

# MODERN PENTECOSTALISM AS AN URBAN PHENOMENON: THE CASE OF THE FAMILY OF GOD CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE

Lovemore Togarasei

**Abstract:** The past twenty to thirty years in the history of Zimbabwean Christianity have witnessed the emergence of a new breed of Pentecostalism that tends to attract the middle and upper classes urban residents. This paper presents findings from a case study of one such movement, the Family of God church. It describes and analyses the origins, growth and development of this church as an urban modern Pentecostal movement. The first section of the paper discusses the origins and development of the church focusing on the life of the founder. The second section focuses on the teaching and practices of the church. The church's doctrines and practices are here analysed to find out the extent to which these have been influenced by the socio-political and economic challenges in the urban areas. The paper concludes that the modern Pentecostal movement is meant to address urban needs.

## *Introduction*

A few years<sup>1</sup> after the Azusa Street Revival in North America, the event that marked the beginning of Pentecostal Christianity,<sup>2</sup> missionaries of this new form of Christianity had spread around the globe.

---

<sup>1</sup> The first version of this paper was presented at the Urban Life in 20th Century Africa Conference on 13 March 2004 at Trinity College, Cambridge, UK. Special thanks to Ford Foundation and Isaac Newton Trust of Cambridge for funding my six months Visiting Research Fellowship from October 2003 to March 2004 at the Centre of African Studies, University of Cambridge. Many thanks also to the Centre staff, Dr. John Lonsdale, Prof. Birgit Meyer and participants at the conference for their comments.

<sup>2</sup> The Azusa Street Revival of 1906 is taken by many, e.g. W. Cesar, 'From Babel to Pentecost: A socio-historical-theological study of the growth of Pentecostalism', in: A. Corten and R. Marshall-Fratani (eds.), *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, London: Hurst and Company 2001, 22-40, as the beginning of Pentecostal Christianity. However, the view taken by E. A. Wilson, 'They Crossed the Red Sea, Didn't They? Critical History and Pentecostal Beginnings,' in: *The Globalisation of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, Carlisle: Regnum Books International 1999, 112, that there had been expressions of Pentecostalism earlier, for example the Topeka, Kansas events of 1901 is acceptable. W.J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide*, Massachusetts: Hendrikson Publishers 1997, 20-24, even questions whether Pentecostalism started with Parham or Seymour. I therefore think that the beginning of Pentecostalism should be seen as a process that culminated at the Azusa Street Revival.

Only two years after the revival, the movement had reached South Africa from which it quickly leaped into Zimbabwe.<sup>3</sup> Through the influence of the Apostolic Faith Church, which quickly became the region's largest Pentecostal church and a major catalyst for Pentecostal advance into Zimbabwe,<sup>4</sup> Pentecostalism led to the mushrooming of several African Initiated Churches (AICs) in Zimbabwe starting from the 1920s. The Johane Marange Apostolic Church, Johane Masowe Apostolic Church, Samuel Mutendi's Zion Christian Church are some of the churches started during this period which have managed to stand the test of time. Although these churches drew followers from different social and economic classes, notable was their association with the poor, the less educated and those in the rural areas.

In the past 20 years or so a new breed of Pentecostalism has, however, emerged not only in Zimbabwe, but also in many countries worldwide. I have decided to call this breed 'modern Pentecostalism' to distinguish it from the Pentecostal movement of the 1920s and the 1930s in Zimbabwe. This modern Pentecostalism is distinguished from the older form because of its attraction of the urban middle class, the elite and the fairly educated into its fold. A. Corten and R. Marshall-Fratani describe this form of Pentecostalism as; '(...) a New Reformation of the 20th century particularly in the developing world (...) (which) projects a new vision of the world, responding in particular to processes and promises of modernity and modernisation.'<sup>5</sup> This form of Pentecostalism has given birth to numerous churches in Zimbabwe. One of these churches, which is the object of this study, is the Family of God Church (FOG). I choose to focus on this church because, though it has had tremendous influence on the life of people in Zimbabwe's urban areas, it has not received close attention from scholars. Founded in 1980, the church has witnessed tremendous growth within and beyond Zimbabwe. Today the church has over 54 congregations in towns, growth points and major service centres in Zimbabwe. It has also spread over the continent of Africa and beyond, boasting of not less than ten congregations overseas.

To discuss this church I depend much on information I gathered from adherents, dropouts, critics and sympathisers of the church whom

---

<sup>3</sup> C.F. Hallencreutz, *Religion and Politics in Harare 1890-1980*, Sweden: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> D. Maxwell, 'Historicizing Christian Independency: the Southern African Pentecostal Movement ca 1908-1960', *Journal of African History*, 39/2 (1999), 243-264.

<sup>5</sup> Corten and Marshall-Fratani, 1.

I interviewed. I also gathered some data as a participant observer in a number of the church's services from as far back as 1992 when I was a student at the University of Zimbabwe where the church was very active. The church also runs a website,<sup>6</sup> which has proved to be very informative and so forms part of my data pool. Thus I mainly rely on primary data because, apart from one B.A. Honours dissertation<sup>7</sup>, I am not aware of any other scholarly work that has been produced on this church's history and development.<sup>8</sup>

#### *A Brief History of the Founding of the Family of God Church*

Like most Pentecostal churches elsewhere, the history of FOG is incomplete without the history of the founder.<sup>9</sup> Also called Andrew Wutawunashe World Wide Ministries, World Wide Family of God Churches and Christian Family Faith Tabernacles, FOG was founded by Andrew Wutawunashe.<sup>10</sup>

Born in 1953 in the Gutu district of Masvingo province, Andrew's early life was characterised by political activism rather than religion.<sup>11</sup> In 1973, while at the University of Zimbabwe (then University of

<sup>6</sup> Website of African Revival Productions of the Worldwide Family of God Church: [www.africanrevival.com](http://www.africanrevival.com).

<sup>7</sup> S. Sola, *A Survey and Analysis of the Origin, Growth and Development of the Family of God as a Pentecostal Church within the Christian Movement*, unpublished B.A. Hons dissertation, Harare: Department of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy, University of Zimbabwe 1996.

<sup>8</sup> R. Mate, 'Wombs as God's Laboratories: Pentecostal Discourses of Femininity in Zimbabwe', *Africa*, 72/4 (2002), 549-568, has written on the ministry of women in this church but has very little on the church's history. R.I.J. Hackett, 'Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation of Media Technologies in Nigeria and Ghana', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 28/3 (1998), 350-374, also mentioned Wutawunashe but does not say much on the history, doctrine and practice of the church.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the link between W.F. Kumuyi and the Deeper Life Bible Church in Nigeria (M.A. Ojo, 'Deeper Life Bible Church of Nigeria,' in: P. Gifford (ed.), *New Dimensions in African Christianity*, Ibadan: Sefer, 1993, 163-167) and Ezekiel Guti and Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) (D. Maxwell, 'Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty? Pentecostalism, Prosperity and Modernity in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28/3 (1998), 350-374.

<sup>10</sup> I should mention that some pastors in this church are not happy with the position that the church was founded by Andrew Wutawunashe. They think many people were instrumental in the formation of the church. Some of them have left to start their own movements accusing Andrew of creating a personality cult around himself.

