

The Place and Challenges of Modern Pentecostal Christianity in Botswana

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Abstract

This article discusses Modern Pentecostal Churches (MPCs) in Botswana from their beginning in the post-independence era to the present day. It begins by discussing the major characteristics of these churches. Specifically, the article considers the role and place of this form of Christianity in the Botswana society. It notes that this form of Christianity is making some contributions to the socio-economic and political life of Botswana. However, it also points out that the churches have more to do to reflect their increasing dominance in the Christian faith.

Introduction

Botswana is home to a number of religions, thanks to Section 11(2) of the country's Constitution that provides for freedom of religion (Republic of Botswana 1966). This freedom is also stated in the country's guiding document known as Vision 2016 (Republic of Botswana 1997). Existing religions in Botswana are Christianity, African Traditional Religion, Islam, Baha'i Faith, Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism. Statistics vary but generally put Christians at above 65% (Republic of Botswana 2001). This should not be surprising considering the long history of the presence of Christianity in Botswana and its role even in the politics of the country during the missionary period which predates colonial rule in 1885 (Mgadla 2003 and Kgalemang 2007). Although Christianity is the majority religion in the country, it has metamorphosed a lot since Botswana's Independence in 1966. Whereas at Independence the majority of the Christian churches were mainly of missionary origin, today three broad categories are often discerned even though it should be emphasised that these categories are not without their own problems (West 1975).

The three categories into which Christian churches are often classified are mainline churches, African Independent Churches (AICs) and Pentecostal/Evangelical churches (Amanze 1994). Although these categories go a long way in giving a picture of Christianity in Botswana 50 years after Independence, there are also significant differences among churches that may belong to one category. Among the Pentecostal/Evangelical group, for example, there are those churches which were a direct result of Western missionaries. These are different from other Pentecostal churches which are a product of African Christian initiatives. In this paper the latter group is called Modern Pentecostal Churches (MPCs) to distinguish them from the classical Pentecostal churches which came earlier before them (Togarasei 2005). It should be noted that while we distinguish them from classical Pentecostalism, it is important to mention that they share a lot of similarities with not only classical Pentecostals but other Christian denominations as well.

In this article the focus is on the MPCs, looking at their history, characteristics and their contribution to the socio-economic and political development of post-independence Botswana and the challenges they are facing.

Botswana Modern Pentecostal Churches

Historians of Pentecostalism often debate the origins of this movement (Wilson 1999 and Maxwell 1999). However, one version argues that The Azusa Street Revival of 1906 in Los Angeles, USA is often taken by many as the event that gave birth to modern day Pentecostal Christianity (César 2001). Here, in April 1906, Pentecostalism was expressed in full in a chapel that was run by an African-American called William Jo-

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seph Seymour. Only two years after the Azusa Street Revival, Pentecostalism had arrived in South Africa in the form of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM). Led by John G Lake, it soon became very instrumental in the spread of the Pentecostal gospel in Southern Africa. There were also many other smaller Pentecostal churches that helped in spreading Pentecostalism in the region (Maxwell 1999). Together with the AFM, these gave birth to the first batch of Pentecostal churches to operate in Botswana beginning in the mid-1930s (Amanze 1994).

Today scholars distinguish between these earlier churches and a new brand of Pentecostal churches that emerged in the early 1970s but particularly in the 1980s. These churches are a product of what many scholars on Pentecostalism in Africa call the second Pentecostal wave to sweep through Africa beginning particularly in urban areas (van Dijk 2004 and Togarasei 2005). In Botswana this is a post-independence Christian phenomenon. These churches share the same characteristics as discussed below. The churches are fast becoming the major public expression of Christianity in Botswana. However, there is no statistical evidence for the growth of MPCs since statistics in Botswana often identify Christians in general not as denominational populations. Known as ‘fire churches,’ the dominance of these churches is seen in their public prominence.

As Christian churches MPCs share some characteristics with other churches particularly AICs. Nevertheless, the cumulative characteristics of these churches distinguish them from other Christian denominations. Below we look at their transnational character, association with urban areas, gospel of prosperity, spiritism and association with modernity. These characteristics are certainly found in some other Christian churches but they have been intensified in MPCs.

