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Pentecostalism as a Form of Protest Movement Against Economic Decline and Tyranny: The Case of Celebration Church in Zimbabwe

Abstract

In the last decade, citizens of Zimbabwe experienced the worst economic and political crisis of all time, which resulted in the total collapse of the economy. This study sought to examine the role of religion during this period of economic and political turmoil. Contemporary research and sociological analysis, focused on Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe, often shows Pentecostalism as a quintessentially popular religion that addresses existential problems and offers protection and security to the suffering. In order to contribute to this discourse, an empirical study was conducted amongst the believers of the Celebration Church in Zimbabwe. The data obtained showed Pentecostalism as a form of protest movement against economic and political turmoil.

Key words: Celebration church, deprivation theory, functionalist theory, Pentecostalism.

Introduction

This study, focused on Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe, seeks to examine the role of religion during the unsettled times. As it happens in other parts of the world, there is revival of religion, particularly among Pentecostals.² Pentecostals, according to scholars such as Barrett, Kurian and Johnson (2001: 19), Cox (1996: xv), Dayton (1987:

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2 Within Christianity, Pentecostals have the highest growth rates per year. According to Barrett *et al* (2001: 19-21), annual growth rates among Christians are as follows:

10), Droogers (2005: 258) Hunt (2003: 75) and Walker (1997: 27) are the fastest growing contemporary branch of evangelical Christianity in Africa and in many parts of the world. Zimbabweans of all walks of life, therefore, turn to Pentecostalism in search for solutions to their existential problems.

The debate centred on the relationship between religion and politics and/or religion and the secular continues to influence theoretical reflection and innovation in Pentecostalism. Ranger (1986: 6) notes that few can study religious movements in Africa "without feeling that even if they were not unequivocally anti-colonial they constituted a form of politics". The popularity of Pentecostalism in Africa in an era of dictatorial regimes and tyranny has now become the focus of contemporary research. Meyer (2004: 464), points out that religion and politics are usually entangled in a more complicated way than would suggest and this continues to attract attention about questions of resistance and domination. Usually due to lack of opportunity to protest openly, the powerless protest within the domain of everyday church practice.

Contrary to the secularization theory which postulates the decline of religiosity, in Zimbabwe, there is resurgence of religiosity evident in the Pentecostal tradition. Contemporary sociologists such as Bruce (2003) argue that religion continues to be an autonomous force in contemporary politics. In the case of Zimbabwe, religion plays a major role in politics prompting political players to compete for space in their quest to seek legitimacy from religion. The Celebration church represents one of the new religious movements in Zimbabwe that challenges the oppressive machinery of the state by calling for reformation in the core institutions of the state.

During the last decade (2000 – 2010), Zimbabwe, governed by a dictatorial regime, was plunged into the worst economic, political crisis of all time. According to the Daily News (Daily News (The) 2011: 1), "Hunger, disease, poverty, human rights abuse, murder, torture, unemployment, destruction of the economy, corruption, nepotism and disregard of the rule of law among many other issues have characterised Zimbabwe's independence". Due to the harsh effects of misrule and tyranny, the economy subsequently collapsed and this led to a dramatic decline in the living conditions of the people. The country had one of

Pentecostals (8.1%), Evangelicals (5.4%), All Protestants (3.3) and Roman Catholics and Others (1.3%).

the highest inflation rates³ in the world and this triggered among others food shortages and the adoption of the United States dollar and South African rand as official currencies.

The ZANU (PF) government led by Robert Mugabe was accused of silencing the opposition through arbitrary and unlawful arrests. In the midst of the economic and political crisis, corruption dominated both the private and public spheres of life as the people struggled to survive. Unfair and unorthodox business practices were common as everyone wanted to make profit in a market that was driven by speculation. The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe was accused of promoting the activities of the so-called "black" or parallel market in order to sustain the core functions of the state. A new and rare phenomenon known as "money burning" emerged when people exchanged foreign currency for trillions of useless Zimbabwe dollars.

In light of the above remarks, this study sought to explore the role of religion during these unsettled times.

The problem that underlay this study centred on three issues, firstly, the role of religion during the period of economic and political turmoil. Secondly, the impact of the economic and political conditions on Pentecostal religiosity – whether the economic and political conditions in Zimbabwe led to a resurgence or decline of Pentecostal religiosity. Thirdly, the study sought to examine Pentecostalism as a protest movement against economic decline and tyranny.

Against the backdrop of the preceding discussion, the following research questions were formulated to guide the research process:

- What was the role of religion during the period of economic and political turmoil in Zimbabwe?
- To what extent does Pentecostalism as a movement protest against economic decline and tyranny in Zimbabwe?
- Did Pentecostalism achieve its mandate of reforming and transforming tyranny and corruption?
- What were the major themes of Pentecostalism that specifically addressed economic decline and tyranny?
- Is there evidence of decline or resurgence of Pentecostal religiosity in Zimbabwe during the period of economic decline and tyranny?
- What is the major attraction of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe during the period of economic decline and tyranny?

