

‘Battling for Souls: Contesting for Space’? African Traditional Religions and Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe

Tapiwa Praise Mapuranga

Abstract

There is no doubt of the existence of religious competition and conversion in Africa. Pentecostalism has become one of the fastest growing forms of Christianity that has created a major competition for African traditional religions. This study concurs with the idea that diversity and competition are often vehicles, if not drivers, of creative change, and such innovation creates more competition. It is the thrust of this study to analyse how contemporary Pentecostalism in Harare has been forced to create innovations from African Traditional Religion as experienced through ‘rituals, symbols and practices that are usually forms of communication with the divine as well as through more contemplative practices that enhance one’s awareness of the presence of God’ (Mwaura 2008:2).

KEY WORDS: Innovation, Competition, African Traditional Religion, Pentecostalism, Continuity and Change

Introduction

Religious competition exists amongst various religious traditions that exist in the Zimbabwean religious market. This article explores the competition that exists between Pentecostalism and African Traditional Religions (ATRs). It is the aim of this study to analyse how contemporary Pentecostalism in Harare has been forced to compete against ATRs. The study examines how Pentecostalism has created innovations drawn from ATRs so as to maintain the relevance of spirituality in a world characterized by religious competition. As players in the same religious market, Pentecostalism and ATRs are likely to be involved in a competitive quest to attract clients. As Michael Bourdillon (1990) avers, this can create tension between the religions. However, this study approaches the theme from a more positive perspective; we seek to explore the extent to which practitioners of ATRs and Pentecostalism have been forced to be innovative and creative as they seek to create boundaries and present themselves as offering a more competitive product.

Rationale of This Study

The significance of this study lies in its quest to unveil the significance of the African belief system in the African, even in the context of conversion to other religions. Scholars such as J.S Mbiti (1969, 1975), J.A Awolalu (1976), amongst others, generally concur that ATRs are indigenous beliefs and practices that have been passed on from one generation to the other. This is generally a lived way of life that is complex and multifaceted. This study seeks to analyse how far this indigenous beliefs and practices have been passed on over generations, no matter the arrival of newer traditions such as Pentecostalism.

As shall be expanded in this article, ATRs have faced a lot of competition from other religious traditions on the religious market. There have been ways (through innovation) in which this traditional religion has adapted to some competition to remain relevant. One of the forms of religions that have been in competition with ATR is Pentecostalism. In this study, I argue that ATR has continued to survive within Pentecostalism. This implies that, though a competitor, Pentecostalism has embraced ATR, by innovating ideas borrowed from ATR. Thus, some scholars have stated that, 'through modern changes, the traditional religion cannot remain intact but it is by no means extinct (Awolalu 1976:1).

Scholars are increasingly recognising the emergence of these newer Pentecostal and charismatic churches in the African ecclesial experience (e.g., Bateye 2008:116, Ukah 2007). Pentecostalism represents the fastest growing brand of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa (Kalu 2008). Of the three types of Pentecostalism identified by Ukah (2007: 11), this article focuses on the newer Pentecostal churches. In Zimbabwe, these newer Pentecostal churches have mushroomed after the year 2000. Some of the more prominent include The Prophetic Healing and Deliverance Ministries, (PHD), United Family International Church (UFIC), Spirit Embassy, and the Divine Yard Church of His Presence (DCOHP). They sprang up alongside a few older Pentecostal bodies, such as Family of God Church (FOG), and Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Church (ZAOGA), that were in existence earlier.

This study argues that Pentecostalism is surviving in an era where there were already existent forms of worship. To survive, Pentecostalism must compete with and (if possible), outdo the existing traditional practices (amongst other religions). Consequently, Pentecostalism has to invent new ideas from African religions that appeal to the believers of ATR so as to be relevant within the same setup which has always appealed to African believers. Thus, the two religions have to face intense competition and be innovative enough to thrive in the religious market.

Methodology

This study employs qualitative methodology, using an ethnographic case study approach. The study lies in the sociological assumption that when two or more religious systems share the same space, they are likely to compete for followers. Close examination of these spaces was best suited to the methodology selected. The research site, Harare, was selected and isolated carefully. It constitutes the hub of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe, with its cosmopolitan outlook. It thus hosts the Head Offices of numerous Pentecostal ministries, as well as various practitioners of African traditional religion.

Fieldwork was conducted over eight months. This included interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation. A total of twenty interviews were held with

various categories of research participants who include religious leaders and members of the congregation (men and women) from each of the participating religious organisations.

Apart from interviews, Pentecostal and interdenominational conventions were attended (such events are always under way in Harare). This enabled participant observation to be a critical tool of the research methodology. Furthermore, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews availed qualitative data that clarified the phenomenon under investigation. Participant observation was also done by attending and witnessing selected traditional ceremonies. Processing and analysis of data included translation of some material from Shona and Ndebele and synthesizing data according to themes.

Brief Overview of Literature

Several scholars have examined the relationship between Christianity in general and ATRs. Examples include Mosala (1983), who examines the relationship between African traditional religious beliefs and Christianity. This same relationship has been noted by Maxwell (2002), who argues that in some way Christians tend to borrow from traditional religion and culture. More related to this study is the argument by Biri (2012) that ATR remains a ‘silent, but echoing voice’ in Pentecostalism. She argues that ‘Pentecostalism does not offer anything completely new but that what it offers either resonates well with, or is sourced from the historical religious and cultural background of believers’ (2012: 37). It is from such arguments that the following chapters seek to examine the validity and applicability of this argument.