Transnational or international self-presentation

One characteristic of modern Pentecostalism is transnationalism or internationalism. This is expressed in some of the names of these churches such as Winners’ Chapel International, Christ Citadel International Church, Worldwide Family of God Churches, Forward in Faith International, and others. It was through this characteristic that Pentecostalism came to Botswana. Christ Citadel International Church and Prevailing Christian Ministries were introduced by Ghanaians, Forward in Faith International and Family of God Church were introduced by Zimbabweans and the Bible Life Church was founded in Botswana by a Malawian. Besides, there is always a frequent interaction of Pentecostals in different countries. In Botswana, several Pentecostal preachers from other countries always announced their presence through various forms of media. Most of these preachers are from Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe and United States of America (USA) while others come from Swaziland, Zambia and the United Kingdom. In different congregations, welcoming visitors from other countries is part of the worship service. Visitors are asked to give their names, state where they come from and greet the congregation. Visiting pastors are asked to give sermons, arrange workshops for specific groups of the congregation or share their experiences of the work of God in their own countries. Often these are pastors from other Pentecostal churches not necessarily of the same denomination. The understanding is that the more the foreign visitors the church receives the more international it becomes.

Botswana Pentecostal preachers are also invited to other countries to give sermons. Dr Enock Sitima of Bible Life Ministries is often on preaching tours in Ghana, Nigeria, the USA and other countries. Such participation in global Pentecostalism gives one’s church an international image, a characteristic sought by MPCs. As correctly noted, ‘(Pentecostal) preachers promote internationalism and place high value on making overseas trips and hosting international conventions’ (Anderson 2004:43). Because MPCs are obsessed with numbers, and therefore prone to exaggeration (Maxwell 2006), they also strive to set up congregations in as many nations as they can. The Family of God, for example, claims that it has

branches in more than fifty countries of the world (www.africanrevival.com). Thus even those MPCs that originated in Botswana also make efforts to spread their wings to other countries. Bible Life Ministries now has branches in Lesotho, South Africa and Zambia.

The international status of these churches is also expressed by the display of national flags of different countries during sermons and prophesying. These are an expression that the church is an international institution, a commonwealth of all citizens of the universe and that all are welcome. There are also attempts to use languages spoken in different countries especially in songs and testimonies.

Association with urban areas

Modern Pentecostalism is an urban phenomenon (Togarasei 2005). Most MPCs, unlike AICs began in urban areas where they have attracted young men and women as members and leaders. It is, perhaps, not accidental then, that the mushrooming of Pentecostal churches in Botswana coincided with the urbanisation of the country in the post-independence era. Although they have members in rural areas, the majority of MPCs membership is from urban areas. The use of English as the language of communication, the dress code, hairstyle and general business-like approach to life, fellowship groups and their activities, evangelistic strategies and use of modern media technologies, all suit urban contexts. The language of entrepreneurship, success and prosperity promoted in these churches is suitable in urban areas where such opportunities are present.

MPCs also target the middle class, most of whom are found in urban areas. In Botswana some of the leaders of Pentecostal churches are young professionals who double up as professionals in their own fields and pastors in church. For example, the leader of End Time Ministries, Biggie Butale, who is an elected Member of Parliament for Tati West constituency, is a trained lawyer. The young professionals who are attracted by these churches make huge financial contributions to the churches. The urban contexts thus provide the churches with opportunities to maintain their elitist status. They also provide the churches with huge meeting places like theatres and converted industrial halls or warehouses. In Gaborone, the Rhema Church, Christ Embassy, Phakalane Community Church, Family of God Church and Celebration Church meet in converted industrial halls.