3 Inflation was estimated at 200 000% in May 2008 and unemployment at over 80%.

Purpose of the Study

With the above research questions in mind, the purpose of the article was, firstly, to examine the role of religion during the period of economic decline and tyranny in Zimbabwe. Secondly, the article was aimed at analysing the role of the Celebration church in protesting against economic decline and tyranny in Zimbabwe. Thirdly, the article looked at how religion, particularly how Pentecostalism adapts to suit the interests of the believers during the unsettled times. Finally, the article looked at the major attraction of Pentecostalism in contemporary Zimbabwe society.

In order to achieve the purpose, the key concepts in the study were clarified; a review of literature pertaining to Pentecostalism was done; an empirical study for the Zimbabwe situation was undertaken; and conclusions were put forward.

Clarification of Key Concepts

Celebration Church

Formation Amidst Economic Decline and Tyranny

The Celebration Church was formed in year 2000 by Senior Pastors Tom and Bonnie Deuschle. Pastor Tom Deuschle and his wife Bonnie, who emigrated from America, have been actively involved in church ministry in Zimbabwe from 1981 when they were members of the Rhema church. They left Rhema and formed the Hear the Word Ministries and in 2000 the Celebration Church Ministries was formed. The church has a total membership of 45000 believers in countries such as Zimbabwe, United Kingdom, Ireland, South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, Malaysia, Australia and Mozambique (Celebration Church 2011a: 1). The Celebration church can be described as a movement of renewal with its key emphasis on revivalism⁴ and reformation. The formation of the Celebration Church Ministries in 2000 amidst political and economic turmoil, characterised by illegal land invasions and the collapse of the economy, was significant in understanding the role of religion during the unsettled times.

4 Revivalism is traditionally linked to a code of personal piety and the denouncement of evil in the world and strict isolation from it. It is seen as a popular form of religion associated with stern opposition to such sins as drinking, smoking and gambling. Above all, it insists upon the conscious commitment to Jesus Christ as one's personal saviour (Hunt 2003: 74).

Core Beliefs of the Church as a Modern-Day Pentecostal Movement

The Celebration church believes in both the Old and New Testaments as inspired by God and that they are a revelation of God to man and the only infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct. The church also believes in the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The church maintains a broad global network through various media channels including print materials (Celebration Church 2011a: 1).

Like other Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe such as the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA), the Celebration church focuses on beliefs and practices that "address adherents' existential concerns for wholeness, purity, meaning and empowerment" (Maxwell 2006: 209). As Maxwell (2006: 209) further reiterates:

Contemporary Pentecostalism enables African adherents to come to terms with neo-liberalism. It offers 'hope and lived solutions' to combat intensifying poverty, marginalisation and insecurity, problems that arise from structural conditions that are beyond the power of individuals to alter and which their political leaders are unable or unwilling to change.

The Celebration church is thoroughly a modern-day Pentecostal movement since it accommodates the world as much as it rejects it. It does not, by and large, oppose science and critical rationalism. The movement also uses hi-tech modern approaches to evangelism and embraces cultural concerns such as healing, human potential and therapeutic techniques. Furthermore, the movement fits Cox's (1996: 272) description of what he calls "designer churches". Designer churches, according to Cox (1996: 272), wish to be judged by the speed of growth of their congregations, funds available, attractive buildings, prestigious leaders, and other hallmarks of success which reflect the wider enterprise culture.

Reformation – a Revolution or Awakening Amongst the People of Zimbabwe

Reformation is a major theme of the Celebration church and the ministry aims at reforming individuals, families, societies and nations. Hence, the church qualifies to be called a movement of renewal⁵

⁵ The Renewal movement advocated the return to the pristine spiritual condition of the first-century church. It therefore confronted increasing secularization, rationalism, disbelief and pluralism (Hunt 2003: 77).

or revivalism. The present-day society is viewed as corrupt and immoral. Maxwell (2006: 185) notes that "Zimbabweans increasingly experienced their state as violent, bankrupt and immoral". Hunt (2003: 75) views Pentecostalism as the most significant movement of revival over the last hundred years. The Celebration church, therefore, aims at changing individuals, families, societies and nations in accordance with "correct" biblical norms and values. In an interview with Pastor Tom Deuschle (2011), he condemned the breakdown of the family unit particularly with the advent of what is commonly known as the "small house"⁶ syndrome in Zimbabwe. Besides the state, Deuschle also advocated for the reformation of the institution of the family due to the aforementioned problem of the "small house".