<sup>11</sup> My efforts to interview Andrew Wutawunashe were fruitless as he was continually said to be busy and out of the country on church business. The man is so elusive, chauffeur driven, he appears in the middle of church services, give his sermon and disappears under his body-guards. A respondent told me that getting to interview the

Rhodesia), he became involved in student activism. He was a member of the Shona-Ndebele Society, a political organ that opposed the colonial regime of Ian Smith. Other members of this society included Witness Mangwende, a late government Minister, and Simba Makoni, a former Minister of Finance, who were Student Representative Council president and secretary general respectively. In the same year (1973), Andrew together with other students were arrested for plotting against the government. This saw him dropping from his studies. They were imprisoned for three months at Marondera prison. After their release, Andrew had to go home to Masvingo because one of the conditions of the jail sentence was that the convicts were not to be seen within 20 km of the city of Salisbury (now Harare).

Andrew's religious journey started on 6th June 1974 when he felt totally transformed and entered into a new relationship with Jesus which saw him making a total break with his former life. Thus when Andrew enrolled at Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone in the same year, he became involved, not in politics, but in religion. He joined a students' Christian group which was called Bible Study Union. In fact, though Andrew traces his strong religious awakeness back to Zimbabwe, I am of the opinion that his experiences in Sierra Leone formed his strong Pentecostal life. A number of factors support this view.

First, it was in Sierra Leone that Andrew started attending a Pentecostal Church, Bethel Bible Pentecostal Church. This church's influence on him is even seen in that he has named FOG's Bible School, Bethel Training Mission. Second, it was also in Sierra Leone that Andrew claims to have received a call. He says this happened one day in late September 1975 when he felt in his heart God telling him to go back to Zimbabwe and become a preacher. Not convinced by this feeling he says he continued praying to God for the confirmation of this feeling. The confirmation came one day in the form of what he calls a vision of five pillars, based on Isaiah 54. Andrew's interpretation of this prophecy in connection with his ministry is rather interesting. In this prophecy, Deutero-Isaiah, 'expounds the expected deliverance (of Israel) in the total context of God's purpose for Israel,

---

man is almost impossible. One explanation to this elusiveness was said to be his political involvement, which makes him suspicious of strangers. I am also of the opinion that the man wants to protect his 'divinity' by appearing 'transcendent'. I therefore depend on my interviews with his relatives and church members, church records and on the work of S. Sola who managed to interview him once.

and through Israel, for the world.<sup>12</sup> The prophet gave these oracles when the armies of Cyrus were victoriously extending the bounds of the Persian Empire, and the collapse of Babylon, where the Jews were held in exile, was imminent. How Andrew then found prophecy of his ministry in these oracles can only find answer in what J. Lonsdale has said about the Kikuyu in Kenya and the Bible, 'Kikuyu have read the Bible as an allegory of their own history.'<sup>13</sup> This is exactly how Andrew and his FOG have read the Bible, 'as an allegory of their own history.'

After receiving this vision Andrew started preaching in the students' Bible Study Union. Slowly he started accepting the call to prophecy. He says he was further encouraged by one of the colleagues in the study union who told him that God had revealed it to him that Andrew was to go and preach. Thus at the end of November 1975, Andrew packed his bags, left the university and headed home to take up God's call.

When Andrew returned back to Zimbabwe he briefly ministered in the Dutch Reformed Church, the church in which he was brought up by his parents. He soon became a youth leader within the youth department of the church. He became involved in the church's Mobile Unit that preached the gospel around the city of Harare. It appears Andrew started using what he had learnt from the Pentecostal church in Sierra Leone, for he started praying for the sick, something which was not practiced in the Dutch Reformed Church. The church therefore became suspicious of his activities and doctrine. It appears Andrew had made up his mind to start his own movement as he soon left the church and continued preaching and praying for the sick.

Soon Andrew gathered a group of youths who included his brothers and started the Witness Ministries. As M. Kamwendo says, the Witness Ministries was virtually a youth movement.<sup>14</sup> Right from this stage the movement had elitist and modernist characters. Three of the small group, Erasmus, Jonathan (Andrew's brothers) and Jonas Mushosho were undergraduate students at the University of Rhodesia. The idea to start the church was also discussed right in the heart of the city of

<sup>12</sup> E.W. Heaton, *A Short Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, Oxford: One World Publications 1997, 116.

<sup>13</sup> J. Lonsdale, 'Kikuyu Christianities,' in: D. Maxwell and I. Lawrie (eds.), *Christianity and the African Imagination: Essays in Honour of Adrian Hastings*, Leiden: Brill 2002, 158.

<sup>14</sup> M. Kamwendo, *Its time to Unleash your Greatness*, Harare: Wonak Investments Pvt Ltd 2003, 48.

Harare, in the house of Deacon Chigawazira.<sup>15</sup> At the time of formation, however, the Witness Ministries was a non-denominational movement. As S. Sola puts it, '(it was) just a prayer group (. . .) (which) went around the streets of Harare and there they would witness to the people on how God was eager to have them saved and become his children.'<sup>16</sup> They ministered in Scripture Unions<sup>17</sup> throughout the city and many parts of the country. They also worked closely with the University of Rhodesia's Christian Union. Though claiming to be non-denominational, the Witness Ministries manifested Pentecostal features. They emphasized the idea of being born-again, speaking in tongues and performance of miracles. More and more people were won to the Witness Ministries and so a centre of the movement was opened at 99 Harare Street in Harare.

Andrew's activism in the youth department of the Dutch Reformed Church and the formation of the Witness Ministries should be seen as steps towards the formation of his own church in 1980. This is because we should recall that he had seen a vision which compelled him to abandon his academic pursuits. Through the Witness Ministries, therefore, Andrew managed to gather a number of followers in the name of a non-denominational movement. Now with enough people to start his own church, at the beginning of 1980 he called some of his early followers, told them what God was expecting from him and all agreed to start FOG.

Although Andrew claims to be the sole founder of the movement, many other pastors of the church do not accept this. They argue that many other people including ordinary members of the church played pivotal roles in building the church. I am also of the opinion that Andrew's Pentecostal doctrine was influenced by many of the old generation of born-again in Harare. There is no doubt that as a Harare preacher he interacted with Pentecostal preachers while he was still in the Dutch Reformed Church. Often in his sermons he mentions the

---

<sup>15</sup> Pastor M. Chinoda, Interview, Harare, 14 July 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Sola, 14.

<sup>17</sup> Introduced in the 1890s in Britain to evangelise school children, the Scripture Union (in schools) and Christian Union (in universities and tertiary colleges) have had strong Pentecostal influences on students. Matthews Ojo (1986) describes how Campus Christianity influenced charismatic movements in western Nigeria in the 1960s and 1970s. Hackett, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 260, also mentions these non-denominational evangelical movements which flooded the schools in Nigeria in the 1940s from Britain with their emphasis on personal salvation, a strict Bible centred morality and soul winning as having laid the foundation for later charismatic and Pentecostal movements.

veteran ZAOGA evangelist, Abel Sande, as his close friend and spiritual father. He even bought him a truck when he was purged from the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA). They have remained good friends up to this day.<sup>18</sup> He should also have been influenced by the Kenyan Pentecostal preacher, Joe Kayo, who according to J. Makumbe introduced the aggressive policy towards giving in FOG.<sup>19</sup> He also appears to have read American Pentecostal literature (e.g. the writings of American Pentecostal preachers like Ernest Angley and Jimmy Swaggart) for his gospel is so similar to those schooled in American Pentecostalism like Ezekiel Guti of ZAOGA, Tom Deuschle of Hear the Word Ministries and even Enoch Sitima of Bible Life Ministries on Botswana.

