisis.

Over-spiritualisation of the crisis

Studies have shown that Pentecostal churches in Africa generally stress the reality of demons or witchcraft and this has made them popular among Africans who have an ‘enchanted’ worldview (Gifford 2001). This African worldview of the supernatural had been both denied and ignored by the mainline churches. While the mainline churches would explain the state of the nation in terms of falling commodity prices, corruption, *et cetera*, the new Pentecostal churches would use the framework of spiritual forces. They are concerned with the source of suffering of Africans and what salvation might mean under such circumstances. Just like the African Traditional Religions, prosperity gospel upholds a personalised as opposed to a cosmic religious worldview. It focuses on material realities such as finding a job, a husband, a child, a car, an education and a visa to the West and how one can succeed in achieving these things through faith and overcoming demonic evil forces. The PHD Ministries also endorses this worldview. This approach has naturally led to the theology of deliverance from demons (Gifford 2001, 329-332). Political structures, which will be part of this personalised worldview, are not considered to be part of the problem but lack of faith or blockages caused by demons. Tambudzai, the jobless and homeless young woman cited in the introductory section, typical of the many people that seek deliverance from Prophet Magaya, subscribes to this same worldview.

The emphasis by the PHD Ministries that almost every problem that one has is a result of some evil spirit or demon leads to what may be regarded as the ‘over-spiritualisation’ of the cause of the Zimbabwean crisis. This is the tendency of shifting the cause of the crisis from human beings to spirits. If one has a habit of accumulation of debts, blame is not placed on the person in question but on some evil spirit. Such diagnosis of social problems has several unfortunate implications because behind the crisis that Zimbabwe is experiencing are also people and systems responsible for it. The tendency to blame it all on the demons tends to shift the blame away from people and unjust social structures. Attention is diverted from irresponsible family members as family problems are blamed on the spirits. Irresponsible government

systems and unjust international policies can go unchecked as all blame is placed on demons.

Critiquing unjust social systems in order to transform them is part and parcel of the prophetic call which all churches and Christian religious movements cannot afford to ignore. It is usually these unjust systems that lead to societal crises and any prophetic church or ministry (in the case of PHD) cannot afford to 'hear no evil' and 'see no evil'. Mainline churches may have erred by denying and ignoring the personalised African religious worldview but their slant on presenting a cosmic Christianity also needs appreciation. This slant encourages churches to participate in the transformation of both the individual and society. The approach demands churches to be prophetic by way of standing for the poor and disadvantaged in the society even to the extent of denouncing unjust structures. The Old Testament portrays prophets as God's messengers who defend the poor and denounce exploitation and oppression especially in circumstances whereby the monarchy favoured the rich while it bred poverty, oppression and exploitation of the poor. Ironically, the monarchy was supposed to be an institution that protected the poor and let justice flow like water (Amos 2: 6-7; 5:10-12; 8:4-6; Isaiah 3:13-24; Jeremiah 6:26-29 and Micah 2:1-2). Prophets challenged political leadership that ignored the plight of the poor. In the New Testament, Paul encouraged people to respect authorities (Romans 13:1-7). However, he also reminded State authorities that they were there to serve God for the benefit of the people they ruled (Romans 13:4). When Herod Antipas (a ruler of the Jews during Jesus' time) failed to meet this condition (of using power for the benefit of the people), Jesus openly condemned him as he called him 'that fox', meaning a crafty deceiver (Luke 13:31-33). Thus, transforming society also means reminding the authorities of their duty to attend to the needs of the people they rule. This would be one of the critical ways of leading the Zimbabwean society out of its socioeconomic crisis.

This challenge to work for the social transformation of the society on the part of the church has often been associated with social justice. The Catholic Church, for instance, has a body of teaching called the social teaching of the church, which is based on scriptures and the

church's philosophical and theological tradition. In such documents, it claims its right and duty to defend the poor in the moment of their suffering (John Paul II 1991, paragraph 5), and that keeping silent would be tantamount to neglecting its duty (John Paul II 1991, paragraph 53). John Paul II (1991, paragraph 54) also asserts that the social teaching of the church, a new tool for evangelization suitable for the modern world, concerns itself with "...the human rights of the individual, and in particular of the 'working class', the family and education, the duties of the State, the ordering of the national and international society, economic life, culture, war and peace, and respect for life from the moment of conception until death." Likewise, the World Council of Churches (1948) believes that churches have a public role to promote social justice in the society. It encourages churches to be the voice of the voiceless and "...to speak boldly in Christ's name both to those in power and to the people, to oppose terror, cruelty and race discrimination, to stand by the outcast, the prisoner and the refugee." By preaching the social gospel, churches believe that they are fulfilling their prophetic role of defending the poor and ensuring that there is no individual, people or systems that stand in the way of the human dignity of any member of the society, and especially a society going through a crisis such as that of Zimbabwe.