This study particularly interrogates the popular notion that conversion to Pentecostalism represents a clean break with the past (Meyer 1998; Togarasei 2006). It seeks to understand how values, beliefs and practices from ATRs might be continuing in Pentecostal churches in Harare, despite the rhetoric and official dismissal of them. Preliminary studies by Biri (2012), albeit in a rural setting, appear to indicate that Pentecostal churches have carried over key aspects of the traditional worldview. This study confirms Ogbu Kalu’s contention that ‘the African map of the universe’ is at the heart of African Pentecostalism (2008: ch. 9).

Innovation and Competition: Unpacking the Concepts

Religious innovation may be defined as a departure from orthodox, and can be deemed as a threat to the original praxis. (Iyer et al 2011). For Iyer,

...‘innovation’ in the religion sector ... [is] any alteration to beliefs and/or to religious practice either by individuals or by the religious clergy that has an impact on then subsequent actual observance of the religion. Consequently, taking a cue from the literature from the economics of innovation, we can think of ‘innovation’ in the religion sector if there are alterations to religious practice, which makes previous practice less likely to be adopted (2011: 5-6).

Expanding out from this definition, this article therefore analyses the ways in which Pentecostalism has altered the beliefs in ATR, illustrating how these traditional religions have managed to survive the threat and competition posed by these newer religions. But just what is this religious competition?

One of the varied definitions of religious competition has been given by Lu, Johnson and Stark (2008:140: ‘Competition lies at the heart of the religious economy model. The model assumes that there is a religious market in which religious firms compete with each other to attract or maintain adherents by means of providing religious products and services’.

In simpler terms therefore, religious competition may be defined as the art of trying to get to the hearts and minds of the believers in the religious marketplace of any given society. From these definitions, this article argues that religious innovation and competition can be manifested in various dimensions which include rituals, doctrinal, spiritual, experiential, and moral amongst many others. For this article, there is an implication that although African traditional religion seems to be under threat from modern day Pentecostalism in Harare today, its tremors are still being experienced within Pentecostalism. On the one hand, one can argue that ATR has been innovative enough such that it remains existent amidst religious competition. On the other hand, it could be argued that Pentecostalism has developed a strategy to adopt new ideas that are acceptable in the religious market by transforming what had always existed within ATRs.

The next section examines results from the study which show some of the aspects from both African Traditional religion and Pentecostalism that illustrate the vibrancy of this innovation and competition between the selected religions.

Findings

Fieldwork from a number of Pentecostal ministries that include PHD ministries, UFIC and DCOHP amongst others has illustrated a lot of mutual borrowing, competition and innovation with ATRs. This pattern seems inevitable as these religions seek the same attention within same spaces. Some of the findings are identified below.

The belief in Spirits and Exorcism

The belief in spirits is one of the major aspects of African traditional religions. Spirits are critical in the religious life of any human being in African traditional religion. These spirits can be labelled as either good or bad depending on their role and effect in the life of the believer. As such, good spirits (such as those which might invoke a talent to heal, sing, or hunt, amongst other roles) can be invoked and celebrated in the life of the believer, whilst bad spirits (which can cause all sorts of immorality, for example, to steal, kill and be promiscuous), are usually exorcised out of the believer. A study around the city of Harare has shown that Pentecostals in Harare strongly believe in spirits. Likewise, they can either be good or bad. For example, the power of the Holy Spirit is critical to Pentecostalism. There are evil spirits as well that affect a person negatively, resulting in undesired conditions such as failing to get married, poverty, death, amongst others.

However, there seems to be a major difference in that what African traditional religion calls ‘good spirits’ (*mashave*) which have all been labelled under ‘heathen’ spirits which need to be cleansed out in Pentecostal Christianity. According to Pastor Todd (interview), ‘these spirits are why many believers in our churches flock here for deliverance’. What is critical in both these religions is the pivotal role that the belief in spirits plays. However, having realised that the arrival of Christianity denounced this aspect in African traditional religion, Pentecostalism thus sought a way to incorporate it to suit Christianity. There was thus

some innovation on the part of Pentecostalism, as it borrowed from African Traditional Religion.

Exorcism and Deliverance

Another area of innovation and competition between ATR and Pentecostalism is in exorcism and deliverance. What has been identified as deliverance in Pentecostalism is more or less similar to the practice of exorcism in ATRs. Thus, the concept of exorcism in African traditional religion has been adopted and adapted to suit Pentecostal Christianity in Harare. According to Kehinde (2016: 2):

The background to deliverance ministry in African Christianity could be associated or traced to the understanding of beliefs of the African people that an individual or community could be bewitched or attacked spiritually with the unseen forces. They believed that there are spiritual forces that could act against one’s progress in life. When anxieties and stresses arise in social and domestic life, when things do not go according to plan, when there is barrenness or sterility, depression or failure in business, in academic or other pursuits.

Through participant observation, we noted that there is a similar aspect of the belief in spirits and the way they are exorcised. A striking similarity was the way in which the believer who is being exorcised of the spirit rolls and screams. A Pentecostal identified as Mai Sithole (interview) clearly pointed out, ‘I am happier when demons are commanded out of us and they scream out and roll away, just as our forefathers did with their religion, though the way they did it was heathen’. Deliverance is as crucial to Pentecostalism as it was to ATR. Some Pentecostals have even embraced it into their identities, for e.g., the Prophetic, Healing and Deliverance ministries. This illustrates the extent to which deliverance is one of the crucial aspects of these ministries. Consequently, due to the observation that African traditional religious ways of exorcisms were no longer commonly accepted in the spiritual and religious market, Pentecostalism sought new ways of dealing with such spirits by introducing the aspect of ‘deliverance’.