*The Church as an Urban Pentecostal Movement*

Having been formed by reasonably well-educated urban youths (Andrew was 27 years old when the church was formed), the church remained an urban-elitist and modernist movement. Although it is true that not everyone in the church is rich or educated, the church attracts those who are seeking both success and prosperity in life. The bulk of its membership are from the high density suburbs. They are attracted by the church's teaching on prosperity although this prosperity remains more of an aspiration than a reality for many. In the rest of this essay I therefore demonstrate the urban-elitist and modernist characters of the church by looking at its growth and development, structure, meeting places, music and doctrine.

*Growth*

One of the factors that have made FOG an urban-elitist and modernist movement is the trend the church took as it expanded from Harare into the world. The church's evangelistic targets were mainly schools, colleges and urban centres. Conventions and crusades were advertised in streets, radios and televisions. Camp meetings were also held for the youth in different urban centres.

From the capital city the church headed towards the second largest city of Zimbabwe. A church was opened in Bulawayo by 1981. Other

---

<sup>18</sup> Interview with five FOG members who confessed knowledge of the friendship, Harare, 2003.

<sup>19</sup> See: Sola.

branches soon followed in Gweru, Masvingo, Mutare and the rest of Zimbabwe's urban centres. By 1984 the church had already started making in-roads to other countries. Branches were opened in nearly all countries in the central and southern sub-region of Africa. In 1985 Andrew made eleven prophecies of the African Revival (the church's understanding of its role) that further strengthened the church's evangelisation.<sup>20</sup>

Based on these prophecies the church intensified its evangelisation. Branches were opened even outside Africa. Over the past 23 years of its existence, the church has grown in leaps and bounds. Within this short time FOG has managed to expand so rapidly confirming A. Droogers's observation that one of the characteristics of Pentecostalism is rapid expansion.<sup>21</sup> Statistical figures of church membership are, however, difficult to establish because the church does not keep registers of membership at all its congregations. I, however, found out, during my research that, the largest congregation in Kambuzuma, Harare, numbers between 300 and 700 members at each Sunday service. Congregations in smaller cities can be estimated between 100 and 200 members.

#### *Outreach Strategies*

Another factor that shows the urban-elitist features of FOG is its outreach strategy. The church has a well-defined evangelisation pattern. A town, suburb or any other locality is identified for evangelisation, normally as a result of a member of the church residing there. This is followed by advertisements for a crusade on radio and/or television. Banners are hung on street poles and posted on walls and at other strategic places in the city to publicise the event. The advertisements are as attractive as any other commercial advertisements. People are promised salvation (both physical and spiritual), healing, music and miracles. Usually Andrew himself speaks at these crusades. Converts are made and depending on their number a pastor is left to tender the new flock resulting in a branch in the locality.

---

<sup>20</sup> The prophecies seem to have been influenced by the prophecies of Isaiah 54-60 (Website of African Revival Productions of the Worldwide Family of God Church: [www.aficanrevival.com/prophecies](http://www.aficanrevival.com/prophecies)).

<sup>21</sup> A. Droogers, 'Globalisation and Pentecostal success' in: A. Corten and R. Marshall-Fratani (eds.), *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, London: Hurst and Company 2001, 41.



Apart from the crusades, the church has three important conventions each year. These conventions are also called camp meetings. The first is the Easter Convention which is held over the Easter holidays. This camp meeting is held in Harare at the Show grounds. The second is the August Convention which is held over the Heroes' holiday, originally in Masvingo but now it is used for rural areas crusades. This appears to be a deliberate move to evangelise the rural areas since for long the church remained an urban movement. The third is the Pan African and World Churches Convention which is held over a week from Christmas Eve to New Year's Eve at the Trade Fair grounds in Bulawayo. These conventions attract a lot of people since they are thoroughly advertised. Many people have been won into the church through these conventions. The conventions seem to have been deliberately timed to make sure that church members 'make a complete break with the past.'<sup>22</sup> Easter, Heroes and Christmas holidays are traditionally times when family members gather together to carry out traditional rituals like appeasement of ancestral spirits and the unveiling of tombstones (the erection of memorial tombstones on graves). Scheduling church activities during these times therefore keeps members away from these traditional practices.

Individual FOG members are also ever on a recruitment drive. Many approach you with the question, *Makaponeswa here?* (Have you been saved?) or *Makaberekwa here?* (Have you been born-again?) Those with cars offer people lifts in the hope of taking the opportunity to spread their word of salvation. Like other Pentecostals elsewhere, the cars have gospel messages stuck where the eyes cannot miss them.<sup>23</sup> Such messages include: 'With Jesus nothing is impossible', 'Jesus heals cancer', 'Put all your troubles in Jesus', 'Those who want to seek Jesus at the eleventh hour die at ten thirty', and such other messages. Such cars also greet you with gospel music once you are offered a lift (usually for free). Small groups of FOG members also go out on recruitment drives. S. Sola observed how such small groups went around the University of Zimbabwe halls of residence witnessing from door to door.<sup>24</sup> Members of the church are also missionaries to their families, friends and colleagues at work or at school. Thus trained or untrained, each member of the church is a missionary in his/her own right.

<sup>22</sup> Maxwell, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 350-374.

<sup>23</sup> Hackett, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 263, mentions car stickers as one of the many ways used by Ghanaian Pentecostals to preach.

<sup>24</sup> Sola, 21.

Because of its urban or modernist character, the church has also fully utilised the forces of globalisation and modernisation in its expansion.<sup>25</sup> What I have noticed is that most of the branches of the church have been established where a member or some members of the church are working or staying. Migrant labour, which is one characteristic of globalisation, has therefore, helped much in the expansion of the church.<sup>26</sup> Teachers, for example, have been very influential in the spread of the church's gospel. Many university students and graduates I interviewed said they got converted to FOG through their teachers who were members of the church.<sup>27</sup> Members who have been posted to other countries for professional business have been very instrumental in the founding of branches outside Zimbabwe. The church has also used radio and television religious programmes to spread its gospel. As Pastor M. Chinoda said, 'Because the church is the salt of the earth, most of our pastors take part in radio and television religious programmes and that way spread the message of the salvation brought by Jesus.'<sup>28</sup> As a progressive urban church, the church has even taken advantage of modern computer technology. The offices are fully computerised and the church even runs a worldwide web page through which it sells its history, teaching and practice to the world. Advertisements of forthcoming events are also posted on the web. An e-mail address is provided through which those who want to ask questions or those who seek the church's assistance may communicate.

#### *The Structure of the Church*

The structure of FOG also manifests its urban character. This is mainly seen in its leadership and fellowship groups. When one looks at the leadership structure of FOG one can easily mistake it for any successful business enterprise. It is also this structure then which shows the urban character of the church. At the top of the church structure is Andrew himself as the founder, overseer and prophet. Like a direc-

---

<sup>25</sup> For further discussion of globalisation and Pentecostalism see A. Droogers, *Between Babel and Pentecost*, 41-61.

<sup>26</sup> D. Maxwell, 'Christianity without Frontiers: Shona Missionaries and Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa' in: D. Maxwell and I. Lawrie (eds.), *Christianity and the African Imagination: Essays in Honour of Adrian Hastings*, Leiden: Brill 2002, 295-332.