Deuschle (2009: 63) sees the Celebration church as a revolution or a great awakening amongst the people of Zimbabwe in fighting all forms of corruption, intimidation and genocide. He (2009: 63) elaborates as follows:

Today, there is an awakening in the hearts of Africans of all nations, creeds, genders, tribes, and denominations who want to look past their differences and focus on a common denominator, principles that are set forth clearly in the Word of God that will bring genuine reformation. These principles are the only hope for dismantling the deep-seated corruption, jealousy, intimidation, genocide, ethnic cleansings, authoritarianism, tribal factionalism, and many of the other "isms" that have ravaged and beset Africa. Until they are dismantled, we will not see this great "African renaissance" take place.

Furthermore, Deuschle (2009: 59), notes that, compared to other African countries, Zimbabwe was a wealthy nation, however, "this picture only changed in 2000, with the implementation of a pre-election land distribution program which led to a destabilization of the economy in massive proportions". The Celebration church argues that the destabilisation of the economy was a result of mismanagement and poor policies by the ZANU (PF) regime. The ongoing mismanagement resulted in increasing poverty and starvation in Zimbabwe in the first decade of the twenty-first century (Deuschle 2009: 59).

6 The "small house" denotes a common tendency by married man in Zimbabwe to have extra-marital relations and maintain a single woman outside marriage whilst enjoying sexual relations with that woman as if the two are married. This relationship is considered subsidiary (small) compared to the main marriage yet important to the welfare of both the man practising it and the unmarried woman being looked after. The "small house" is also a direct result of poverty and breakdown of the economy in Zimbabwe as most single women struggle to survive (L.N).

Systemic Poverty as the Main Source of Oppression in Zimbabwe

Pastor Tom Deuschle (2011) referred to systemic poverty as the main source of oppression. The collapse of the economy and/or economic decline is largely attributed to misrule. There are different types of poverty noted in Zimbabwe society, according to the Celebration church, i.e. spiritual, financial, etc. The state is not the only instrument that is responsible for perpetuating poverty in Zimbabwe because religion is also used to oppress people and examples cited include some apostolic churches such as the Johane Masowe we Chishanu which refuse infant immunization among others. It is important when dealing with the Celebration church to problematise the church's concept of poverty in order to put into context its theme of reformation.

Entrepreneurship as a Strategy to Mitigate Poverty

The church believes that reformation cannot take place in society unless it is backed by Christian businesses that will not just finance the gospel, but will serve as existing models of excellence brought about by adhering to kingdom principles. A number of internationally-acclaimed business leaders have been mentored in a Celebration church support programme. Strategic advice and wise counsel is given in order to help entrepreneurs to develop sound business practices and to survive in a challenging and difficult context such as Zimbabwe. The support given to entrepreneurs during the difficult times in Zimbabwe was meant to counter the effects of poverty and suffering amongst Christians (Celebration Church 2011b: 1).

Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism refers to all the churches that consider themselves Pentecostal because of the emphasis they place on to the believer's access to the work and gifts – charismata – of the Holy Spirit (Droogers 2005: 258; Hunt, Hamilton and Walter 1997: 2). According to Droogers (2005: 258), "these charismata, such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing and exorcism, are part of the Pentecostal praxis". However, the Pentecostal churches differ in size, style and organization. Pentecostalism as religion is not limited or confined to the aforementioned churches, certain churches which emphasize the presence of the Holy Spirit in the so-called charismatic movements in Protestant and Catholic churches

could qualify to be included. These charismatic churches operate within the mainstream churches in order to "renew" them without the intention of founding separate churches (Droogers 2005: 258). It is, hence, difficult to draw a clear distinction between Pentecostalism and other phenomena such as Evangelical churches or Christian fundamentalism because there could be significant overlap.

Hunt et al (1997: 2) make a clear distinction between what they call Classical Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism. According to Hunt et al (1997: 2), the earlier Pentecostal movement, with its alleged beginnings at Azusa street mission in California in 1906, is now typically referred to as Classical Pentecostalism. On a global basis, Classical Pentecostalism has produced its own variants or denominations which have come to take their rightful place alongside the other mainstream historical churches. These contemporary variants or denominations are now typically referred to as Neo-Pentecostalism, otherwise known as the Charismatic movement. The latter include churches within the established denominations that have been open to charismatic renewal, along with itinerant ministries and para-church organisations outside of these structures (Hunt et al 1997: 2).

Deprivation Theory

The deprivation theory is a key concept in analysing Pentecostalism as a protest movement in Zimbabwe. According to Furseth and Repstad (2006: 111), the deprivation theory maintains that "religious commitment is a result of the compensation that religion provides in situations where individuals meet obstacles in life and search for alternative goals". The concept of deprivation is also derived from Karl Marx who noted that "religion would fulfil the needs of those near the bottom of the social hierarchy; that is, religion serves as a source of comfort and it takes the form of protest and reaction against injustice and misery" (Furseth and Repstad 2006: 111).

