

Research Articles



“You Are Blessed to Be a Blessing”: Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches and the Politics of Redistribution in Harare

Research Article

Simbarashe Gukurume | ORCID: 0000-0002-2297-3693

Senior Lecturer, Department of Social Sciences (Sociology), Sol Plaatje University, Kimberley, South Africa; Department of Anthropology and Development Studies, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa
sgukurume1@gmail.com

Abstract

Drawing on ethnographic research in Zimbabwe, this article examines the ways through which a new Pentecostal-Charismatic Church (PCC), Good Life Church (GLC), engages in charity and redistributive activities in Harare. From the mid-2000s, there has been a remarkable Pentecostal explosion in Zimbabwe. This explosion coincided with a protracted socio-economic and political crisis. This crisis was marked by deepening poverty, skyrocketing unemployment, hyperinflation, and the withdrawal of state welfare. This was worsened by rapid emigration, which dismembered kinship-based social safety nets. In response, new PCCs emerged as new and alternative spaces of welfare provision, redistribution and social security. I argue that GLC's engagement in acts of charity should be understood within the broader discourse of spiritual warfare against the demons of poverty. By addressing “this-worldly” concerns, GLC attempts to make a holistic contribution to sustainable development by attending to the spiritual and material needs of people. Indeed, a culture of giving is cultivated and habituated

in everyday life and practices within the church. I assert that acts of individual and collective charity provision in GLC enable many people to navigate uncertainties and precarities wrought by the postcolonial economic crisis. This article draws on Bourdieu's theory of practice, and particularly his concepts of field, habitus and forms of anticipation to unpack the acts of charity in GLC. A specific kind of Pentecostal habitus is (re)produced through teachings, rituals, socialities and convivialities forged within the church.

Keywords

charity – spiritual warfare – Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches – development – Philanthropy – redistribution

1 Introduction

It's a Sunday morning and Prophet Emmanuel is preaching at his church, clad in a sharp black suit, white shirt and striped tie. He moves up and down the pulpit clutching his latest iPad. Almost half of the congregants follow the biblical message on their smartphones. In front, the biblical passages are also projected onto the two huge screens that sandwich the exquisitely decorated pulpit. Many, predominantly youthful congregants are busy writing notes. As the Prophet moves up and down the aisle, his Rolex watch glitters underneath the designer suit. He shouts to a cheering crowd:

You should know that God did not bless you for nothing. God blessed you for a reason. He blessed you so that you can also be a blessing to someone, so if you want God to keep blessing you then you should live your purpose – you should live in the way God wants you to live.

Field notes November 2017

In many of his services, Prophet Emmanuel preaches the word of giving (*kupa*) and helping (*kubatsira*) the less privileged. For Prophet Emmanuel, giving mediates and instrumentalises the flow of Godly blessings into one's life. In his own words, "blessed is the hand that gives, for there is more blessing in giving" (quoting from Acts 20:35, field notes May 2017). Likewise, many of my interlocutors also believed that giving was the key that unlocked opportunities. In one of the services, Prophet Emmanuel asserted that "God gave us his only son

so that we could be saved from our sins, so as born-again Christians we should also live a life of giving because God prospers those who sacrifice to expand the kingdom of God” (field notes July 2018). Unlike some Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches (PCCs) which discourage acts of charity (see van Wyk 2014), the Good Life Church (GLC) constantly encouraged members to donate. In PCCs such as GLC, gifts are said to simultaneously strengthen the spirits of both givers and recipients (Coleman 2006).

This article examines contemporary modalities of Pentecostal charity in Harare. It does so by examining GLC’s activities and everyday rituals. It builds on a burgeoning body of work that explores how philanthropy and charity mediate and drives processes of development. It draws inspiration from Klaitz (2011), who argued that through charity activities, born-again Christians engage and reconfigure the personhood of others. The article also examines the developmental nature and potential of GLC’s charity activities. By examining the charity work of GLC, this article contributes to our understanding of the efforts of GLC to fill the lacuna created by the state’s inability to provide welfare and alleviate poverty among its citizenry. By so doing I explore how these charity activities contribute to sustainable development.