Gospel of prosperity

Perhaps, the major attraction of MPCs to Botswana is their chief characteristic of the doctrine of prosperity. Also called dominion theology, faith gospel or health and wealth gospel (Gifford 2001), it emphasises that prosperity is the fruit of faith and so getting rich is seen as God's will and an outward manifestation of his blessing. The gospel is supported through a selective reading of biblical texts with much emphasis on Old Testament texts (Togarasei 2011 and 2013). Poverty is attributed to the work of the devil who 'is inimical to productivity' (Mate 2002:552). Material poverty is also seen as a type of disease from which Christians should endeavour to be healed completely (Dada 2004). To move from this poverty one, therefore, needs deliverance from the spirit of poverty (Maxwell 1998). Hence, MPCs' members are taught to use their hands to get rich. The teaching and emphasis on prosperity has made the rich feel at home. They find it to be a departure from the missionary teaching that pronounced blessings on the poor. As Andre Corten and Ruth Marshal-Fratani (2001:5) say, in Pentecostal churches, 'Salvation is now resolutely this-worldly and evidence of new life has become as much material as spiritual'. Resultantly, these churches boast of some of the richest citizens of Botswana. One can mistake the churches' meetings for a business meeting as members put on expensive suits, expensive jewellery, elaborate hairstyles and other beauty ornaments, not to mention the flashy cars parked outside. The growing affluence of the Botswana, contrary to the pre-independence poverty, is unmistakable in MPCs.

The churches encourage their members to get into commercial businesses, often discouraging them

from seeking employment. At Winners' Chapel International and Bible Life Ministries, the author has listened to sermons where the preachers were discouraging members from seeking employment. They were told to strive to be employers themselves. The word JOB (employment) is said to be an abbreviation of 'Just Over Broke'. Members are taught principles of starting and running business and are prayed for to open doors for beginning their businesses. Thus there are many leaders and owners of different companies who are members of these churches. With Botswana being a predominantly government-driven economy prayers are also made for those who intend to offer bids for government tenders, and many testify to getting certain tenders because of the power of prayer. This, however, does not mean that everyone in these churches is rich. There are some poor people but usually these are people who feel they are on an upward journey to prosperity. Prosperity is also explained in terms of health as we will see later in this paper. To be prosperous, members of Pentecostal churches are taught to 'sow seeds' of prosperity in line with the Biblical book of 2 Corinthians 9:6-11. Therefore, the churches receive comparatively huge sums of money from members who expect financial and health 'breakthroughs' in their lives in return. This author interviewed one member of a Pentecostal church in Gaborone who said he had recently 'sown' P50,000 (about US\$70,00) to the church and was experiencing phenomenal growth in his transport business (Anonymous interview 2 July 2011). Because members are taught to be generous, some of these churches have fat coffers that enable their founders and those close to them to live lavish lifestyles.

When giving a sermon on 5 June 2010 at the church in Broadhurst (Gaborone), Pastor Sitima of Bible Life Ministries said that the prosperity blessings of church members come through the pastor of the church, hence the pastor should be richer than all members. Most founders of Pentecostal churches are therefore rich. It is not surprising for members to buy them cars or houses on important occasions like their birthdays or wedding anniversaries. They own several properties and some of them are chauffeur-driven in expensive cars.

Glossolalia and spiritism

MPCs emphasise baptism in the spirit. This is understood as being born-again, hence Pentecostals are sometimes described as born-again (Maxwell 2006). The chief sign of having been born-again is *glossolalia*, a Greek word which means speaking in tongues. Some Pentecostals, however, distinguish between being born again and being baptized in the Spirit. Whereas for some being born again is associated with *glossalalia*, for others water baptism leads to being born again with *glossalalia* coming as one of the spiritual gifts bestowed upon believers. *Glossolalia* is the utterance of some unintelligible speech and is traced back to the account in Acts 2 when Jesus' disciples were filled by the spirit and started speaking in other tongues. MPCs emphasise this practice and it is not uncommon to find several people speaking in tongues in a Pentecostal service. A number of Pentecostal churches in Botswana consider speaking in tongues to be the external manifestation of the spiritual rebirth of a convert. Speaking in tongues is not only a sign of being born-again, it also functions to check the level of purity of a believer. The understanding is that 'any involvement in sinful, defiling, worldly practices will impair (*glossolalia*)' as van Dijk (1992:81) puts it. This was confirmed by one Pentecostal in Francistown who said, 'When you have sinned, you cannot speak in tongues. It is only after confession that the gift will come back' (Anonymous interview 5 May 2009).