<sup>27</sup> Most of the teachers are leaders of Scripture Union in their schools. Dr L. Dube-Chirairo says this about her conversion to FOG, 'I was born again in 1982 while in high school after a teacher who went to FOG preached about the need to give one's life to Jesus.' Interview, Harare, 15/08/03.

<sup>28</sup> Pastor M. Chinoda, Interview, see note 15.

tor of any company, he has a personal assistant. Andrew's offices are at Atlas House, first floor, along Robert Mugabe Road in Central Harare. This is the headquarters of the church worldwide. An administrator is in charge of the affairs of the centre. As the prophet of the church, Andrew makes all key decisions in the running of the church. He, through prophecy, comes up with annual themes for Christian study. 2003, for example, was the year of the Harvester. He controls the activities of the church in all its branches by always giving local pastors directions on what the church should do.

Below Andrew is his brother, Erasmus, who is the bishop of the church. He is the executive director of all the church's congregations. In practice Erasmus has become Andrew's deputy as he is the only one who takes charge of the church when Andrew is away.<sup>29</sup> From the bishop come pastors, elders and deacons. Pastors are divided into senior and junior pastors on the basis mainly of their experience and dedication to the interests of the church. All pastors are full time ministers of the church and have undergone training at Bethel Training Mission in Marondera, some 75 km east of Harare.

The training of pastors is another factor that shows the modernity of the church. It is a departure from old Pentecostal movements like Zionist and Apostolic churches in Zimbabwe whose clerics are not trained. Since the modern Pentecostal clerics minister to a rather elitist community, the clerics are trained in the church's doctrine of prosperity, management skills and other skills needed for the modern society and technology over and above other theology courses like Biblical studies. The course lasts a year and is completed in a diploma.

The church has a Board of Trustees made up of appointed pastors, deacons and elders. This board is divided into the Central Advisory Board and the Regional Advisory Board. The Central Advisory Board, in principle, is the supreme organ of the church dealing with all church matters at national and international levels. It is made up of appointed members from all Regional Advisory Boards. On the other hand Regional Advisory Boards only deal with regional matters of the church.

Leadership structures flow down to the grassroots of the church. At grassroots level the church is divided into different cells in accordance with residential areas. Each cell has its leader who contacts mid-week services each Tuesday evening. These leaders are called home cell

---

<sup>29</sup> Although this used to be the case in the church, at the time of writing, the author was informed by some adherents of the church that the office of the bishop was vacant following misunderstandings between Erasmus and the church over his Christian contacts.

leaders and in terms of leadership hierarchy come under church elders. There are also other leadership positions like choir leaders, youth leaders, ushers, money collectors, leaders of shepherding groups and so on. Nearly every member, including women who can also be appointed pastors, has a role to play in church. Considering that the church attracts young and upwardly mobile and ambitious individuals, this makes administrative sense as it gives everyone a responsibility for the church and quenches the leadership ambitions of the youth.

As an urban church FOG has also been accused of vices that are found in other urban institutions in Zimbabwe in its leadership structure. One such vice is nepotism. Because of unemployment in Zimbabwe (it stands at 70% today), many employers employ their relatives. The church's leadership structure is filled mainly by Andrew's relatives that Paul Gundani has described the church as, 'one of those churches run like a family business.'<sup>30</sup> Others have described it as a Wutawunashé dynasty. As we mentioned above Andrew and Erasmus are overseer and bishop respectively. Their father is the senior rural pastor. Another of Andrew's brothers, Jonathan, and his wife, Shuvai, play a key role in the church as the founders of the singing group, the Family Singers. Andrew's wife, Dr Rutendo, is the founder and leader of the Precious Stones (explained below). The church offices are manned by Wutawunashes and during my research I found out that most of the pastors and other leaders are related to Andrew in one way or the other.<sup>31</sup> In fact Sola is correct when she says, 'If one were to mention all the positions held by members of the Wutawunashé extended families, they would make a church on their own.'<sup>32</sup> According to insiders it is most of these relatives who make up the Board of Trustees.<sup>33</sup> The church, however, does not officially accept this. Whether the accusations are true or false, what we are interested in, anyway, is the fact that the church suffers the same accusations that other modern urban institutions in Zimbabwe are facing.

---

<sup>30</sup> P. Gundani, 'The Land Crisis in Zimbabwe and the role of the churches towards its resolution', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 28/2 (2002), 162.

<sup>31</sup> This has also been the case in the Jimmy Swaggart Ministries where at one time 22 Swaggart relatives were on the church's pay-roll (P. Gifford, *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*, Harare: Baobab Books and UZ Publication 1988, 60).

<sup>32</sup> Sola, 31.

<sup>33</sup> This is also true of other Pentecostal movements in Zimbabwe. D. Maxwell, '“Catch the Cockerel Before Dawn”: Pentecostalism and Politics in Post-colonial Zimbabwe', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 70/2, (2000), 249-277, also observed this phenomenon in ZAOGA.

Apart from having a well-defined leadership structure like any modern institution, the church's other urban-elitist character is seen in its fellowship groups. The groups, as we shall see, are meant to deal with urban needs and urban pressures. There are three fellowship groups: youth, women and men.

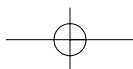
Having started as a youth movement, FOG has remained dominated by the youth. The church considers as belonging to the youth all between the ages of 12 and 35. This makes almost everyone in Zimbabwe youth considering the fact that life expectancy in the country has fallen down to 38 years. The youth therefore make more than 50% of the total population of the church. In fact at one service of the church about three-quarters of a congregation of about three hundred people were youths. Asked why the church is mainly a youth movement, Pastor M. Chinoda had this to say, 'FOG is an African revival meant to bring the world, starting with Africa, to God. To do this we need to change a whole generation. This can only be done by focusing on the youth who are tomorrow's leaders.'<sup>34</sup> But how has the church attracted the youth?

It is common knowledge that the youth are the most vulnerable group in every society. They still have a future to look forward to. They therefore want jobs, success and health. They want to know the purpose of life. Any institution that needs to attract them has to offer them what they are looking for. To me the urban-elitist and modernist character of FOG attracts these youths. Most of the youths in Zimbabwe are somewhat privileged to be open to modernity because of the level of literacy in the country (estimated at more than 85%). Young elites, potential elites and frustrated graduates therefore find the modernity of the church addressing their needs as we shall see when we come to consider the doctrine of the church. To address their needs the church divides the youth into various age groups.

The 12 to 21 age group is called the group of the overcomers. The church acknowledges that this age group faces the challenges of adolescence and so there is need for them to be taught how to overcome those challenges. The main message for this group is 'You are a Champion'.<sup>35</sup> Using scripture the overcomer is taught to overcome challenges like David and help the needy youths outside the church. Such challenges include peer pressure leading to sexual promiscuity

<sup>34</sup> Pastor M. Chinoda, Interview, see note 11.

<sup>35</sup> A. Wutawunashe, 'Understanding Overcomers,' undated document.



and drug addiction. The youth are taught how to conquer these in the name of Christ.