There are different types of deprivation such as economic, social, organismic, ethical and psychic. Furseth and Repstad (2006: 111) distinguish the salient differences in the above forms of deprivation as follows: "Economic deprivation implies that one has a difficult financial situation or is poor. Social deprivation implies that one has little access to the types of goods and qualities that are highly appreciated in society". The concept "deprivation" constitutes an important concept in

this study, particularly in conceptualising the Celebration church as a protest movement.

Functionalist Theory

Another important theory in this study is the functionalist theory since it underpins the interpretation of empirical data. The functionalist theory, according to O'Dea and O'Dea Aviad (1983: 2-3), "sees society as an ongoing equilibrium of social institutions which pattern human activity in terms of shared norms, held to be legitimate and binding by the human participants". Religion is viewed as one form of these social institutions. Furseth and Repstad (2006: 20) note that functional definitions of religion define religion according to the utility or effects that religion is supposed to have for the individual and/or society. O'Dea and O'Dea Aviad (1983: 4) corroborate the above view by asserting that the "functionalist theory sees man in society as characterised by two types of needs and two kinds of propensities to act. Men must act upon the environment, either adjusting to it or mastering and controlling it. This study, based on the Celebration church, is underpinned by the functionalist theory. Consequently, the focus of the study is on the role or function of the church in protesting against oppression or deprivation issues affecting society. Functionalist definitions, therefore, view religion as a human activity that attempts to create meaning and identity (Furseth and Repstad 2006: 20).

Method of Research

Literature Review

According to Barrett et al (2001: 19), Cox (1996: xv) and Hunt (2003: 75), Pentecostalism represents the most significant movement of revival over the last hundred years and today it constitutes the fastest growing wing of Christianity and indeed of any expression of religiosity in the world other than Islam. Martin (1990: 163) identifies Pentecostalism as a new spiritual communication characterised by speaking in tongues, and testimonies to 'blessings'. Pentecostal communication is, therefore, manifested in the healing touch, ecstatic speech, in stories and testimonies and in music, and also in an atmosphere of participation in which those hitherto voices, including women, make their voice heard (Martin 1990: 163).

Martin (2011: 81) advocates that Pentecostalism has the capacity to reverse the negative stereotypes of marginal groups. As in the case of Zimbabwe, the ordinary people were oppressed physically and spiritually. The oppression of the people is aptly captured by believers at Celebration church who view poverty as oppression and as imposed by the devil. Hence, poverty could be seen as physical and spiritual. In the case of Zimbabwe, the state epitomises the devil in its oppression of the poor. According to Martin (2011: 81), conditions in Africa are amongst the worst in the world and Pentecostalism is used as an instrument in fighting the pauperization and oppression of the masses. Religion is subsequently associated with national survival against oppression.

Pentecostalism is defined by Droogers (2005: 259) as "that form of Christianity in which the Holy Spirit occupies a central place". Initially the core distinguishing features of Pentecostalism included the emphasis on speaking in tongues and the 'second baptism' in the spirit; however, the entire Pentecostal movement is evolving so rapidly that the aforementioned aspects no longer hold. Furthermore, on a global scale, its ability to enculturate, which has led to its rapid growth, has seemingly transformed the movement out of all recognition (Hunt 2003: 78).

Martin (1990: 258) argues that the appeal of contemporary Pentecostalism in the Third World is a result of its ability to offer a popularised form of Protestant Christianity which satisfies the requirements of the impoverished masses. As Martin (1990: 258) puts it:

The very rapid growth of Pentecostalism occurs against this background. It offers participation, mutual support, emotional release, a sense of identity and dignity, and though authoritarian it does not offer authority to those who also have status in the outside world. Pentecostalism provides a substitute society, and within that society cares largely for its own...

Walker (1997: 28) notes that Pentecostalism as religion has ministered to the poor and the disinherited in a culturally appropriate manner and in so doing has initiated them into the working processes and value systems of modernity. He explains in this respect:

At the very least Pentecostalism throughout the world has not only provided meaning and succour to its adherents but it has also equipped many of them with the values of ascetic Protestantism so useful to the modern enterprise, and so essential for social mobility in a capitalist economy (Walker 1997: 36).

Chalfant, Beckley and Palmer (1981: 227) view Pentecostalism as a

powerful form of fundamentalism. They argue that it demonstrates the appeal of a close relationship between evangelism, a literal interpretation of the Bible, and a religious experience including tongues, healing, miracles and other paranormal experiences. Cox (1996: 81-83) asserts that Pentecostalism is backward looking particularly when he speaks of 'primal spirituality'. According to Cox (1996: 81-83), the movement attempts a restoration of the spiritual power which began the faith. It thus seeks to return to archetypal religious experiences exemplified by the emphasis put on the charismata. Hence, there is 'primal hope' that looks forward to the dawn of a new age, a millenarian heaven on earth⁷.