Pentecostal spiritism is also expressed in their association of most events and activities with spirits. It is claimed that just as there is the spirit of God that gives gifts like *glossalalia*, there are also evil spirits that are always at work against believers. Pentecostal services are, therefore, characterised by a lot of talk and exorcisms of evil spirits. The spirits are cursed in the name of Jesus and in some churches like Bible Life Ministries, they are physically 'boxed' as pastors lead believers in punching the air with the imagination that they are punching the evil spirits. Poverty, illness and all that which inhibit human welfare

and success are spiritualised. Especially feared is the spirit of witchcraft. It is not uncommon to attend a Pentecostal service in Botswana and not hear mention of witchcraft. It is as if witchcraft is everywhere. This strong belief goes back to traditional Tswana beliefs. As John and Jean Commaroff (1991) correctly say, traditional Botswana believed strongly in the power of witchcraft. As elsewhere in traditional Africa, witches were feared and families always made sure they take measures to protect themselves against witchcraft. Despite the coming of Westernisation, deep-seated beliefs and fear of witchcraft have remained among Botswana (Makgala and Monkge 2011). Botswana Pentecostal preachers respond to this fear by providing an alternative source of power which is the spirit of God. They explain that failure to marry, ill-health, lack of success in business or education and all other misfortunes are a result of evil spiritual forces, and therefore, associated with witchcraft. There is usually no identification of the witches, rather the pastors proclaim that in the name of Jesus all witches stand trembling and believers should know that as long as they have faith, they are protected.

Modernity

Modernity is another chief characteristic of MPCs. By modernity we mean contemporary, up-to-date with what is happening in the world. It is actually this particular characteristic that distinguishes them from AICs especially when one considers that AICs also practice *glossolalia* and faith healing. Modernity is expressed in various ways among MPCs in Botswana. As we have seen, they are associated with urban areas. They also attract young professionals, and upwardly mobile college and university graduates. Most of these churches meet in modern buildings and sometimes built in posh suburbs of particular cities (Togarasei 2006). In Botswana, Bible Life Ministries has the largest church building in the country which was opened on 22 May 2010. Forward in Faith Church also has a modern church building at Block 8 in Gaborone. So is the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Gaborone's Main Mall area. Although they have not put up their own structures, Christ Embassy, Family of God and other Botswana MPCs meet in state-of-the-art buildings. Elsewhere in Africa, MPCs have also been noted for putting up modern buildings. In September 1999, a 150,000 capacity church sanctuary was dedicated for the Winners' Chapel in Nigeria (Anderson 2004). Indeed some pastors of these churches boast of having offices better than those of some state presidents (Togarasei 2006).

As modern institutions, most MPCs make widespread use of modern media technologies. Church services are now conducted live through satellite and through television and radio. The Phakalane Christian Church records all its services which are then beamed on television. The Winners' Chapel ran a series of advertisements on radio and in the local *Mmegi* newspaper in 2007 and 2008. Billboards and other surfaces are filled with posters announcing forthcoming crusades and conventions. Websites run and advertise various Christian activities and bookshops have Christian literature. Christ Embassy even has a television station of its own although it broadcasts from South Africa. Christian posters and billboards compete with those of multinational companies along the streets of various Botswana cities, towns and villages. In 2008 the Winners' Chapel erected one of the largest billboards at what used to be the Nokia Circle in Gaborone West on the Lobatse (AI). Bible Life Ministries has electronic billboards and power point presentations in its sanctuary. At the Phakalane Community Church one can even afford to leave his /her Bible when going to church since Scriptures for the day are projected through power point. The cell phone is now a medium of Christian evangelism and through the cell phone and television, it is said that one can receive the healing powers of Christian healers who are miles away (Togarasei 2007).