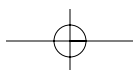
Those in age 22-35 are called purpose-pursuers or achievers. They are taught to discover themselves, to know what they want in life, pursue it and achieve it. They are encouraged to think beyond their boarders to have their influence felt all over the world. They are taught to aim higher in life, possess things, achieve in business (as teachers, authors or any other profession) and aim to be millionaires before reaching 30 years of age.<sup>36</sup> But whatever they achieve they are reminded to use it to build the house of God first as Jesus taught, 'Seek first his kingdom and His righteousness and all things will be added' (Matthew 6:33).

Male/female needs are also catered for. The youth ministry is therefore divided into Cornerstones and Plants to achieve this. The Cornerstones are overcomer and achiever girls meeting together to discuss womanhood while the Plants are Overcomer and Achiever boys meeting together to discuss manhood. The name Cornerstones is derived from Psalm 144:12, 'That our daughters may be as cornerstones polished after the similitude of a palace'. The group is therefore meant to promote womanhood at home, in church and in society at large. They do fundraising projects together and arrange birthday parties for their members. On the other hand the Plants (this name is also derived from Psalm 144:12, "... that our sons may be as plants growing up in their youth") are taught to be productive, reliable and strong. They raise money through projects and hold functions like birthday parties and bachelor's parties together.

The youth ministry is therefore the pillar of FOG. Its headquarters is in Gaborone, Botswana, the country of residence of the youth pastor. Each August the Southern Africa Youth Convention is held there. This, in a way, helps to give the church a transnational and international character. The youth are led by leaders who are well instructed to deal with the youth in the church's Youth Leaders' seminars. The youth are encouraged to raise money for the church, to worship through arts, for example, choirs, dramas, dance groups and so on, and to evangelise the world through outreaches, open air sermons, crusades to schools, universities and other youth centres.

---

<sup>36</sup> A. Wutawunashe, 'Understanding Achievers/Purpose pursuers,' undated document. Becoming a millionaire used to be an aspiration only some five years ago. Today nearly everyone in Zimbabwe is a millionaire because of the loss of value of the dollar due to high inflation.



FOG women have their fellowship group as well. In fact women's Christian organisations are the oldest fellowship groups starting within the mainline churches as early as Christianity was introduced in Zimbabwe. T. O. Ranger notes the emergence of uniformed Christian women's organisations like the Anglican Mothers' Union, the Methodist Ruwadzano and Catholic sororities devoted to the Virgin Mary in Manicaland in the 1920s.<sup>37</sup> The same was also true of the youth organisations we discussed above. However, the context of the church determined the activities of the organisations. The women's organisations noted by Ranger, being in rural areas, '(...) were only partly a means of instilling restrictive and inappropriate doctrines of sexual constraint and female subordination.'<sup>38</sup> The modern church in an urban setting addresses different issues as we see in the FOG women's ministry.

The FOG women's ministry is called Precious Women. The story of the group is that on the 2nd of May 1990, while in Durham, North Carolina with her husband, Dr Rutendo Wutawunashe, the founder of the ministry had a vision in which she saw a lump of soil. Water then appeared flowing over the lump of soil washing the soil away. As the soil was washed away, a bright green stone appeared from the lump of the soil. A sharp instrument also appeared cleaning up the crevices of the precious stone while water continued to flow cleaning up the stone. The vision was interpreted to mean the position of a woman in life. A woman, the interpretation goes, is like a lump of soil with treasure inside. The word of God, which is the water and the sharp instrument, gives a woman her true value (a bright green stone). Without it a woman is undervalued, whether educated or uneducated, rich or poor. This is a result of the work of the devil who causes the woman to sin, to suffer injustice, oppression and inferiority complex. Rutendo was then told to take this message to all women in the world. She was to teach them that with the word of God, they can realise their real value.

Based on the vision Dr Rutendo Wutawunashe then started a women's ministry in the church called Precious Stones after the precious stones named in Revelation 21 including gold and pearl. There are therefore 14 women groups based on these 14 precious stones. The women

---

<sup>37</sup> T.O. Ranger, 'Taking on the Missionary's Task: African Spirituality and the Mission Churches of Manicaland in the 1930s,' in: D. Maxwell and I. Lawrie (eds.), *Christianity and the African Imagination: Essays in Honour of Adrian Hastings*, Leiden: Brill 2002, 97.

<sup>38</sup> Ranger, 97.

are taught that they have value in life. They are encouraged to emulate the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:10-31. Each year they have a Precious Stones Women's Conference at the Harare International Conference Centre.

FOG's women ministry, in a number of ways, shows the urban character of the church. In their various groups women assist each other to cope with the daily pressures of urban life. Unlike in rural areas where social life revolves around kinship relations, in urban areas voluntary associations fill this gap left by loss of kin. The women provide material and social assistance to those of their group starting a home. They arrange house-warming parties for those moving into new houses, baby welcome parties, birthday parties, 'kitchen top-ups' and funeral assistance. House keeping matters like cooking, entertaining visitors and home décor are also taught. As R. Mate correctly argues these matters are quite relevant in a situation where some people's first contact with modernity and urban life is through education, marriage or employment.<sup>39</sup> Such people therefore need lessons on urban domesticity. The FOG women's ministry has even started the Gemstone Resource Centre meant to assist women getting into small businesses.<sup>40</sup> Women are encouraged to get into businesses to raise money for the church and for themselves. Even those employed elsewhere are encouraged to boost their finances by engaging in other income generation projects. The women are also taught to be presentable every time and everywhere. This is another clear testimony of the modernity of the church. Elaborate hair-dos and make-ups are encouraged in this church. Women are encouraged to put on clothes of 'silk and purple' like the virtuous wife of Proverbs. The women's ministry therefore runs a grooming school where one pays a small fee in order to be trained on how to present oneself as a modern woman.

Apart from the fact that men run most of the activities of the church, they also have their own fellowship group. The FOG men's fellowship is called the Mighty Men. There are 12 groups of the men's ministry named after the 12 sons of Jacob. The Mighty Men are encouraged to achieve for themselves and for the church of God. They are encouraged to work hard and accumulate wealth. Like other Pentecostal movements,<sup>41</sup> the church has a business forum for men called the

<sup>39</sup> Rekopantswe Mate, *Africa*.

<sup>40</sup> Mrs. B. Chinouriri, Interview, Harare, 4 August 2003.

<sup>41</sup> For example the Full Gospel Church has the Full Gospel Businessmen's Forum (P. Gifford, *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*, Baobab Books, Harare: University of



Projects and Investment Desk. It has a fund meant to provide capital for those who do not have enough money to start self-help projects. The desk is run like any modern money lending institution. As at 2003 one could borrow up to Z\$50 000 (about US\$10) and repay it at an interest in six months.<sup>42</sup>

#### *FOG's Meeting Places*

From the beginning the church reflected its urban-elitist character by meeting in modest environments. Right from the time the church was founded, members were prepared to rent premises in order to hold their meetings in modern buildings. Unlike the earlier Pentecostal movements, they never met under trees. They first met at 99 Harare Street in the city centre, from where they moved to Harare Show grounds before moving to Kambuzuma Cinema Theatre. The church has turned four cinema theatres into church buildings. These are Kambuzuma Theatre in Harare, 7Arts Theatre in Bulawayo, Gweru Theatre and Makoni Theatre in Rusape.