Scholars such as Droogers (2005: 265) allude to the fact that external conditions such as poverty and underdevelopment trigger revival and innovation in Pentecostal religiosity. Modernization does not lead to secularization but to sacralisation. Droogers (2005: 265) explains as follows:

Though modernization seems identical with progress, to many people suffering is abundant, especially in the third world, but also in the urban margins of so-called developed countries. The wealth of the few is paid for by the poverty of the many. Because Pentecostalism applies the gifts of the Spirit to instant resolution of problems (especially through healing), the link with suffering and problem-solving is only natural. The Pentecostal church is one of the addresses where healing and health appear to be available. When modernisation has not produced an adequate medical infrastructure, despite the illusion of progress, such help is more than welcome.

Maxwell (2006: 184) carried out an in-depth study of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA). The study was carried out during the period of economic and political turmoil when Zimbabwe's health care and education deteriorated, unemployment increased, public sector wages were falling behind the rate of inflation and civil servants were forced to strike. Growing industrial unrest from the mid-1990s onwards reflected growing trade union militancy that eventually led to the formation of the MDC (Maxwell 2006: 184-185). Maxwell (2006: 184) summarises the conditions in Zimbabwe as follows: "In Zimbabwe healthcare and education deteriorated, unemployment increased, while the population expanded with many young people

⁷ Millenarianism is the belief that Christ's return to Earth is imminent, and that when he does return there will exist a thousand years during which holiness will prevail and Christ will reign on Earth (Chalfant *et al* 1981: 231).

migrating to towns and cities. By 1998 many Zimbabweans were only eating one meal a day”.

Maxwell's (2006: 185) study thus shows Pentecostalism as a:

quintessentially popular religion, able to satisfy existential passions and to aid those struggling for survival. In particular it demonstrates how Pentecostal religion addresses the personal sense of abjection created by shattered hopes of independence, and offers security in the face of state retrenchment, the capriciousness of global capitalism and growing levels of violence and crime. Beyond providing them with security, the Pentecostal community captures and offers them stability and hope as they strive toward something better.

In Maxwell's (2006: 189) study, the Pentecostal church is a "refugee camp". According to Maxwell (2006: 192), the preponderance of images of refuge, security and protection in contemporary Pentecostal preaching in Zimbabwe does suggest that there is an element of escapism or flight from the world in this form of Christian religion. Maxwell (2006: 193) further reiterates that:

Numerous Zimbabweans enter ZAOGA assemblies with low self esteem, feeling wretched, despised and abused. But within the safe confines of the Pentecostal community they experience a revelation. They learn that they are not a 'nobody' but a 'somebody'. Even though they may not have 'big things' they are nevertheless 'special'. They are no longer just citizens of a state that has broken its promises and increasingly resorts to surveillance and control; they have new royal identity as members of the Kingdom of God.

With the information obtained from the above international literature, an empirical study, particular to the Zimbabwe situation, and which produced descriptive statistical data, was undertaken.

Empirical Study

Questionnaire

To obtain data about the role of Pentecostalism during the period of economic and political turmoil, a questionnaire was developed. The findings of Martin (1996: 45-46) and Maxwell (2006: 189) were used in planning the questionnaire. According to Martin (1996: 45-46), "the message of redemption or 'freedom from slavery', and the promise of healing resonate powerfully amongst people caught up in every kind of abuse, violation and indebtedness".

The questionnaire comprised two sections. The purpose of Section A, firstly, was to establish the gender of the respondents in order to determine whether gender plays a role when respondents explain what they perceive to be the major attraction of Pentecostalism from their own view point. The respondents were requested to tick off their specific gender in the applicable block. Secondly, Section A aimed at finding out the length of membership of each respondent at the church – how long one has been a member of the church. This was meant to find out the period when one joined the church and also to establish whether Pentecostalism as religion was able to sustain and retain members for a long period or more than two years. If the member was able to remain within the church, the researcher would then proceed and find out the major attraction of Pentecostalism to that member. Thirdly, Section A aimed at finding out whether the respondents had a special role within the church.

The purpose of Section B of the questionnaire, firstly, was to identify the specific problems that the respondents experienced as a result of the economic and political conditions in Zimbabwe in the past decade (2000 – 2010). Secondly, Section B aimed at finding out the specific role of the church in addressing the problems of the believers in terms of pastoral care. Thirdly, Section B aimed at finding out the opinions of the respondents on whether the church succeeded in protesting against economic decline and tyranny and also in providing a sanctuary to those who were emotionally and spiritually distressed. Fourthly, the aim of Section B was to find out the values that were imparted to the believers as a way of mitigating the problems of the past decade. Fifthly, the section aimed at finding out whether the church's theme of reformation assisted to change perceptions of society. An open question was presented to the respondents in which they were requested to outline their understanding of reformation and the impact of the message of reformation on society. Finally, Section B aimed at finding out on what motivated the respondents to join the church. The initial draft of the questionnaire was discussed with an expert to determine the validity of the two sections. It resulted in a change of wording in an attempt to ensure that the respondents understood the gist of the two sections.