2 Conceptualisation

The concepts that I use in this article, while falling neatly into the discursive construction of development, tend to be complex and problematic. Therefore, this section of the article attempts to conceptualise and unpack these concepts and show how they are weaved into discussions of religion and development. The concept of sustainable development is not only contested but may also not mean the same to everyone. However, there is consensus among scholars that it is an intergenerational phenomenon and has an intricate connection to three fundamental and interrelated pillars, namely the ecology/environmental pillar, the economic pillar and the sociocultural pillar. In this article, I adopt the Brundtland Commission’s 1987 definition of sustainable development as the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the capacity or ability of the future generations to meet their own needs (WCED 1987). However, I adapt this definition based on how it is envisioned and understood at a grassroots level.

Scholars have tried to differentiate between charity and philanthropy, where the former is viewed as easing immediate suffering while the latter tends to be framed institutionally with a focus on ameliorating structural causes of

social ills (Alexander 2018). Charity is framed as an act of voluntary provision of assistance or gifts in cash or kind towards the needy, vulnerable and suffering. In most cases, charity and philanthropy are used interchangeably as acts of altruism and generosity without expectation of reciprocity from the receiving party.

3 Theoretical Lens

Bourdieu's (1984) theoretical concepts of the field and habitus are productive in helping us to understand the politics of Pentecostal redistribution in Harare. Bourdieu defines the field as an arena where actors compete for influence and strategic positions to assert hegemonic dominance. Bourdieu conceived the idea of the "field" as a social space in which interactions, transactions and events take place. Likewise, the habitus is defined as an embodied way of thinking and behaving, or internalised dispositions and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways (Wacquant 2005, 316). Thus, the habitus relates to enduring patterned ways of "being" that are often transferable and reconfigured in a variety of socioeconomic and political contexts. I develop two analytical concepts from Bourdieu's work, that of the "philanthropic habitus" and the "Pentecostal field". The philanthropic habitus here denotes the altruistic dispositions, norms, practices and culture that is engendered by and through Pentecostal teachings and everyday rituals thereof. For Bourdieu one cannot fully understand the habitus independent of the field because the habitus is shaped by the field but also simultaneously shapes the field in specific ways. As such, the habitus is the brainchild of the complex interplay between the free will of "agency" (church actors) and "structures" (church principles/doctrines). Indeed, the habitus is not merely a "structured structure", but also a "structuring structure". Thus, I use these concepts dialectically to establish not only how Pentecostals' philanthropic habitus is objectively shaped and structured, but also how it is subjectively constructed and reproduced by the actions and interactions of the very same actors embedded within this objective structure, that is the Pentecostal field. As such, I assert that the complex entanglement between the Pentecostal field and the philanthropic habitus mediates the practice of giving in GLC. Indeed, Bourdieu (1984) asserts that practice straddles habitus and field.

One of the rituals which GLC uses to cultivate and sustain a philanthropic habitus is the "bring and share" ritual regularly organised at the church. During this ritual, church members are urged to bring presents and food to share with a person they did not know before. Through this ritual new socialities are

forged between church members. These socialities often develop into convivial relationships which in some cases transform the subjectivities and personhood of the members involved.

4 The Good Life Church

GLC is a new Pentecostal church formed at the height of the socioeconomic and political crisis in 2008 (Gukurume 2015; Gukurume and Taru 2020) in Zimbabwe. It was founded and is led by the youthful and charismatic Prophet Emmanuel. This church falls under what I refer to as the fourth wave Pentecostal category and preaches the gospel of prosperity in the here and now (see Gukurume 2018b). Historically, Pentecostalism has grown in specific waves. The fourth wave is marked by a strong emphasis on the prophetic and miraculous accumulation of material wealth in the here and now rather than the afterlife. It departs from an emphasis on denominational doctrine to a prophetic and apostolic “body of Christ”. Fourth wave Pentecostalism is largely initiated in Africa by youthful and charismatic prophets who deploy spectacular power in demonstrating the power of Christ. This includes the instantaneous and miraculous accumulation of wealth in the here and now, what is often called “miracle money”. Indeed, fourth wave Pentecostalism foregrounds an eschatological understanding of the world as a battlefield where Christians engage in perpetual spiritual warfare. Spiritual warfare denotes the born-again Christians’ battle against the work of evil forces, and prosperity is the belief that Christians are entitled to material wealth, health and success in every aspect of life (Taru and Settler 2015; Gukurume 2017; Gukurume and Taru 2020). GLC is arguably one of the fastest growing Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe and attracts thousands of congregants. What sets this church apart from other new churches is its emphasis on the twin theology of prosperity and spiritual warfare. Before establishing GLC, Prophet Emmanuel was a pastor in the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) (Gukurume 2018b). GLC started with lunchtime interdenominational services in Harare. Due to the popularity of these prayer sessions, the congregation moved from one venue to another looking for bigger space that could accommodate the swelling numbers.