Apart from the cinema theatres the church also rents other good facilities for its services. In Harare, for example, the church is using Chitungwiza Aquatic Complex, a modern sporting facility as the meeting place for the Chitungwiza branch. Community halls, classrooms and church halls are other meeting places used by the church. It has also built its own facilities, for example, a modern church building in Masvingo. Asked why the church spends a lot of money on renting or building the best facilities, Pastor M. Chinoda said God wants the best and therefore should be worshipped in the best environment. This has made the church to maintain its modern-elitist character. I am of the opinion that social-economic class determines church affiliation among other factors, of course. Thus because of its modern-elitist outlook, FOG has attracted those who consider themselves, and those who aspire, to be modern and elitist. This has made the church an urban Pentecostal movement for the middle class and the elite. The modern meeting places of the church rather than meeting under trees in their modern suits and cars surely attracts such people.

Not only are the Sunday services held in good environments, conventions and crusades are also held in modern facilities. FOG was the

---

Zimbabwe 1988) and Hear the Word Church has the Victory Business Forum (T. Deuschle, *Building People Building Dreams: How a Church can Change a Nation*, Harare: Hear the Word Publishing 2003).

<sup>42</sup> Dr E. Manzungu, Interview, Harare, 6 June 2003.

first church to use the modern Harare International Conference Centre in Harare Sheraton Hotel for church business. As we have seen, women hold their Precious Women Annual Convention in the same venue. The Pan African and World Christian Convention is held at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair grounds in Bulawayo each December. Members attending the conventions have to book hotels and other public facilities for their accommodation. This underlines the modernity of the church as it likes to link itself with sites of business and success.

### *Music in Church*

Music plays a central role in nearly all the Christian churches. In Africa it is one way through which people express their theology.<sup>43</sup> FOG takes the same stance and goes further to use music in a way which reflects its urban character and modernity. In this church there is a great use of modern music instruments. Of course, mainline churches have been using musical instruments for the past century of Christian existence in Zimbabwe. J. Lenherr mentions the use of the harmonium in early mission days and also the brass bands in the services of the mission churches like the Roman Catholic Church, Salvation Army and Wesleyan Methodist Church.<sup>44</sup> The most common instruments, however, were traditional drums and rattles. *Mbira* (finger piano), *hwamanda* (horns) and *marimba* (xylophones) were later introduced but as Lenherr observes, 'the high cost of modern instruments restricted their use to towns and big parishes.'<sup>45</sup> As an urban church FOG has moved into these high cost instruments. From the beginning the church made use of modern music instruments like electric guitars, modern drum kits, keyboards, all to the accompaniment of powerful public address systems. These are fused with traditional instruments like *ngoma* (drums), *hosho* (rattles) and *mbira*. Each congregation has its own choir known as the Family Choir.

Music is also central throughout the worship services. It opens and closes the services. Instruments are played during prayers and when

<sup>43</sup> For a detailed discussion of how theology is expressed in Shona Christian songs, for example, see L. Togarasei, 'African Oral Theology: the Case of Shona Christian Songs', *Swedish Missiological Themes* 91/1 (2003), 67-80.

<sup>44</sup> J. Lenherr, 'The Hymnody of the Mission Churches among the Shona and the Ndebele,' in: M.F.C. Bourdillon (ed.), *Christianity South of the Zambezi*, volume 2, Gwelo: Mambo Press 1977, 118.

<sup>45</sup> Lenherr, 118.

the preacher is preaching. It appears the church realises music's power to move emotions and thereby carry people into the spiritual realm. This is because even when people are called to repentance, sweet instrumental music is played at the background. Just as in African Traditional Religion(s) music was used to induce spirit possession, in FOG, music is meant to take people into the spiritual realm. Women say they even fight wars (of illness, unemployment etc.) as they sing and dance to the music.

Another thing that shows the urban-elitist character of the church in the area of music is its incorporation of the various forms of urban music and dance into the church. *Kwasa kwasa*, *ndombolo* or *soukous* (erotic/sexually suggestive dance styles), originating in the Democratic Republic of Congo have been incorporated into the church's music. One of the church's pastors, Chakanetsa Bandimba has even recorded videos of *kwasa kwasa* Christian music which have raised mixed feelings among the Christian population in Zimbabwe. But whatever people have said about the church's attitude to music and dance, it has won a number of youths, who, among other things, have been attracted by the church's sensitivity to urban youths' needs. As Pastor Bandimba put it, the church must provide those things that the people go into the world for but are not rejected by the Bible.<sup>46</sup>

The church also blesses the recording and selling of gospel music, another indicator of its urban character. This is seen as one of the most important ways of invading public space.<sup>47</sup> Right in the formative period of FOG, the Family Singers started recording gospel music for commercial purposes. In fact this group is counted among the pioneers of gospel music in Zimbabwe and Shuvai is considered one of the 'mothers' of Zimbabwean gospel music.<sup>48</sup> The church has also seen the birth of many other professional gospel musicians. Pastor Bandimba, Anna Zengeya, Pastor Madeleine Kerzner and Dee Zigori are some of the FOG members who have gone professional in gospel music. Even Andrew himself has teamed up with Masego Makhao and Mwangelwa Gwanyanya to record an album. Like other urban musicians they also play at public concerts. Each year the church music

<sup>46</sup> Pastor C. Bandimba, interview on a Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation TV programme, 1999.

<sup>47</sup> Hackett, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 263.

<sup>48</sup> E. Chitando, *Singing Culture: A Study of Gospel Music in Zimbabwe*, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet Research Report no. 121 (2002), 49, mentions Jordan Chataika, Mechanic Manyeruke and Shuvai Wutawunashé as pioneers of gospel music in Zimbabwe.

groups hold one free show in the Harare International Conference Centre (HICC).

### *Church Doctrine*

FOG shares with other churches the basic Christian doctrines. However, as a modern Pentecostal movement it emphasises certain teachings that suit its urban setting and modernity. The Bible is quite central in the church's formation of its doctrinal teachings. Attempt is always made to find a Biblical basis for the church's teaching and practice.

Like other modern Pentecostal movements, one of the central teachings of FOG is the gospel of prosperity. Also called dominion theology,<sup>49</sup> faith gospel,<sup>50</sup> or health and wealth gospel,<sup>51</sup> it emphasises prosperity as a fruit of faith. Gifford summarises the doctrine aptly:

According to the faith gospel, God has met all the needs of human beings in the suffering and death of Christ and every Christian should now share the victory of Christ over sin, sickness and poverty. A believer has a right to the blessings of health and wealth won by Christ and he/she can obtain these blessings merely by a positive confession of faith.<sup>52</sup>

This is surely a message that appeals to those already successful or seeking success and well being. The message could surely be an insult to a poor old man or woman who has failed to make it in life. It, however, makes the rich and the upwardly mobile feel at home. In fact, FOG considers poverty to be a curse, a sign of evil spirit possession that one needs deliverance from. The born-again should be successful in life since he/she has been delivered from this spirit of poverty.<sup>53</sup> Several Biblical passages are quoted to support this gospel of prosperity. For FOG it is not possible to list down all the Biblical passages they use to formulate the doctrine of prosperity. It would appear as if all they see in the Bible is prosperity. For example in reading Matthew 9:37, 'The harvest is truly plenteous but the labourers are few', Andrew sees all FOG members as being called in this passage to be labourers in the field. They are to harvest souls, money, material things (e.g. cars, houses), influence and power. Also in inter-

<sup>49</sup> A. Corten and R. Marshall-Fratani, *Between Babel and Pentecost*, 5.