The Belief in the Spiritual Person

Not only does Pentecostalism show some innovation on the spiritual belief and exorcism, but also the role of a spiritual person. This is the one who usually is the medium between the deity and the believers. This practitioner in Shona Traditional Religion is called a *n’anga* (Chavunduka 1978, Gelfand 1985, and Shoko 2011). This study revealed that the role of a *n’anga* in African traditional religion is like that of a prophet in Pentecostalism. There emerged a notion of innovation in the context of religious competition. Due to the central role that the Christian religion seemed to be overtaking the space of African traditional religions, there had to be some innovation on the roles such as those of the *n’anga*, so that he/she can be transformed to be called a prophet in Pentecostalism (Chiwara and Shoko in Chitando et. al. 2013). As such, the title ‘prophet’ is more of just an innovation from the role of a traditional healer/*n’anga*. It is from this aspect that one can identify the traditional healer with the likes of Pentecostal prophets in Harare such as Emmanuel Makandiwa of United Family International Church (UFIC), Walter Magaya of Prophetic Healing and Deliverance Ministries (PHD), Tavonga Wutabwashe of Heartfelt International Ministries (HIM), amongst a whole lot of others.

One could wonder how the prophet becomes different from the *n’anga*. Are these people not performing the same roles, albeit in different identities? Innovation on the part of Pentecostalism illustrates that the identity of the young Pentecostal prophet becomes a more acceptable and appealing title than that of the *n’anga*. An interviewee (James), explained that there are various reasons why, at the end of the day, he feels more comfortable to be identified with the prophet rather than the *n’anga*. These include:

- a. Their immaculate dressing as opposed to the dirty, smelly traditional animal skins.
- b. The English language that is easier to understand as opposed to some unidentified language that needs the interpretation of an aid.
- c. The use of modern technology such as televisions, public address systems as opposed to some tools used by *n’angas* such as horns.
- d. The level of prosperity spoken about is relevant to contemporary society. Prophets speak of money, cars, houses, unlike the traditional healer that talks of prosperity in hunting, farming and other such traditional tasks.
- e. The types of spiritual battles being fought are also quite relevant to the young believer, unlike *n’angas* who usually focus on battles emanating from long departed ancestors who the believer knows nothing about.

Spiritual Mentorship

Emerging from the identity of the prophet is an interesting aspect in Pentecostalism regarding how one is groomed to be a prophet. There seems to be a growing aspect of spiritual parenting that is emerging in Pentecostalism. A survey in most Pentecostal churches has revealed that most of the prominent prophets have their ‘spiritual fathers’ who in the real sense are their mentors. It is from these spiritual fathers that these ‘men of God’ got their impartation from; they get their powers through their fathers. This is similar to what happens in ATR where one does not just become a traditional healer; but must undergo some coaching, training or some transitional stage where one is mentored.

The research from this study has linked most of the prophets in Pentecostalism to some spiritual mentees. Examples include T.B Joshua of Nigeria as a ‘father’ to Walter Magaya (PHD) and Sham Hungwe (House of Grace International Church), and Victor Boateng as a ‘father’ to Emmanuel Makandiwa (UFIC), Uebert Angel as a ‘father’ to Paul Sanyangore (Victory World International Ministries Church), amongst others. In some cases, such as two of those mentioned, these fathers stay in countries different from those of their sons. Therefore, their sons must travel long distances for mentorship. This study has seen this aspect as a form of innovation due to competition between ATRs and Pentecostalism. Whereas, in African religions, a practitioner goes to some distant place to get powers in what is known as *kuromba* or *kuenda kumaroro* (spiritual enhancement). Christianity regards this practice in a negative way. However, because it is a practice that has been deemed a necessity by these African Christians, they have innovated new ways of seeking power and guidance through the notion of having spiritual fathers.

It is interesting to note that these mentors are always spiritual ‘fathers’ and never ‘mothers’. This illustrates the extent to which masculinities are at play in religion. In Zimbabwe, patriarchy endorses heroic masculinities to the extent that one would not choose to be mentored by a woman but a man. This study concurs with Chitando, Manyonganise and Mlambo (2012: 167) in their analysis of the role of fatherhood in Pentecostalism. They argue thus: ‘It is our submission that most men in Zimbabwe would find it extremely difficult to say they are children of a particular woman prophet/ess. Socialisation allows them to submit to other men on the basis that these men are endowed

with spiritual power.’ Apart from the discussed points of innovation and competition, this article turns on to another way in which Pentecostalism has shown some innovation based on ATRs – through adopting and adapting the names of God.

Names of God

Names continue to play a significant role in the African setting. Amongst a variety of studies done on naming, A.J.C Pongweni (1983) provides a classic analysis of the significance of naming among the Shona of Zimbabwe. This is reiterated by Chitando (1998:109) who argues that ‘names encapsulated the people’s socio-religious concerns and were meaningful in their given context’. Names of God illustrate the importance of the Supreme Being in African Religions. According to van der Merwe, the concept of a Supreme Being had always been present in African Religion (1957: 2). This is illustrated on the various names of God which are loaded with deep meaning. These include such names as Nyadenga, Wokumusoro, Runji, Musikavanhu, Chirazvamauya, Chirazamauya, amongst a lot more others (1957: 6-12). According to Mapuranga (2013:173) the significance of names did not end with the arrival of new religions such as Christianity. Though some of these names can be acceptable in Pentecostal Christianity today, the concept of using such names has been largely innovated to meet the religious marketplace of the Christians. Pentecostals have coined new names for God such as the following:

- Jehovah Chikopokopo (Eubert Angel’s Spiritual Embassy Church). This name likens God to a military helicopter which does not need a specially designated space to land, such as an airplane needs. According to a follower of Angel’s church, ‘God can thus land in your life anytime for whatever challenges you may have, and He is able to solve them’.
- Jehovah Jaw Breaker (JJB) (Paul Sanyangore’s World Victory International). Paul Sanyangore in one of his sermons (May 2016: Harare), explained that this name means that people’s jaws will be broken as they open their mouths with great awe and astonishment to the miracles God does. (*Mwari vanoita minana inotyora majans vanhu vachishama miromo*). This followed a testimony by Sanyangore’s sister who had a letter from the doctor indicating that her ailing heart condition had been reversed.
- In one of his sermons, Walter Magaya of PHD Ministries referred God as the following: *Nyamatsatse nyeredzi inoyedzema* (Nyamatsatse, the star that shines all night). *Chamangurangura, Bbobhojani, Spanera, simbi inodya dzimwe simbi* (An iron that sharpens another iron).