GLC finally settled at a city sports centre, a city council owned multipurpose hall which accommodates thousands of people. During fieldwork, GLC constructed a 30,000-seater church in Chitungwiza, a dormitory town close to Harare. It was also planning to construct another state-of-the-art auditorium at the church headquarters in Mount Hampden. Over the years, GLC has

grown and established itself in the country's competitive religious landscape. It has also spread its branches across national borders by establishing branches in neighbouring countries like South Africa, Botswana and Zambia. GLC has grown into a transnational religious movement. On the church's website, it is claimed that the Prophet was called to expand the kingdom of God in every corner of the world and the church will have a branch in every country.¹ This belief informs the church's aggressive and creative proselytisation activities, including the provision of charity work. GLC frames itself as a modern and upper-middle-class church. However, its membership is an eclectic mixture of the well-to-do, the working class and the poor. In the next section, I turn my attention to the ways in which GLC seeks to engender and cultivate a philanthropic habitus among its membership. The enactment of this habitus is part of the spiritual warfare deployed against the principalities and powers of evil, in which only spiritual weapons can prevail (Marshall 2016).

5 Materials and Methods

This study took a qualitative and ethnographic approach to understanding the charity and redistributive practices of GLC. Data used in this article is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted from 2014 to 2018 with members of PCCS based in Harare. For this article, I draw largely on qualitative data collected from GLC. A total of 25 interviews were conducted with participants. In addition, ten key informant interviews were conducted with officials from GLC and church members donating gifts to the poor. Participant observation was also conducted over a period of four years in GLC and involved attending church services and other charity and related activities organised by the church. During these activities, I conducted informal conversations with church members. Participants were selected through snowballing and purposive sampling techniques. Apart from primary data, I also used secondary data drawn from church publications, recorded videos of charity activities as well as newspaper articles on the charity work done by GLC.

6 Creating a Pentecostal "Philanthropic Habitus"

GLC's doctrine and rituals cultivate religious subjectivities and a Pentecostal habitus that valorises acts of giving. In imparting this culture, Prophet

¹ https://www.ufiministries.org/art_sandton.php.
<https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2015/10/18/makandiwa-to-open-branch-in-sa/>.

Emmanuel and his wife lead by example. During their birthday celebrations, they make donations to children’s homes, widows, prisons and invite homeless children to eat with them. Apart from this, Prophet Emmanuel’s wife, Prophetess Ruth, runs the charity arm of the church called AGAPE Family Care. This department is responsible for all the church’s charity work. Interestingly, charity work is deployed as a powerful proselytising strategy by the church. Indeed, apart from the “powerful word” preached and the energetic praise and worship choir, charity also explains the magnetic appeal of GLC. For instance, almost half of my interlocutors converted due to the material support they received from the church. For instance, Peter² explained in an interview:

I was impressed by what I was hearing from people about what this church was doing in the community. I heard stories of how the church looked after widows, orphans and giving free healthcare, especially cataract services, so I just said let me go and see this church.

Interview with Peter 11/06/2017

Peter’s views were also echoed by many others who were lured to GLC by its charity work. Prophetess Ruth was honoured with an honorary doctorate by the International Institute of Philanthropy as recognition for her charity work (Karengезeka 2014).³ Prophetess Ruth is a role model to many young women in GLC. Many admire her for the work she does in the community. As one of my interlocutors, Gladys, asserted during an interview:

Mhamha (mother) does a lot of charity work to transform people’s lives. I am one of the lucky people to have benefited from the university financial support (scholarship) that AGAPE Family Care offers to students. This scholarship has helped me a lot and now I am almost completing my degree at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ).

Interview with Gladys 14/10/2017

Several other interlocutors shared Gladys’s views about the charity work done by GLC. Gladys explained to me that when she converted to GLC her life was transformed for the better through GLC’s charity work. Gladys lost her father when she was about to go to university. Her father had suffered from cancer for a long time. Gladys’s mother was not formally employed and joined the informal sector (Gukurume 2018a) when her husband died. However, as a new

² This is a pseudonym, and all the other names of believers are anonymised too.