<sup>50</sup> P. Gifford, 'The complex provenance of some elements of African Pentecostal theology,' in: A. Corten and R. Marshall-Fratani (eds.), *Between Babel and Pentecost*, London: Hurst and Company 2001, 62.

<sup>51</sup> A. Droogers, *Between Babel and Pentecost*, 47.

<sup>52</sup> P. Gifford, *Between Babel and Pentecost*, 62.

<sup>53</sup> D. Maxwell, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 350-374.

preting John 4:35, 'Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white, ready to harvest —', he again talks of the Christian's need to see what to collect here on earth: health, holiness, power, money and material things.<sup>54</sup> The belief therefore is that what God talks of right from the time of Abraham is prosperity. Since he owns the world and all that is in it those who are his must share in his riches. 2 Corinthians 8:9 summarises FOG's gospel of prosperity: 'Jesus was made poor for our sake, that through his poverty we might be rich.' In an urban environment where inflation is spiralling and unemployment rampant, this gospel is no doubt enticing. But in practice how does this gospel work to make FOG a church for the urban middle class?

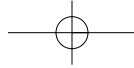
The church has its own economic principles different from the ordinary ones. The analogy of sowing and reaping (2 Corinthians 9:6-11) is often used and for Andrew, in the kingdom of God money is the seed to be sown.<sup>55</sup> All who want to prosper have to give to God first, that is, to the church. The giving is the investment and so the more you give the more you will harvest. When it comes to money, the business nature of the church is reflected crystal clear. One critic has said, 'No matter what topic Andrew teaches he always finds a way of talking about the need to finance the church.'<sup>56</sup> Andrew is against foreign funding as he says any foreign donations come with strings attached. Since FOG is an African Revival, giving Africa to the world, Andrew says it must be self-funded.<sup>57</sup> As a result there are different types of offerings that people are asked to make. At one service on the 13th of June 2003 at Kambuzuma congregation I counted five offerings that were called for. The first was the grace offering that was made before Andrew started his sermon. According to Andrew the money is meant to ask God's grace for the sermon of the day. The second was the main offering of the day, a common offering found in many churches. The third was the commonwealth offering. According to Pastor Chinoda commonwealth offerings are meant to run the church, for example putting up buildings. The offerings are made three times a year in April, July and October. The fourth offering on that day

<sup>54</sup> A. Wutawunashe, Homegroup Lesson 2 (2003), 1.

<sup>55</sup> A. Wutawunashe, Homegroup Lesson 4 (2003), 1.

<sup>56</sup> B. Gwara, Interview, Harare, 2 June 2003.

<sup>57</sup> I could not ascertain Andrew's claim that FOG is self-funded. Many African preachers use such strong rhetoric of pan-Africanism but behind the doors receive large amounts of money from foreign donors. They emphasise self-sufficiency as a tactic for encouraging members to pump out money for the church's activities.



were pledges for Monday seed money. Seed money is an offering made every day as a way of sowing blessings. The more one invests in this fund the more he/she gets back in form of blessings from God. The fifth that day was the Botswana Youth Convention offering. People were asked to give offerings or make pledges to help those who wanted to go to the convention but had no bus fare. Like all modern financial institutions, late payments of pledges attract financial penalties possibly taking into consideration the high rate of inflation in Zimbabwe. Apart from the five there are also tithes to be paid by everyone on the basis of what ones receives from a business or from employment. It is tithing which is believed to open God's windows of blessings (Malachi 3:10). During offerings sometimes people are graded on the basis of how much they are able to give. Those giving high sums of money come first and those giving little come last.

To afford all these offerings surely one has to be well off. No wonder many of the people in this church are in the upper or middle economic classes.<sup>58</sup> This does not mean that there are no poor people, but as I have argued above, the poor in this church are those in the process of upward mobility, those who feel they are in a process of transformation to a higher status in life, who are convinced that they can make it in life through Jesus who delivers them from the spirits of poverty. And indeed FOG is ready to fulfil their ambitions. The church inculcates an entrepreneurial spirit among its members. Lessons are given on how to start small businesses. As we have seen the Mighty Men have the Projects and Investment Desk ready to assist those who want to start small businesses. Andrew is on record for teaching against laziness, loving sleep and folding of hands (Proverbs 6:9-11). For him these are signs of the curse of poverty and in one of his lessons he gave the following practical exercise for one to get wealth:

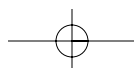
- a) Pray for salvation from poverty;
- b) Decide to change and begin to work for wealth;
- c) Sow your seed (by making offerings to the church) faithfully every week every month without leaving gaps.<sup>59</sup>

Those employed are encouraged to pray for promotion at work in order to earn more. Thus prosperity is at the centre of the doctrine

---

<sup>58</sup> Many members of the Kambuzuma congregation drive some of the latest car models. On one visit I counted not less than 50 latest model cars ranging from Mercedes Benz to Isuzu/Mazda/Toyota twin cab pick ups. Although there are many rich people, the majority remain aspiring for the riches comforted and encouraged by the church's gospel of prosperity.

<sup>59</sup> A. Wutawunashe, Homegroup Lesson 4 (2003), 2.



of the church. This prosperity comes through hard work and offerings to the church.

Another doctrinal area in which FOG's urban character is shown is in its attitude to African worldview and traditional practices. Its attitude can be described as ambivalent. I think this ambivalence is a result of the church's strong African feelings<sup>60</sup> and at the same time its openness to urbanity, modernity and transnationality. To illustrate this position of ambivalence I look at the church's teaching on sickness and health.

Illness is one problem that leads many people to religion in Africa. No wonder most early missionaries to Africa opened their missions by building a small treatment centre.<sup>61</sup> But not all the diseases could be treated in the mission hospitals. Africans believe that some diseases are caused by evil spirits and therefore cannot be healed using western medicine. Such illnesses require spiritual healing. The need to address such spiritual problems led to the emergence of the first batch of Pentecostal churches in Africa, what Ogbu Kalu calls the second African Christian response after the first one which saw the emergence of Ethiopian type churches.<sup>62</sup> The first Pentecostal churches reacted against mainline Christianity which denied the existence of witchcraft, evil spirits that cause illnesses and traditional healing practices, taking these as superstitions. These early Pentecostal movements, also called African Initiated Churches, upheld the African cosmology. As R. van Dijk

---

<sup>60</sup> For example, addressing the Youth Ministry, Andrew says, 'Our ways of worship, behaviour, values, eg. our worship must be characterised by African drums, rhythm and dance. We must not overshadow what God gave us with something else. Generations must hear from the blessedness and riches of Africa. Remember we have an agenda to give Africa to the world.' (Understanding Family Youth Ministry, undated document, 1). There is therefore a sense in which the church regards itself as an African ministry to uphold certain African values and export the gospel that has been 'cooked in an African pot' back to the west. In an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation African Service in 1990, Andrew reiterated this saying, 'Europeans have strayed. Their ways are materialistic, permissive and purposeless. A European's life is totally ungodly.' As the interviewer, Doudu of Cameroon concluded Wutawunashe was implying that he was bringing back to Europe a hackneyed god that European missionaries had lost or abandoned in Africa (The Sunday Mirror, 20 April 2000).