Related works

Several studies have shown that new Pentecostalism is on the increase in Africa and that it also has to do with the context of the continent. According to Togarasei, widespread poverty in Africa is the main reason why charismatic Pentecostalism is the fastest growing kind of Christianity in the African continent. He argued that this version of Christianity could go a long way in making a positive contribution in fighting poverty in the continent (Togarasei 2011). An earlier study of prosperity gospel of Pentecostal churches in Cameroon by Akoko (2007) suggested that the mushrooming of prosperity Pentecostal churches in Cameroon was a survival strategy amidst an economic crisis in the country. In his investigation of the pros and cons of the gospel of prosperity in Zimbabwe, Bishau (2013) argued that proponents of the prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe had become crowd-pullers even though it was still too early to tell for how long this might

go on. By making a close analysis of selected gospel music, Ezra Chitando (2013) lays open the conflicting views regarding the Zimbabwean prophets and their gospel of prosperity in Zimbabwe's context of harsh socioeconomic and political conditions. Based on his study of the religious right in Southern Africa, Paul Gifford (1991) expressed discomfort with the gospel of prosperity that emphasised individual healing to the extent of diverting attention away from the socio-structural causes of the problems in the region. Using the United Family International Church founded by Emmanuel Makandiwa as case study, Mapuranga, Chitando, and Gunda (2013) asserted the importance of employing a multi-disciplinary approach in order to properly understand the various aspects of these new religious movements.

In his ethnographic study of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God, Africa (ZAOGA), David Maxwell concluded that the prosperity gospel put forward by this church addressed the local situation with the hope of promoting rapid social change among its believers. It also provided "...a pattern for coming to terms with, and benefitting from, modernities' dominant values and institutions" (Maxwell 1998, 352). In his later work of 2006, David Maxwell confirmed the features of the ZAOGA prosperity gospel as he underlined how it equipped individuals with confidence that would help them find a way to overcome challenges posed by neo-liberalism. He identified ZAOGA practices and teachings that were an adaption of the prosperity gospel, and especially one propelled by Myles Munroe, a graduate of Oral Roberts University. The slant of Munroe's prosperity gospel was that God gave man power to realise his dreams. He also had strong emphasis on black pride and self-actualisation, which ZAOGA gladly adapted. In indigenising this version of American prosperity gospel, it introduced themes such as 'Talents', 'the Spirit of Poverty', and 'deliverance'. 'Talents' is a teaching which encourages 'penny capitalism' in order to 'prosper' the church. In 'deliverance' ZAOGA teaches that blessings come through giving. The notion of 'the Spirit of Poverty' was derived from the conviction that believers remained poor because of their spiritual condition. 'The spirit of poverty' was understood to be conquered through parting ways with the African traditional practices such as veneration of ancestors and spirit possession (Maxwell 2006,

204). Maxwell's study of ZAOGA serves as a good background to understanding most of the concepts used by the PHD Ministries, and especially regarding evil spirits.

Conclusion

This study has conceded that the emergency of many Christian religious movements preaching the gospel of prosperity has coincided with an era of serious economic hardships in the country. A case of the PHD Ministries showed that the new Pentecostal church promises to give answer to the many social problems that Zimbabweans are facing due to the socioeconomic crisis. Thousands of people flock to the PHD Ministries in order to be delivered from poverty and various diseases. As in many prosperity gospel versions in Africa, the PHD Ministries maintains that evil spirits block people from achieving their destiny of prosperity. The main question was whether the PHD Ministries can provide a way out of this crisis. It is argued that the PHD Ministries is a positive response to the crisis in so far as it encourages people to be innovative amidst harsh social and economic conditions. However, the fact that the founder of this religious movement has managed to build an empire even under the difficult economic conditions suggests that prosperity gospel is also a strategy to cope with the economic crisis, which works in favour of the founder. In addition, it has been observed that the gospel of prosperity tends to emphasise short-cuts to wealth without indicating a clear model of the intended social transformation. Lastly, it is also argued that the emphasis on evil spirits as the cause of all problems tends to exclude human responsibility over the current crisis. In line with this, scriptures and tradition suggest that churches have a prophetic role to contribute towards social transformation by going beyond charity as they challenge social structures that perpetuate poverty in the society.

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