³ <https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2014/07/05/prophetess-makandiwa-awarded-doctorate>.

entrant into the informal sector, business was not lucrative. Gladys noted that since her father passed on, life became difficult for the family. In fact, Gladys was on the brink of dropping out of school and knew that her mother could not afford university tuition. Thus, by supporting and funding Gladys's education, GLC is actively transforming her orientation for the future and by extension engenders self-reliance and personal development. Over time, this will translate to sustainable development as more people's lives and subjectivities are transformed. Indeed, in Zimbabwe and many African countries, education is viewed as a springboard for upward mobility.

Gladys's experience resonates with many of my participants. However, what is interesting with Gladys's story and access to financial support from GLC is the importance of social networks or Bourdieu's social capital. Social capital is conceptualised as the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to individuals or groups by virtue of their connection to a network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 119). In many cases social capital often mediated access to charity and other material benefits. Indeed, scholars have underscored how social capital enables people to navigate the precarities and uncertainties of everyday life. For instance, van de Kamp (2010) noted that access to important resources is mediated by one's positionality in a network of relations. Pentecostalism generates important social capital which drives sustainable socioeconomic development (Bompani 2010; Bompani and Frahm-Arp 2010). Similarly, Togarasei and Biri (2019) assert that Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe are promoting socioeconomic development and help to alleviate poverty through various interventions like financial literacy, entrepreneurship training and the instilling of positive thinking. In GLC, through teachings and rituals, young people are configured to believe that their personal aspirations and ambitions are achievable (Gukurume 2017). This transformation of mentality is critical in fostering self-reliance, hard work and hopefulness, which are important ingredients for sustainable development.

This scenario is in keeping with Burgess (2009), who noted that Pentecostalism promotes civic engagements. Following Putnam, Burgess framed civic engagement as people's networks and connection with the everyday life of their community, including social welfare, community development and political action. Therefore, these activities and engagements that "connect (people) with the life of their community" have strong potential to have a transformative effect on the subjectivities of the people. Pentecostalism fosters hope in difficult times but may also reproduce the status quo by urging people to turn to God for solutions, thereby diverting attention from a state that is failing to provide basic services for its citizens (Gifford 1990; Marshall 1993).

7 Educational Scholarships and Sustainability

GLC tries to transform individuals and the society through its educational support programmes. AGAPE Family Care offers financial support to poor students in and outside the church. Scholarships are offered at various levels from primary, secondary and tertiary level. During fieldwork, I interviewed several university students like Gladys who benefited from the AGAPE scholarships. Some students started receiving financial support from secondary school level on and continued to university level on condition of good academic grades. For instance, Amos highlighted that the financial assistance he received changed not only his personal life, but also that of his family. Amos started receiving funding from GLC when he was doing his advanced level after a recommendation from a church member. Amos passed his examinations with flying colours and enrolled for a computer science degree at the University of Zimbabwe. Amos received a laptop for being the best student in his cohort, and also received a monthly stipend for his upkeep at university. His tuition and accommodation costs were also covered by AGAPE. Amos had just completed an internship and was offered a lucrative job at one of the leading telecommunications companies through his church mentor. Like many of his colleagues, Amos was grateful to GLC for generous financial support and life-changing networks (social capital) that afforded him a job.

James, one of GLC’s charity workers, asserted that:

Our task as born-again Christians is to make sure that we minister to the social, material and spiritual needs of the people. We should strive for a holistic transformation of the people and the community, that is what God’s agents should do and that is what we have been called to do through our prophet.

Interview with James 17/10/2017

James’s views were echoed by other participants who served in the church’s charity department. Many of them believed that it was God’s call(ing) for them to transform people’s lives. Some underscored that they were instruments used by God to advance his kingdom. What is also fascinating in James’s statement is the way in which GLC seeks to transform the individual personhood of members and the community at large. GLC promotes holistic ministry anchored in socioeconomic and spiritual transformation. Therefore, GLC is moving beyond mere provision of charity, into community development models of social engagement and thereby contributing to sustainable development. By engaging disenfranchised members of the church and the community, James

emphasised that GLC was following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, who was sent to deliver people from poverty, illness and other social vices of this world. During church services, Prophet Emmanuel often claims emphatically that his mission is to deliver people from poverty and to make sure that there is abundant health, wealth, happiness and prosperity in every domain of people's lives. Following this, I assert that by ministering to the spiritual and material existential needs of the people, GLC transforms the personhood and subjectivities of its members and contributes to their well-being and therefore to sustainable development. I have shown elsewhere how new PCCs invest in the socioeconomic empowerment of young people and availing economic opportunities which drove upward mobility (Gukurume 2018b; 2018c; 2022).