Socio-economic and Political Role of MPCs in Botswana's Development

The Christian Church has always been part and parcel of development in most African countries. It has worked very closely with the government and other stakeholders in the socio-economic and political de-

velopment of post-independence Botswana. The government has continued to cherish the role played by churches in the country's development. The national long term 'Vision 2016' document acknowledges the role of churches and other religious institutions for their maintenance and transmission of moral and ethical standards, for encouraging the qualities of human spirituality and self-confidence and for imparting sound moral education in schools (Republic of Botswana 1997). The growth of Pentecostalism calls upon researchers and policy makers to take stock of their contribution if Christianity needs to continue playing the social roles it has always played. We discuss some of these contributions below.

Provision of scarce skills

One of the direct contributions of MPCs was the role played by their members in the labour market soon after Independence. It is noted that soon after Independence and with the discovery of diamonds in the country, Botswana faced the problem of manpower shortage (Van Dijk 2003). This is because, unlike other former colonies that had significant infrastructure developed by colonial governments, Botswana became independent at a time when it had very little infrastructure development. Education, health, transport and nearly all other sectors were underdeveloped. In fact Quett Masire, the second president of independent Botswana (1980-1998), says the act of asking for Independence from the British colonial masters at that time was either a sign of being *Very Brave or Very Foolish?* (Masire 2006). On attaining Independence Botswana was, therefore, in dire need of professionals to develop the country. These were to be recruited preferably from other African countries (Van Dijk 2003). With West African countries like Nigeria and Ghana having gained their independence earlier and so had better education facilities, a number of expatriate workers came from these countries. These migrant workers were the ones who brought with them modern Pentecostalism to Botswana. For example, Christ Citadel International was introduced in Botswana by Ghanaian migrants who were employed in the education sector and other government departments. Some of them set up law firms and indeed some were employed as judges where they contributed in the development of the country's legal system (van Dijk 2003).

Employment creation

Whereas some Pentecostals were employed in the public service and parastatal organisations, others also opened up their own businesses that helped in employment creation and service delivery. Mention has already been made of Pentecostal discourse of self-employment. This discourse helped and continues to help in employment creation. The building projects that these churches engage in have created employment for Botswana citizens. The Universal Church of Kingdom of the God has put up a massive structure at the Main Mall in Gaborone. Completed in 2009, the building created employment for many workers from its sketch on paper to the time it was completed. The Bible Life Ministries sanctuary in Broadhurst, Gaborone was completed at a cost of above P15 million (about US\$2million) according to its founder. All this created employment for local people.

Furthermre, in the area of employment creation some people have been employed as pastors, church secretaries/receptionists or as caretakers at the churches' sites. Even non-Pentecostals have benefited from the presence of MPCs in Botswana. Pentecostals' extensive use of mass media has also generated employment. Printing companies, for example, benefit from MPCs who usually put large orders of evangelistic materials like monthly magazines, flyers and street posters. The use of electronic media like CDs and DVDs has also created business opportunities for those running this kind of business.

Good work ethic

Many MPCs members also believe that they have a very strong work ethic. Influenced by the gospel of prosperity, many of them say that they work very hard to prosper and prove the doctrine correct. Pente-

costals generally do well in their professions as they work hard and are generally trustworthy. The belief in Pentecostal doctrine is that one should serve God wherever he/she is. This doctrine promotes a strong work ethic among Pentecostals. Of course, there are some lazy Pentecostals with a poor work ethic, but generally the gospel of prosperity encourages hard work.

The strong work ethic, perhaps a legacy of the Pentecostal work ethic (Weber 1930) is further enhanced by MPCs' promotion of puritanism. Members are discouraged from alcoholism, crime and corruption, vices that affect many organisations. The Botswana government has identified alcohol abuse as contributing not only to HIV spread but also to poor work ethic (Makgala 2013). Some Pentecostals abstain from alcohol and therefore are generally considered to have good work ethics.