<sup>61</sup> In Zimbabwe many early missionaries drew their converts mainly from those who came for treatment at the mission hospitals. For detailed discussion of medical service as a method of evangelisation in Zimbabwe, see Lovemore Togarasei, *The Concept and Practice of Diakonia in the New Testament and its Implications in the Zimbabwean Context*, unpublished D. Phil. thesis, Harare: University of Zimbabwe 2003.

<sup>62</sup> O. Kalu, 'The 3rd Response: Pentecostalism and the Reconstruction of Christian Experience in Africa 1970-1995', *Journal of African Christian Thought* 1/2, (1998).

correctly notes, they made use of herbs, candles, oils, baths, magical rings and various concoctions that include the use of salt, sugar, milk and eggs in their healing practices.<sup>63</sup> Because of this these churches did not recruit much among the educated and modernised who saw such practices as backward and primitive. Some people also saw them as bridges back to African Traditional Religion (s),<sup>64</sup> a position that is no longer accepted even by its proponent, B. Sundkler himself. The churches surely did not go back to African Traditional Religion(s) but used some methods of healing similar to those of traditional healers. In urban areas where most Africans were proud of being modern and looked down upon the rural and traditional, these churches did not get many adherents. The new Pentecostal movement with its urban character has moved away from the use of these perceived traditional healing practices. They uphold the traditional African world-view but the healing of witchcraft and other spirit-caused illnesses is only done in the name of Jesus through laying on of hands and sometimes ecstatic prayer accompanied by speaking in tongues. This way they have won many of the middle class and elite Africans who, still uphold the traditional worldview but because of their modernism, do not want to be associated with traditional practices. As we mentioned above, healing and driving out of spirits are some of the miracles that FOG uses to advertise its crusades. With most of the middle and upper classes considering traditional healing practices to be backward, FOG's healing is the best alternative. Though they believe in the existence of witches and other evil spirits they do not deal with them in traditional and 'backward' ways but in what they consider to be a modern way of dealing with the spirits. As B. Meyer puts it in the context of Ghanaian Pentecostalism, it appears as if God is associated with the future while the devil is associated with the past.<sup>65</sup>

There are many other teachings and practices of FOG that show its urban character that space, however, does not permit us to exhaust. The last we can mention then is the church's use of English as the language of communication. It is a known fact that language carries with it many cultural influences and so the use of English in FOG explicitly shows the urban and western influences on the church. All

<sup>63</sup> Van Dijk, *Between Babel and Pentecost*, 221.

<sup>64</sup> B. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1961, 297.

<sup>65</sup> B. Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1999, 214.



sermons are made in English and then translated to vernacular languages for the benefit of those who do not understand English.

### *Concluding Remarks*

'The package of a religion affects people's choice of it,' writes M.F.C. Bourdillon.<sup>66</sup> His views are echoed by Oosthuizen who also argues that a religion that does not offer material benefit in the here and now does not have a place in Africa.<sup>67</sup> A glance on the history of Christianity in Zimbabwe proves these two scholars absolutely correct. For a period of more than two centuries (until after the colonisation of the country by the British in 1890) missionaries laboured without any success. It was the introduction of medical service, education, the attractions of Christian ideas and practices that helped people relate with colonial society and economy, among other attractions, that then lured people to Christianity. Also the first African response to Christianity<sup>68</sup> which led to the emergence of Ethiopian churches, was meant to give Africans power in the administration of the church. The same applies to the second response that gave rise to the earlier brand of African Pentecostal churches in the name of Zionist and Apostolic churches which was meant to address the mainline churches' failure to deal with issues of witchcraft and evil spirits. The third response for me is meant to address the needs of the urban African who is exposed to forces of globalisation and modernity. The urban church therefore has to address those challenges that people face in urban areas if it were to remain relevant. Many people who migrate to urban areas do so for economic reasons. The cities, however, do not live up to the expectations of many. Although some are able 'to ride the wave and exploit the possibilities' in the urban areas, the majority fail to even make ends meet. They fail to get jobs, proper accommodation, enough food, in short, their expectations are not fulfilled. This is the gap that the Pentecostal gospel of prosperity fills. As David Maxwell says in the case of ZAOGA (which shares most of its characteristics with FOG), the Pentecostals

<sup>66</sup> M.F.C. Bourdillon, *Where are the Ancestors? Changing Culture in Zimbabwe*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications 1993, 85.

<sup>67</sup> G. Oosthuizen, 'The Place and Role of India's Religions in Africa,' in: J.K. Olupon et alii (eds.), *Religious Plurality in Africa*, New York: Montou de Gruyter 1993, 296.

<sup>68</sup> O. Kalu, *Journal of African Christian Thought*.

teach about the spirit of poverty which ‘resonates with ideas of self-reliance, indigenous business and black empowerment (. . .).’<sup>69</sup> This makes the Pentecostals to be more industrious and thus attract others who are also seeking wealth and success.

The urban areas are also frightening as they destroy traditional kinship ties. They open the world to their residents making them participate in global events. Pentecostalism capitalises on this as it, to quote Marshal-Fratani, ‘is presented as the only way people can be connected to the modern world of commodities, media and financial flows without being overrun by it.’<sup>70</sup> As A. Anderson also says, ‘The phenomenon of mass urbanisation (in Africa) results in Pentecostal churches providing places of spiritual security and personal communities for people unsettled by rapid social change.’<sup>71</sup> To me all this proves that modern Pentecostalism or ‘new generation churches as R.I.J. Hackett<sup>72</sup> calls them are urban movements meant to address modern urban needs. As B. Meyer noted among Pentecostals in Ghana, there is a sense in which heaven is depicted by Pentecostals as the ultimate fulfilment of modernity.<sup>73</sup> Her caption of the artist’s view of heaven proves this. In the case of FOG this modernity is emphasised in the teaching that God wants his children to prosper here on earth. As put by Pastor M. Chinoda, ‘God wants his children to live in the best houses, to worship him in the best buildings, to drive the best cars and even when they die to receive best burials from the best funeral companies.’<sup>74</sup> It can therefore be concluded that religion in general and Pentecostalism in particular, owes a great deal to the social, economic, political and even historical contexts in which it operates. As we have seen in this study, FOG’s character has been determined by the urban context in which it operates, addressing modern challenges that people in the urban areas face.

<sup>69</sup> D. Maxwell, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 351.

<sup>70</sup> R. Marshall-Fratani, ‘Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism’, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28/3 (1998), 286.

<sup>71</sup> A. Anderson, ‘Evangelism and Growth of Pentecostalism in Africa’, Website *Arts Web* of the University of Birmingham, [http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/aanderson/Publications/evangelism and growth of pen.htm](http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/aanderson/Publications/evangelism%20and%20growth%20of%20pen.htm), 9 August 2005.

<sup>72</sup> Hackett, *Journal of Religion in Africa*.

<sup>73</sup> B. Meyer, 214.

<sup>74</sup> Pastor M. Chinoda, Interview, see note 11.

**Lovemore Togarasei** (1971) holds a PhD degree from the University of Zimbabwe. The title of his still unpublished dissertation is *The Concept and Practice of Diakonia in the New Testament and its Implications in the Zimbabwean Context*. Nowadays he is a lecturer in New Testament Studies in the department of religious studies, classics and philosophy of the same university. His e-mail address is [ltogarasei@yahoo.com](mailto:ltogarasei@yahoo.com).

Copyright of Exchange is the property of Brill Academic Publishers. The copyright in an individual article may be maintained by the author in certain cases. Content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.