These praise names for God basically refer to the amazing power of God, who, like, a star which shines all night long, is always watchful over His believers (Interview: 2016).

This study has noted that names of God did not end with African Religions. Due to the significant role that names have in African Religion, Pentecostal Christianity realised that it had to innovate new names that are in sync with Christianity in order to compete for religious space with African Religion. This study thus concurs with Mashiri (1999: 93) who argues that naming and addressing practices are dynamic and they reflect linguistic, political and cultural changes. These changes and continuities in the way human relationships and identities are perceived and the factors that determine them. The flourishing of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe has this seen many dynamic names of God that are meant to appeal to the power and authority of the Supreme Being.

Anointing Objects

Sacred objects are a crucial aspect of religious practice. There are quite a number of objects that have been sanctified in both African traditional religions and Christianity, particularly in Pentecostalism. These include oils, water, stones, cloths, bangles and bracelets, amongst a variety of others. According to Eliade (1957:32), such features are not merely themselves but represent some religious implications or significance. For the believers, these objects often act as the doorway or bridge between the sacred and the profane (Eliade 1957:15), that is, the believer and God. This section briefly examines selected objects that have encountered innovation amidst the competition existing between the two religions under study.

a. Oil

Oil has always been a major religious object used for healing, good luck, and chasing away of bad omens in ATR. In most instances, this oil is extracted from animals such as snakes, lions, sheep or pigs. Contemporary Pentecostalism uses olive oil which is believed to be anointed through the man/woman of God. For example, field research has revealed the following inscriptions on oils from two Pentecostal ministries:

- PHD Ministries: ‘Overflow and Abundance... Anointing that breaks the Yoke of the Devil...Your past dark life is over; the anointing is opening a new prosperous life in Jesus Christ’s name’.
- House of Grace International Church: ‘Sets you free from sin, sickness, poverty, as you minister it in Jesus’ name’.

These oils are given some names that enhance/appeal to the believer in terms of its healing powers. These inscriptions are meant to lure or increase the faith of the believer. Thus, these oils help Pentecostalism to appeal to more followers as compared to traditional animal fat used by *n’angas*. This illustrates some innovation on the part of Pentecostalism as some oils used in ATRs were not given any particular names.

b. Bangles and Bracelets

In ATR, it was common to wear a bangle or bracelet which was, in most instances, made from animal skin such as lions and snakes. These were/are usually believed to have powers to protect the one who wears it. In most instances, babies, the pregnant, and the sick usually tied these to their wrists, ankles or waists as protective amulets from the evil spirits. Pentecostalism has embraced this practice through its initiatives. Pentecostal ministries in Harare such as PHD and UFIC encourage their members to wear their bracelets which are known to be a medium of the Holy Spirit.

c. Water

Water is a significant element in African values and culture. Water is life. Water is sacred. This is illustrated in a variety of ways, some which include the names of God. He is referred to as *Dzvivaguru* (The perennial pool /the pool that never dries up). This is similar to the belief in Christianity, where Jesus is referred to as the water of life (cf John 4:14, 7: 38-39, Isaiah 12: 3). As a result, ATRs have always used water as part of the healing processes for some ailments and conditions. In some instances, the source of water is an issue of concern. According to Sekuru Sigauke (interview), he prefers to use water from a particular

mountain which he could not disclose. Others use water from caves, or tree hollows, amongst other sources. This is supported by a research done by Rinne (2001:52) who states that: ‘...flowing water is regarded as the most pure water, and thus, flowing water is considered suitable for holy practices. Stagnant water is never used for medical purposes or divination practices. There are other aspects related to flowing water, such as the origin of the water, which are very important.’

For Pentecostalism to attract the same believers from ATR, indeed the value of water has to be embraced. Pentecostal ministries such as House of Grace Ministries, UFIC and PHD, amongst others have adopted the concept of anointed water. This works well with its adherents as they believe in it as the manifestation of the Almighty to heal them and provide miracles in their life. Most Pentecostals interviewed confirmed that they always move around with a bottle of anointed water in their cars, bags and homes. They spray this water to address any challenges that may include illness, applications, and pregnancies. This ‘holy’ water is also sprayed in their homes for protection. According to Shoko (2007:139), ‘The sprinkling of holy water around the homestead has parallels in traditional religion where the home is ‘fenced’ against witchcraft through protective items....’

The above objects (amulets, water and oil) used in Pentecostalism can greatly be related to ATRs. One Pentecostal leader who shall be identified as Pastor D reiterated that his congregants are highly influenced by ATRs, so for him to lure them, he has to use familiar strategies. This concurs with Shoko (2007: 139), who states that: ‘The use of holy water, smearing of oil and burning of sacred paper as a defense mechanism in the Afrocentric church maybe parallel by the use of charms and amulets in the traditional practice.... Even though such protection assumes new meaning because of the changed setting, the underlying concern still persist.’