Encouraging stable families

Another social contribution of MPCs is in the area of the family. Botswana has a problem of unstable families. Most families are run by single mothers. The *Vision 2016* document thus underscores the need to strengthen the family for the support and development of the people of Botswana. It goes on to note that it is the family unit that encourages responsible parenting and the institution of marriage and that a strong family provides the social foundation for the eradication of problems like teenage pregnancy, prostitution, adultery, street children and the spread of HIV (Republic of Botswana 1997). MPCs promote marriage, marital fidelity, mutual respect and the sharing of family responsibilities. These teachings, including their strong condemnation of pre-marital sex, contribute to a large extent to HIV prevention among Botswana.

Although all other churches also teach these practices, studies elsewhere have shown that of all church categories, the Pentecostal churches proved to be more powerful in shaping the behaviour of their members when it comes to family values (Garner 2000). Members of MPCs are more likely to be married and have stable families than members of other Christian denominations as Ruth Marshall (1992) found out among Nigerian Pentecostals. It is generally claimed that (Pentecostal) husbands are less likely to abuse their wives or cheat on them, and are more likely to respect them, assist in child rearing and spend less money outside the home on drinking, entertainment or other women.

Healing services

Pentecostals claim healing powers. This healing, as is true of healing in Africa, should be understood holistically. It is physical, spiritual and social. Often illnesses and misfortunes are believed to have spiritual causes. Headaches, barrenness, HIV and AIDS, failure to get married, unstable marriages, lack of employment and so on, are understood to be results of spiritual attacks. There is a strong belief in the doctrine of demonology in Pentecostal churches. Demons are believed to cause suffering and misfortune among people. Witchcraft is also believed to be caused by these demons.

Pentecostal preachers claim to have power to reverse the effects of the work of evil spirits (demons). Through prayer, laying on of hands and sometimes the use of 'holy' oil and water (especially from Nigeria), they provide healing to members and non-members alike. There has even been cases of claims of HIV cure and pastors who discourage their members from taking anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) but to trust only in the healing power of God. It is not possible to measure the success of these healing practices but there are plenty of testimonies or claims given by people who have been healed. Judging by the popularity of the healing practices of these churches, it is reasonable to conclude that the churches are providing these social services to the Botswana community. Claims to healing HIV, however, have been problematic as some pastors have been accused of telling their members on HIV treatment to stop taking medication leading to the government of Botswana deporting some of the pastors (Togarasei and Nkomazana 2011).

Promoting positive thinking and unity

The last contribution of MPCs discussed here is their ability to create a positive and united community of believers. As Kwabena Asamoah-Gyaduh (2007) has also argued, Pentecostalism addresses structures of oppression that consign Africa to backwardness, mediocrity and non-achievement. Pentecostal churches in Botswana, as is true of others elsewhere in Africa, are known for holding their services in modernist places. Members are encouraged to aim for the best. They are always reminded that they are 'going to a higher place', 'going somewhere', 'being lifted higher' and that 'God has a plan for your life and works good for your life' (Asamoah-Gyaduh 2007:351). Asamoah-Gyaduh is spot on when he says, 'African Pentecostalism has initiated a move from Afro-pessimism to Afro-optimism and hope'.

In terms of unity, Pentecostals experience the sense of community at three levels although some scholars like William A Beckham (1995) have identified two. The first level is the international level. Pentecostals strive for internationalism as we have seen above. As a result many churches maintain contact with churches in other countries. Although studying AICs, Ezra Chitando (2004) has argued that AICs should be credited for promoting 'African renaissance' and regional integration long before politicians began it. They have networks for cooperation as they host fellow Christians when doing business across borders. This is also very true of Pentecostals. There are many Pentecostals who have business and spiritual links with other Pentecostals internationally. I have already pointed out the many international trips made by Botswana Pentecostal preachers. Many Pentecostal churches are composed of expatriates who find them quite welcoming.