Respondents

Five hundred (544) respondents (8 groups of 68) participated in the research project. 68 members were selected from each congregation

and 8 congregations were selected making a total of 544 respondents. The ordinary church members comprised 480 respondents. The average length of membership ranged from six months to ten years. The sample comprised of 64 senior church members who held positions of responsibility in the church such as pastors, deacons and evangelists. Their average length of membership at the church ranged from five to ten years.

Data Collection

Three weeks prior to the administration of the questionnaires, permission was obtained from the church headquarters at Celebration centre in Harare. The questionnaires were administered during eight sessions. It was done by the following Celebration church branches: Celebration Centre Borrowdale, Harare City Centre, Hatfield, Gweru, Bulawayo main, Mzilikazi, Epworth and Kadoma.

All the respondents from each of the eight branches completed the questionnaires all at once supervised by the researcher himself. This was to avoid respondents discussing with other fellow members and therefore influencing the outcomes of the survey. However, there was a possibility that pastors could possibly exchange notes from one branch to another in their weekly meetings, for example, the Hatfield branch is very close to the Epworth branch, and the two pastors often meet.

The procedure for all groups of respondents was identical. Prior to the completion of the questionnaires, the instructions were read out loud to the respondents. Difficult words were explained, as any misunderstanding could have influenced the results of the respondents. The respondents were encouraged to ask questions prior to and during the completion of the questionnaires, and were ensured that they could take all the time they needed to complete the questionnaires. Participants' anonymity was assured and voluntary participation in the research project was ascertained. Respondents were asked to write their responses as comprehensively as possible on the questionnaire paper itself. A 100% response rate was obtained because the questionnaire was completed in the presence of the researcher and thus collected by the researcher himself. The collected data were then prepared for analysis. A system of coding the qualitative data was used to analyse the responses to the open ended questions. The coding of qualitative data entailed assigning unique labels to responses that contained references to specific categories of information. The following procedures were followed with regard to the analysis of the responses to the closed questions: sorting; quality checking; data entering; data categorizing; and checking the frequency (N=) counts for each of the variables.

Results

| Variable | Groups | | | |
|-------------------------|---------|------|--------------------|------|
| | Pastors | | Ordinary believers | |
| | N = | % | N= | % |
| Poverty | 54 | 84.3 | 412 | 85.8 |
| Low Salaries | 39 | 60.9 | 273 | 56.8 |
| Lack of health care | 34 | 53.1 | 307 | 63.9 |
| Lack of social services | 35 | 54.6 | 288 | 60 |
| All forms of abuse | 40 | 62.5 | 374 | 77.9 |

Table 1. Responses on the different types of problems that affected the respondents as a result of the economic and political turmoil of the past decade (2000 – 2010)

Analysis:

Respondents were asked a question on the different types of problems that affected them as a result of the economic and political turmoil of the past decade (2000 – 2010).

Pastors

Pastors identified the following as the major problems that affected them as a result of the economic and political turmoil of the past decade (2000 – 2010): Poverty (84.3%, N=54); low salaries (60.9%, N=39), lack of health care (53.1%, N=34), lack of social services (54.6%, N=35), all forms of abuse (62.5%, N=40). Respondents explained that the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy rendered the State unable to discharge its social services such as education, and state obligations such as payment of meaningful civil servants' salaries were ignored. However, 62.5% (N=40) noted that the State became immoral and, therefore, resorted to violence which resulted in all types of abuse such as sexual abuse (women being raped) and physical abuse (rampant beatings of opposition party supporters).

Ordinary believers

Respondents in this category identified the following as the major problems that affected them as a result of the economic and political turmoil of the past decade (2000 – 2010): Poverty (85.8%, N=412); low salaries (56.8%, N=273); lack of health care (63.9%, N=307); lack of social services (60%, N=288); all forms of abuse (77.9%, N=374). The ordinary believers viewed poverty as the prime evil and a direct result of the economic and political turmoil of the past decade. Other problems obviously centred on health and other social services as the government became bankrupt and unable to offer such services. The ordinary believers also noted that as the State became more desperate in holding on to power, it had to apply more unorthodox and "dirty" tactics such as intimidation and violence.