Apart from the discussed, we turn to the innovation of musical instruments emerging through competition between ATRs and Pentecostalism.

d. Musical Instruments

Music has always been a crucial aspect of the traditional life of the Africans (Chitando 2002). This concept has been adapted in Pentecostalism where it continues to take a centre stage in influencing the lives of the believers. There are musical instruments that were used in traditional religion such as *hosho* and *mbira*, and drums made from wood and animal skin, amongst others. Pentecostalism has sought to adopt the effect of such musical instruments by bringing in new types of instruments such as trumpets, keyboards and modern-day drums, amongst others. According to Chitando (2002: 26):

...the changes in Shona traditional music should not only be thought of in terms of external influences, though these often instigate the most profound changes. Encounters with new experiences and challenges have always had an impact on music production. ...Amidst the ideology which musical practices that have been handed down from the ancestors are cast in stone, there is always a constant negotiation and creation of new artistic modes. This observation helps to explain why musicians from a Shona cultural background were not traumatised by the experience of colonialism....

As such, there is evidence of innovation and competition in terms of musical instruments between ATRs and Pentecostalism. Apart from these objects, we continue to examine

other phenomena where there appears to be competition which brings in innovation in Pentecostalism.

The Gospel of Prosperity

The concept of success has been another area in which Pentecostalism sought to innovate a new way of the understanding of prosperity from ATRs. Scholars generally agree that the gospel of prosperity has always been existent in African Traditional Religions (Shoko 2008, Anim 2010). The concepts of *Kuromba* (acquiring supernatural powers to get rich) and acquiring a *divisi* (charm to get plenty), *chikwambo* (goblin used to supernaturally collect riches from others) or *gona* (horn use to keep charms and medicines in some instances for wealth), amongst others, have always been used in Zimbabwean Traditional Religions to acquire wealth and prosperity. Some have possessed a *gona* to acquire wealth in the form of hunting, farming and dancing (Vengeyi 2011: 98).

The role of using charms to acquire wealth in traditional medicine can be compared to what Pentecostalism practices. This is embraced in Pentecostalism through the teaching of the prosperity gospel. One of the key tenets of Pentecostal theology is the gospel of prosperity. According to Asamoah (2013: 198): ‘Prosperity theology, sometimes referred to as the prosperity gospel, the health and wealth gospel, or the gospel of success is a Christian religious doctrine that financial blessing is the will of God for Christians, and that faith, positive speech, and donations to Christian ministries will always increase one’s material wealth.’

Pentecostalism has thus illustrated innovation on the very concept of prosperity in newer ways that have become more lucrative and acceptable in the contemporary religious market in Harare today. Rather than going to the traditional healer to acquire a *gona*, *chikwambo*, *divisi* or *kuromba*, Pentecostals have resorted to the use of anointed water, oil, bangles, and towels amongst other items as discussed above. According to Anim (2010: 66):

The thriving prosperity teaching in the charismatic ministries is largely due to the fact that the charismatics have tapped into fertile ground already nurtured by the traditional concept of prosperity, which is to be understood in terms of wealth, longevity, and fertility or procreativity. In African cosmology, the belief in and pursuit of prosperity is paramount. Africans do not ‘honour’ or accept suffering or poverty. It is a battle they have always sought to fight. The belief in the gods is primarily to ensure prosperity and well-being.

In all Pentecostal services attended to attain participant observation, the gospel of prosperity was reiterated. It emerges as a specifically Pentecostal doctrine that places emphasis on the attainment of wealth and health in the life before death, Gifford (1998), Ayegboyin (2011) and Garrard-Burnett (2012). For Gifford for example, its origins were from the biblical text of Matthew 11:23ff. The basic teaching is that God wants the Christian to be wealthy and that poverty is an indication of personal sin. A further tenet, based on a tendentious reading of 2 Corinthians 9 is that in order to reap, one must sow. This means that the Christian must contribute abundantly to the work of evangelism and to the upkeep of his/her Pastors, if he/she wishes health and material wealth themselves. Apart from the identified verses, Walter Magaya, Emmanuel Makandiwa, Paul Sanyangore and Sham Hungwe, uniquely address the gospel of prosperity, quoting from biblical verses such as Psalms 37:4, Matt 16: 27. This is comparable to ATR’s use of charms to acquire

wealth. For example, this study has observed the innovation on the part of Pentecostalism to address the concern of the believers in terms of acquiring health and wealth. For instance, research findings concur with the argument by Vengeyi (2011: 113) that: ‘In as much as the *gona* guided everyday life of the Shona, Zimbabwean Pentecostal churches believe that the Bible should guide every step of their feet. This forms the rationale for arguing that the prominence given to the Bible in Zimbabwean Pentecostal churches is a substitute for the *gona*’.

The Roles of Women

Women in African traditional religions played a significant role in the religious realm of society. They held a number of important roles that had to do with the spiritual life of their families, communities and other social units. The overarching perception was that women were considered as having a big role to play in the recreation of humanity (Mukonyora, 2007: 17ff; 1999: 276–84). This is also portrayed in myths (Bucher; 1980; Mapuranga, 2011: 38–40; and Parrinder, 1967: 15–16). The significance of women as life-givers is also illustrated in names. Writing in the context of the Ndaus in Chipinge, Zimbabwe, Mapuranga (2011: 40–41), highlights some names that were accorded to women because of their special function as life-givers. Consequently, because women were being associated with that which gives life, they had a special place as religious functionaries. Women had special roles as healers (Shoko, 2008: 22), rainmakers, diviners, priestesses and other forms of participation in religious rites. A good example of a woman who held a very significant role in the religio-political lives of the society on traditional religion was Nehanda Nyakasikana. She remains the most celebrated traditional heroine who doubles as a spiritual and political figure in the struggle for national independence.