The above level of community, however, usually remains at leadership level. In other words, for the rest of Pentecostals, two levels of community are the most common ones. Beckham (1995) refers to these levels as the 'big' and the 'small' communities. The 'big' community is the congregation level and the 'small' one is the cell group level. Through their cells and branches, MPCs create united communities that work together for the good of each individual. They provide a home and community for individuals who are usually disoriented by urban life's destruction of kinship ties. The church becomes a replacement of the traditional kinship society, and therefore, provides security in urban contexts of insecurity. The congregation meetings on Sunday provide a forum where members meet and learn of what has transpired in the lives of their friends and relatives over the week.

The Challenges

Despite the many contributions MPCs are making in the socio-political and economic development of post-independence Botswana, the churches also face a number of challenges. If the churches are to improve, these challenges and failures need to be pointed out. Below we discuss three such challenges.

Foreign character

A look at the statistics of these churches shows the dominance of foreigners among the leaders. Except for a few ones like End Time Ministries, many of these churches are of foreign origin. Although foreign origin should not be a problem as many churches including all mainline churches are of foreign origin, the problem arises when the leadership of the churches remains dominated by foreigners for too long a time. This will result in accusations of these churches as nothing but 'money making machines,' to use the words of van Dijk (2003:576). Family of God faced such a problem and resulted in the split of the church in 2003 (Togarasei 2008).

Indeed, the foreign character of some of these churches has led to trading of xenophobic accusations in some (Togarasei 2008). Therefore, it is our opinion that if modern Pentecostalism is to live to its characteristic of transcending national boundaries, it should do this also in transferring leadership positions to local people. This would avoid some of the accusations levelled against Pentecostal church leaders such

as externalizing money to the countries of the pastors' origin (Togarasei 2008).

Lack of social conscience (Individualism)

Another challenge facing Pentecostalism in Botswana is overemphasis of individual salvation. MPCs often times have been accused of lacking social conscience. Compared to mainline churches, MPCs are little involved in national affairs. Despite preaching a gospel of prosperity and boasting of having offices that rival those of states presidents, except for a few like the Phakalane Community Church that runs Eagles Academy School, they do not run schools, hospitals and neither are many of them involved in general social welfare. Instead of challenging or addressing socio-economic and political factors that are breeding ground for poverty and economic inequality in society, they accuse those in poverty of being possessed by spirits of poverty.

Explaining every disease in terms of demon possession also makes humanity unable to control their destiny. 'If demons cause every ill, there is no way of dealing with immediate causes of an economic or political nature. If cholera and TB are caused by demons, how can one ever proceed to deal with issues like lack of drains, toilets, sewers, doctors and drugs?' writes Paul Gifford (1992:196). Even practicing Pentecostal theologians are increasingly emphasizing the need for Pentecostalism to face up to the challenges of a prophetic role (Richards 2005). MPCs' voice should be heard addressing social issues in Botswana.

Gender inequality

Although the majority of MPCs' members in Botswana are women, leadership positions are occupied by men. In most of the MPCs men are founders and leaders. In most cases where women are in the leadership, it is by virtue of marriage to the male founder of the church. At Bible Life Ministries, for example, Mrs Sitima is a leader because her husband is the founder and pastor of the church. At Family of God Church, women are appointed pastors but their responsibility is usually limited to Sunday school teaching and to leading praise and worship choirs.

Women also play roles as ushers but the important responsibilities of running the church and making decisions are kept for men. This is indeed a challenge that MPCs need to address. Pentecostalism is the fastest growing form of Christianity in Africa (Anderson 2006), hence, it is important for the leading form of Christianity to also take a lead in women empowerment and equality.

Conclusion

Considering the rate at which Pentecostalism is growing in Africa, it is not surprising that one day it may emerge as the dominant form of Christianity. Just as in other African countries, the growth of this form of Christianity in post-independence Botswana is unprecedented. This article has looked at MPCs in Botswana from their beginning some twenty years ago to the present. Specifically, it considered the role and place of this form of Christianity in Botswana.

It has been noted that this form of Christianity is making some contributions to the socio-economic and political life of Botswana. However, it has also been pointed out that the churches have more to do to reflect their increasing dominance in the Christian faith. Areas that need further attention by these churches include the incorporation of locals into the leadership, the need to be active in the socio-political life of Botswana and the need to include women in church leadership.

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