Analysis:

Respondents were asked a question on the different types of roles played by the church in mitigating the problems experienced by the believers in the past decade (2000 – 2010).

| Variable | Groups | | | |
|-----------------------|---------|------|--------------------|------|
| | Pastors | | Ordinary believers | |
| | N = | % | N= | % |
| Pastoral | 60 | 93.7 | 446 | 92.9 |
| Donations to the poor | 38 | 59.3 | 259 | 53.9 |
| Looking after orphans | 42 | 65.6 | 268 | 55.8 |
| Counselling | 34 | 53.1 | 273 | 56.8 |
| Empowerment | 42 | 65.6 | 331 | 68.9 |

Table 2. Responses on the different types of roles played by the church in addressing the problems experienced by the believers in the past decade (2000 – 2010)

Pastors

Pastors identified the following roles that were played by the church in mitigating the problems of the believers: Pastoral (93.7%, N=60); donations to the poor (59.3%, N=38); looking after orphans (65.6%, N=42); counselling (53.1%, N=34); empowerment (65.6%, N=42). Pastors emphasised pastoral care – guiding the church to face the challenges and realities of the past decade. The biggest challenge, then, was to look after church members who were emotionally and spiritually distressed and coming with all sorts of problems.

Ordinary Believers

Ordinary believers identified the following roles that were played by the church in mitigating their problems: Pastoral (92.9%, N=446); donations to the poor (53.9%, N=259); looking after orphans (55.8%, N=268); counselling (56.8%, N=273); empowerment (68.9%, N=331). Amongst the ordinary believers, the most notable roles were that of providing pastoral care, making donations to the poor and empowering members to survive on their own through imparting survival skills and strategies. Due to high levels of poverty, the church was instrumental in mobilising food, blankets and clothing for the most disadvantaged members of the church including payment of fees for orphaned children. Other members such as those suffering from incurable diseases such as HIV/AIDS were very dependent on the church for their welfare and wellbeing. The latter could not afford to fend for themselves due to ill health and the harsh economic conditions that prevailed.

| Groups | | | |
|-------------|----------|--------------------|----------|
| Pastors | | Ordinary believers | |
| Affirmative | Negative | Affirmative | Negative |
| Yes = N % | No = N % | Yes = N % | No = N % |
| 53 82.8 | 10 15.6 | 412 85.8 | 67 13.9 |

Table 3. Responses on whether the church succeeded in protesting against economic decline and tyranny

Analysis:

Respondents were asked a question whether the church succeeded in protesting against economic decline and tyranny.

Pastors

82.8% (N=53) of the respondents were affirmative in their response to the above-mentioned question. Respondents agreed that the church succeeded in protesting or speaking against economic decline and tyranny. Furthermore, they explained that the church remains the only custodian of political and national consciousness in Zimbabwe. As such it should remain apolitical and condemn any political movement that engages in immoral and sinful acts. 15.6% (N=10) of the respondents disagreed with the statement and argued that tyranny and violence still continues to escalate in Zimbabwe.

Ordinary Believers

85.8% (N=412) of the respondents in this category agreed that the church succeeded in protesting or speaking against economic decline and tyranny. The respondents noted that the economic and political environment in Zimbabwe could no longer give believers hope for the future and the only answer came from God and the Bible. Consequently, biblical citations such as 2nd Corinthians 5 verse 7 gave them strength to face their daily challenges. 13.9% (N=67) of the respondents disagreed with the statement and argued that the church has not succeeded in fighting tyranny.

| Variable | Pastors | | Ordinary believers | |
|--------------|---------|------|--------------------|------|
| | N = | % | N= | % |
| Perseverance | 42 | 65.6 | 412 | 85.8 |
| Self denial | 38 | 59.3 | 398 | 82.9 |
| Purity | 36 | 56.2 | 336 | 70 |
| Boldness | 53 | 82.8 | 451 | 93.9 |
| Faithfulness | 29 | 45.3 | 340 | 70.8 |

Table 4. Responses on the different values imparted to respondents as a strategy to mitigate the problems that affected the believers in the past decade (2000 – 2010)

Analysis:

Respondents were asked a question on the different values given to them as a strategy to mitigate the problems they encountered.

Pastors

Pastors noted the following values that emerged from their teachings during the weekly sermons and cell group meetings: Perseverance (65.6%, N=42); self denial (59.3%, N=38); purity (56.2%, N=36); boldness (82.8%, N=53); faithfulness (45.3%, N=29). It was clear from the pastors that they focused on preparing believers for the new age; hence, emphasis was placed on primal hope. They encouraged believers to be fearless, righteous and to endure the present-day problems.

Ordinary Believers

Ordinary believers noted the following values that were drawn from the weekly sermons and cell group meetings: Perseverance (85.8%, N=412); self denial (82.9%, N=398); purity (70%, N=336); boldness (93.9%, N=451); faithfulness (70.8%, N=340). Respondents in this category pointed out that the values imparted by the church leadership gave them strength to face the challenges of the day and prepared them to focus on the 'spiritual' treasures and not the 'material'. Pentecostalism, therefore, provided believers with a place of refuge where believers could access the "spiritual blessings" and not the "material blessings".