With the given scenario, one would argue that, ‘the Christian message as introduced by the missionaries has affected the lives of many African women in various ways’ (Lagerwerf, 1990: 17). This is one major reason why Africans sought to break away from the ‘white’ gospel and re-create Christianity that met their own needs through what have become known as African Indigenous Churches (AICs) and African Pentecostalism. Women are visible on Pentecostalism, much more than they even were in ATRs. According to Ukah (2007: 16): ‘Knowing the power of women to attract men into religious organisations, some churches deliberately exploit this in giving women pastoral duties so that men would be drawn into the fold. There are now churches with “Department of family affairs” which cater to the needs of family members particularly women’.

Mapuranga (2013) gives detail on the various female personalities that have gained leadership personalities through Pentecostalism. These include Eunor Gutu, Rutendo Wutawunashe, Tendai Magaya, Ruth Makandiwa and Beverly Angel amongst many others. Most female adherents who were interviewed expressed satisfaction over this aspect of Pentecostalism. According to Mrs Wenzira (interview), ‘after all, our tradition has always told us that *musha mukadzi* (the woman is the pillar of the home), so we are there to give direction to our churches’. Resultantly, this concept of accepting the leadership of women in religion illustrates innovation from African Traditional Religion. It has become one of the ways through which Pentecostalism seeks to thrive in the highly competitive religious marketplace in Harare.

Bira/Overnight Crusades

All night crusades are a common event in most Pentecostal ministries in Harare today. Of particular significance is the night into the first of January every year (usually termed as the crossover). Adherents gather in their thousands overnight as they sing and praise to the Almighty. In the UFIC, there is another event dubbed the ‘Judgement night’, and in the PHD ministries there exists a service known as the ‘night of turnaround’.

These, among other nights, are dedicated to serious praise and worship where one is expected to have new dawn in their lives. With particular reference to PHD’s crossover night, an interviewee (James) believes it is a service that totally changes his life for a new beginning. For him, this insight is particularly brought about by the practice of candle lighting that is done in the last minutes of the previous year, into the first hour of the coming year.

The concept of singing and dancing all night long in worship that is recurrent in Pentecostal churches in Harare today did not just occur in a vacuum. This concept reflects some similarity with the traditional *Bira*. This is an all-night ritual, celebrated by Shona people from Zimbabwe in which members of an extended family call on ancestral spirits for guidance and intercession. The attendees at a ceremony participate in singing, dancing and hand clapping (Berliner 1981). In this ceremony, music that was favoured by the ancestors when they were alive is used to summon the spirits to possess living mediums; thus, the religious belief system helps to preserve older musical practices.

The selected objects and practices have sought to give examples on how Pentecostalism has demonstrated innovation, grabbing ideas from ATR in order to survive the religious market in Zimbabwe. The respondents’ views were, however, not homogenous with regards to the assumed relationship between ATRs and Pentecostalism. The following emerged:

- a. Pentecostal Religious Leaders often denied any link with ATRs, quoting the Bible. The most common verses were:
 - 2 Corinthians 5:17: ‘If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The Old has passed away, and the new has come’.
 - Isaiah 43:18, ‘Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old, behold, I am doing a new thing’.
- b. Reactions from the congregants were mixed. Whilst some claimed a total break with the past, there were others who agreed that they were practicing an African form of Pentecostalism where there was bound to be mutual borrowing between the two.
- c. Most Traditional healers and believers in ATRs saw an inevitable resemblance (some claiming borrowing) of Pentecostal practices with ATRs. Of particular interest were the claims made by one traditional healer Sekuru Friday Chisanyu, a registered traditional medicine practitioner and the founding president of the Zimbabwe National Practitioners Association (ZINPA). He argued that Pentecostalism in so many ways embraced ATRs. For him, a prophet, for example, is a *n’anga* merely in a suit, otherwise they practice similar roles in the spirit.

As such, though not homogenous, these ideas reflect in some way a relationship between Pentecostalism and ATRs. The next section elaborates on this communion of borrowing, innovation and competition between ATRs and Pentecostalism.

A Further Interpretation: Innovation and Competition

From the discussion, this study appreciates the existence of religious innovation and competition between ATRs and Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism, which can be attributed to be part of the agenda of colonialism, sought to take the place of ATR. According to Omeje and Kwaja (2008:83), ‘part of the necessity for maximizing the colonial agenda was the tendency towards a systematic obliteration of the entire African social structures and the imposition of their western equivalents or alternatives where such existed’. Thus, as argued by Omeje and Kwaja (2008: 84):

This continuing encounter raises serious concerns about the extent to which Africa is prepared to protect its identity in an emerging civilization based world order that is accelerated by forces of globalization, to the extent that the revival of cultural, ethnic and religious identities are increasingly gaining ground... All of these variables have continued to uphold and define the relations of power and subordination between Africa and the West.

These two religions, amongst others, are clearly contesting for space in order to survive in the religious market. In order to survive in this space of competition, there is an apparent innovation that exists within each of these religions. What is very clear is how Pentecostalism strives to adopt beliefs and practices from African Traditional Religion, and changes them to suit the Christian lifestyle. It tallies with the idea that diversity and competition are often vehicles, if not drivers, of creative change, and such innovation creates more competition. This study concurs with the notion that religious competition stimulates innovation. As such, the presence and seeming threat that Pentecostalism seems to throw at ATR has not succeeded in wiping it away. This is reiterated by Biri (2012: 38) who argues in her study on Zimbabwean Pentecostalism that:

...ATR is a significant ‘silent voice’ that continues to echo the quest for spiritual power in the hearts and ears of Pentecostals as involuntarily they continue to be informed by the realities of their African traditional religious and cultural background... The study argues that some aspects of ATRs seem to have been in decline, yet have remained dynamic in these Pentecostal denominations. These features are expressed in various ways in these churches. ATR is a silent voice and, as such, it is not easy to notice its presence among Pentecostals. Yet ATR is also an echoing voice because Pentecostals have refashioned and resacralised Shona traditional features in dynamic ways.

Thus, it can be argued that religious competition in Harare has created a space for change in terms of how religions are practiced. Competition has become a force and a drive for change. Pentecostalism has shown great creativity in terms of contextualizing borrowed beliefs and practices from African Traditional Religions.

Conclusion

This study thus examines how African forms of religion have resisted dying away through some form of adaptation through innovation. This study has argued that even though Africa is a ‘victim of domination from powerful hegemony, the continent has witnessed counter hegemonies of resistance’ (Reader 1999, Skalnik 2002). This paper on ATR and Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe confirms this statement as it examines some particular traits of ATRs that have remained vibrant in Pentecostalism. This illustrates how ATRs have managed to survive, albeit in altered forms, even in the new religions coming from other parts of the world such as Pentecostalism. In other ways, instead of wiping out certain beliefs and practices of ATR, it has actually brought in new life. According to Hackett (1991), such processes have actually brought about the ‘revitalisation’ of African religions. Pentecostalism, like Zionists and Apostolic prophet churches have been quite successful partly a result of that they have modelled their practices on traditional pattern (Daneel, 1970: 25).

This study has examined some selected traits and manifestations of religious innovation and competition in Harare by exploring how ATRs and Pentecostalism express and market themselves in the face of intense competition and potential rivalry on the spiritual market. This study investigates the similarities between Pentecostalism and African religion in terms of rituals and symbols, stemming from the reality of religious competition out of which the former creates new innovations from the latter, thus creating new ways of being religious that fit into the contemporary spiritual market. This study has examined the extent to which African religions and Pentecostalism in Harare are enduring competition, thereby leading to religious innovation to survive the religious competition in Harare, Zimbabwe. This article confirms the observation made by Martin that Pentecostalism usually ‘appeals to young men and women disembodied from traditional contexts and anxious to embrace modernity (2002: xviii)’. From this, one can argue of the existence of competition between the two religions.

Tapiwa Praise Mapuranga is an Associate Professor in the department of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy of the University of Zimbabwe. She offers courses on women and religion and sociology of religion at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. She is currently serving as a Sabbatical Fellow at the Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University (ZEGU). Her research interests are in the areas of gender and sexualities. One of her latest publications is ‘Gospel Music in Zimbabwe: Selected Women’s Voices’, in *Sounds of Life: Music, Identity and Politics in Zimbabwe*, ed. Fainos Mangena, Ezra Chitando, and Itai Muwati (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), pp. 34-49. Email: mapspraise@yahoo.com.

REFERENCES

Anim, E.K. (2010). ‘The Prosperity Gospel in Ghana and the Primal Imagination’. *PENTVARS Business Journal* 4:2: 66-76.

Asamoah, Moses Kumi. (2013). ‘Penteco/charismatic worldview of prosperity theology’. *African Educational Research Journal* 1:3: 198-208.

Awolalu, J. A. (1976). ‘What Is African Traditional Religion?’ *Studies in Comparative Religion* 10: 2: 1-10.

Ayegboyin, Deji. (2011). ‘New Pentecostal Churches and Prosperity in Nigeria’. In *Who is Afraid of the Holy Spirit? Pentecostalism and Globalization in Africa and Beyond*, pp. 155-179. Edited by Afe Adogame. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.

Bateye, B.O. (2008). ‘Paradigmatic Shift: Reconstruction of Female Leadership Roles in the New Generation Churches in South- Western Nigeria’. In *Christianity in Africa and the Diaspora: the Appropriation of a Scattered Heritage*, pp. 113-125. Edited by Afe Adogame, Roswith Gerloff and Klaus Hock. London: Continuum, 113-125.

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

Berliner, Paul. (1981). *The Soul of Mbira: Music and Traditions of the Shona People of Zimbabwe*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Bourdillon, M.F.C. (1990). *Religion and Society: A Text for Africa*, Gweru: Mambo Press.

Bucher, H. (1980). *Spirits and Power: An Analysis of Shona Cosmology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chavunduka, G. (1978). *Traditional Healers and the Shona Patient*. Gweru: Mambo Press.

Chitando, Ezra. (2002). *Singing Culture: A Study of Gospel Music in Zimbabwe*. Research Report No. 121. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

Chitando, Ezra. (2013). ‘Prophets, Profits and Protests: Prosperity Theology and Zimbabwean Gospel Music’. In *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe*, pp. 95-112. Edited by Ezra Chitando, Masiwa Ragies Gunda and Joachim Kugler. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.

Chitando, E., Manyonganise, M., and Mlambo O.B. (2013). ‘Young, Male and Polished: Masculinities, Generational Shifts and Pentecostal Prophets in Zimbabwe’. In *Prophets, Profits, and the Bible in Zimbabwe*, pp.153-170. Edited by Ezra Chitando, Masiwa Ragies Gunda and Joachim Kugler. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.

Daneel, M. L. (1970). *Zionism and Faith-Healing in Rhodesia: Aspects of African Independent Churches*. The Hague: Mouton.

Garrard-Burnett, Virginia. (2012). ‘Neo-Pentecostalism and Prosperity Theology in Latin America: A Religion for Late Capitalist Society’. *IBEROAMERICANA: Nordic Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 42: 1 & 2: 21-34.

Gelfand, M. (1985). *The Traditional Medical Practitioner in Zimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo Press.