Discussion

The results of this study are reviewed in terms of the research findings of international scholars such as Droogers (2005), Martin (1996; 2011) and Maxwell (2006). In a research project conducted by Droogers (2005: 263), which was focused on Pentecostalism, he suggested that what happens in economic life is compensated for by a similar but inverted process in religious life. Those who have been dispossessed in economic terms and do not enjoy access to the economic means of production, gain control over the religious means of production, and become the owners of a religious product that – under current market conditions – sells well. He explains in this regard:

If the gifts of the spirit are for everyone, this religious capital is democratized. The economically poor become – religiously speaking – rich and blessed. Pentecostal churches are characterized by the multiplicity of tasks that members fulfil and through which they construct their identity. During the day, they may be anonymous workers, whereas in church they have the guarantee of being somebody. No clergy serve as owners of the religious means of production. The language is that of the poor classes, not that of a theologically well-educated elite. Especially when prosperity is viewed as God's promise to the faithful, the religious rich live from the hope that they will also become economically rich. They then have come full circle and have succeeded – through the Pentecostal church – to find their place in a class society (Droogers 2005: 263-264).

Martin (1990: 205-206) conducted similar research on the relationship between Pentecostalism and economic advancement and he asserts that Pentecostal religion and economic advancement do often go together, and when they do so, appear mutually to support and reinforce one another. Pentecostalism attracts converts because it combines material and spiritual improvement. According to Martin (1990: 219), during the period of acute social distress, the poor saw that the austere moral and economic rules of Pentecostalism offered enticing – and well-defined-route for upward mobility. More recently, Martin (2011: 80-81) corroborates his previous assertions and concludes that "from almost all the evidence cited, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, the failure of the state is clearly important in stimulating a shift from politics to religion".

Maxwell (2006: 207) also conducted similar research on the impact of Pentecostalism on post-independence Zimbabwe society that was affected by the 'spirit of poverty'. In his findings, Maxwell (2006: 207) explains as follows:

Doubtless many ZAOGA members rushed for deliverance to 'get ahead', drawn by the images of material success, sophistication and modernity actively promoted by the leadership. But it is clear from the hundreds of letters Guti received from ordinary church members that the majority did not so much seek prosperity as security: 'to stay well at home' – kugara zwakanaka kumusha. They looked to the church, and to Guti in particular, for protection from ancestral curse and for fertility, healing, employment, good marriages... .

The research findings of the above-mentioned international scholars illuminate the findings of this study because Pentecostalism is

viewed as a movement where the powerless protest within the domain of everyday church practice. Pentecostalism is seen as catering to the real needs of the people and countering the woes of modernisation. As Maxwell (2006: 209) further states: "contemporary Pentecostalism is a highly successful popular religion: a set of ideas and practices that addresses adherents' existential concerns for wholeness, purity, meaning and empowerment".

Conclusion

The Celebration church ministries in Zimbabwe represent one of the Pentecostal churches that were formed in the midst of economic decline and tyranny in Zimbabwe characterised by violence and forceful land invasions. The church's message of reformation qualifies it as a renewal movement that was aimed at protesting against economic decline and tyranny. The results of this study reveal that Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe is a popular movement and grows very rapidly in conditions of economic decline and tyranny. According to Cox (1996: xv), current trends show that it is secularity, not spirituality that is headed for extinction. Sociologists such as Comte (1986), Durkheim (1961) and Weber (1958) suggested that the technological advancements and growth in scientific thinking would lead to a decline or even disappearance of religion. However, this is not likely to be seen in many parts of the world including Zimbabwe. Instead, a religious renaissance or resurgence is underway.

Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe is also evolving, particularly as seen during the economic and political turmoil of the past decade. It is clear from the preaching of the pastors at Celebration church that emphasis is on teaching members of the church to be bold and fearless and seek security from Jesus. According to Maxwell (2006: 188), Pentecostals tend to focus on Christ's blood protection quality in their ongoing struggle with the devil and his emissaries in this world. As noted from the results of the empirical study, the ZANU (PF) regime epitomises the devil and his emissaries. The economic and political chaos in Zimbabwe was seen by believers as the work and manifestation of the devil and the Celebration church thus aimed at fighting the devil and putting the devil on fire. The ongoing struggle with the evil imposed by the devil was evident during the weekly sermons and praise and worship sessions. The emphasis on reformation was meant to challenge and change individuals, society and government.

As observed in this study, Pentecostalism is a place of refuge, a sanctuary that provides hope and security to believers who are

suffering abuse and violation. Believers are instructed to seek God and fight the devil. In God they are offered refuge, security and protection. The Pentecostal gospel becomes a vital weapon amidst economic and political turmoil in Zimbabwe. However, the Celebration church does not only provide spiritual refuge, but welfare for the many disadvantaged members of the church. Believers are guided by their primal hope and eagerly wait for the dawn of a new age, a millenarian heaven on earth when the divine norms and values will be bestowed.

In this study, I have attempted to use research outcomes in the field of sociology of religion to understand Pentecostal religiosity, particularly the role of religion during the unsettled times in Zimbabwe.

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