- Gifford Paul. (1998). *The religious right in southern Africa*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications.
- Hackett, Rosalind. (1991). ‘Revitalization in African Traditional Religion’. In *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*, pp. 135-149. Edited by Jacob K. Olupona. New York: Paragon House.
- Hackett, Rosalind. (1998). ‘Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation of Media Technologies in Nigeria and Ghana’. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28: 3: 258-277.
- Hackett, R.I.J., and Soares, B.F. eds. (2015). *New Media and Religious Transformations in Africa*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Iyer, S. et. al. (2011). ‘Divine Innovation: Religion and Service Provision by Religious Organisations in India’. Paper presented to the Spiritual Capital Research Program, 31 March 2011. Faculty of Economics and St. Catharine’s College, University of Cambridge. <http://www.econ.cam.ac.uk/dae/repec/cam/pdf/cwpe1135.pdf>. Accessed 21 January 2017.
- Kalu, Ogbu. (2008). *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction*, Oxford/ New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kalu, Ogbu. (1998). ‘The Third Response: Pentecostalism and the Reconstruction from Christian Experience in Africa, from 1970 -1995’. *Journal of African Christian Thought* 1:2: 1-21.
- Kehinde, F.S. (2016). ‘Deliverance as a Strategy for Mission in Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries in Nigeria’. Paper found at the website of the International Association for Mission Studies. http://missionstudies.org/wpcontent/uploads/2016/04/fabunmi_samuel_Deliverance-as-a-Strategy-for-Mission_paper.pdf. Accessed 22/01/17.
- Lagerwerf, L. (1990). ‘African Women Doing Theology’. *Exchange* 19:1: 1–68.
- Lu, Y., Johnson, B. And Stark, R. (2008). ‘Deregulation and the Religious Market in Taiwan: A Research Note’. *The Sociological Quarterly* 49: 139–153.
- Mapuranga, T. P. (2011). *Gender, HIV and AIDS and African Traditional Religions in Zimbabwe: The Gains and the Pains of the Ndaun Woman in Chipinge District*. Saarbrücken: Lambert.
- Mapuranga, T. P. (2013). ‘Bargaining With Patriarchy: Women Pentecostal Leaders in Zimbabwe’. *Fieldwork in Religion* 8:1: 74-91.
- Martin, David. (2002). *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Mashiri, P. (1999). ‘Terms of Address in Shona: A Sociolinguist Approach’. *Zambezia* 16:1: 93-110.
- Mbiti, John S. (1969). *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann.
- Mbiti, John S. (1975). *Introduction to African Religion*. London: Heinemann.

- Meyer, Birgit. (1998). “‘Make a Complete Break with the Past.’ Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse’. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 27:3: 316-349.
- Mosala, J. (1983). ‘African Traditional Beliefs and Christianity’. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 43:3: 15-34.
- Mukonyora, Isabel. (1999). ‘Women and Ecology in Shona Religion’. *Word and World* 19: 276–84.
- Mukonyora, Isabel. (2007). *Wandering a Gendered Wilderness: Suffering and Healing in an African Initiated Church*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Mwaura, P. (2008). ‘Civic Driven Change~Spirituality, Religion and Faith’. In *Civic Driven Change: Citizen’s Imagination in Action*, pp. 51-66. Edited by Alan Fowler and Kees Biekart. The Hague: Institute of Social Studies.
- Omeje, Kenneth, and Kwaja, Chris M. A. (2008). ‘Exploring the Conflicts between Traditionalism and Modernism in Postcolonial Africa’. In *The Crises of Postcoloniality in Africa*, pp. 83-102. Edited by Kenneth Omeje. , Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Parrinder, Geoffrey. (1967). *African Mythology*. London: Paul Hamlyn.
- Pongweni, A. (1983). *What’s in a Name? A Study of Shona Nomenclature*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Reader, J. (1999). *Africa: A Biography of the Continent*, New York: Vintage Books.
- Rinne, E, (2001), ‘Water and Healing - Experiences from the Traditional Healers in Ile-Ife, Nigeria’. *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 10:1: 41-65.
- Shoko, T. (2007). *Karanga Indigenous Religion in Zimbabwe: Health and Well-Being*, London: Ashgate Publishers.
- Shoko, T. (2008). ‘Karanga Indigenous Religion in Zimbabwe: Health and Well-being’. *Religious Studies Review* 34:2: 118.
- Shoko, T. (2011). ‘Shona Traditional Religion and Medical Practices: Methodological Approaches to Religious Phenomena’. *Africa Development* XXXVI:2: 277– 292.
- Shoko, T. and Chiwara A. (2013). ‘The Prophetic Figure in Zimbabwean Religions: A Comparative Analysis of Prophet Makandiwa of the United Family International Church (UFIC) and the N’anga in African Traditional Religion’. In *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe*, pp.217-230. Edited by Ezra Chitando, Masiwa Ragies Gunda and Joachim Kugler. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.
- Skalnik, Peter. (2002). ‘Chiefdoms and Kingdoms in Africa: Why They are Neither States nor Empires’, paper presented at the African Studies Centre, University of Leiden, 21 February 2002. Available at <http://www.ascleigen.nl/pdf/chiefdomsandkingdoms.pdf>. Accessed on 17 January 2017.
- Togarasei, Lovemore. (2006). ‘Cursed be the Past: Tradition and Modernity among

Modern Pentecostals in Zimbabwe and Botswana’. *BOLESWA* 1:2: 114-132.

Ukah, Ansh. (2007). ‘African Christianities: Features, Promises and Problems’. Working Paper No. 79, Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien, Department of Anthropology and African Studies, Johannes Gutenberg University-Mainz. <http://www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de/Dateien/AP79.pdf> Accessed 22/01/17.

van der Merwe W.J. (1957). *The Shona Idea of God*. Masvingo: Morgenster Mission Press.

Vengeyi, Obvious. (2011). ‘Gona And The Bible among Indigenous Pentecostal Churches of Zimbabwe: A Comparative Approach’. In *From Text to Practice The Role of the Bible in Daily Living of African People Today*, pp. 95-129. Edited by Masiwa Ragies Gundda. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.