More so, GLC also engages in community infrastructural development through the transformation of urban landscapes and cityscapes. This transformation and rehabilitation of urban landscapes is informed by GLC's eschatological belief that born-again Christians should conquer every aspect of life, including secular spaces like cities, before the imminent second coming of Christ (Miller and Yamamori 2007, 213; van Wyk 2014; Gukurume 2018b). Through a programme called Operation Nehemiah, Prophet Emmanuel urges members of his church to engage in construction and real estate projects as a business. In church services, members are always told to think of themselves as landlords and not tenants and as entrepreneurs not workers. In turn, members actively work towards the attainment of these goals, while the church sometimes provides both spiritual and material technologies which fostered belief in the attainment of these goals. In the next section, I examine this in detail and show how entrepreneurship and financial literacy programmes contribute to individual and collective upward mobility.

8 Entrepreneurship Investments and Financial Literacy

GLC promotes members' engagement in small businesses, what Maxwell (2005: 11) called "petty capitalism". The church does this through initiatives such as business and entrepreneurship training, assisting members to register companies and gain financial literacy. Following this, GLC organises monthly business seminars and entrepreneurship training. They also organise annual business conferences entitled "The Billionaire's Mindset Summit" and the "Economic Empowerment Summit". Through these events, GLC cultivates an "entrepreneurial habitus" and mindset among its membership. The entrepreneurship skills taught by and through the church as well as the business networks forged during these events often enable members of the church to

grow their businesses and prosper financially. Indeed, for Taru (2019) these business and entrepreneurship skills and investment knowledge instilled in the church members help people to navigate the uncertainties and precarities that characterise the Zimbabwean postcolonial state. Prophet Emmanuel and his pastors constantly remind congregants during church services that “God did not create them so that they can be poor, but so that they can have dominion over everything including poverty, sickness and misfortune”. In both my conversations and interviews with participants, many of them believed that born-again Christians are entitled to Godly material blessings. In the words of Jeremiah,

If you are a child of God, you should prosper in every facet of your life. Our father (God) owns all the gold and silver. So, when you start a business, that business should prosper and make you rich. Born-again Christians were not born to suffer, but to enjoy.

Interview Jeremiah 22/10/2017

Interestingly, many participants told me that life should be enjoyed in the here and now, and not in the afterlife. Some believed that it was possible for God to miraculously bless them with riches, what is often referred to as “miracle money” in the church.⁴ During church services, Prophet Emmanuel often made miracle money, and congregants claimed to have received miracle money. Joseph, one of my interlocutors, told me how he started his thriving vehicle spare parts business with the miracle money he received into his mobile phone when Prophet Emmanuel made declarations for people to receive miracle money. This belief in the miraculous accumulation of wealth out of nothing is typical of fourth wave PCCs and relates to the Comaroffian (2000) “occult economies”. The Comaroffs relate this to the workings of neo-liberal capitalism’s magical power to create value and money out of nothing (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; van de Kamp 2010). With regards to the miracle money, Joseph explained:

It was at one of his many crusades (evening outdoor church services) that I attended. The prophet asked us to write on a small piece of paper three things that we would want God to bless them with, so I was desperately looking for a job so that is what I wrote first and then money for a business and lastly for my mother to be healed. I took the paper to the front

⁴ <https://www.herald.co.zw/2013-the-curious-case-of-miracle-money/>.

next to the pulpit where the prophet was. He stopped me and took my paper and said to me you will receive all this today.

Interview with Joseph 19/05/2018

Joseph noted that after everyone finished taking their pieces of papers to the front, the papers were taken and put in a small bag and the Prophet started praying, holding the small bag. Prophet Emmanuel then started making declarations that God will deliver everything people requested, and shouted loudly, “receive, receive your deliverance, receive miracle money – into your pockets, into your account, into your mobile phone” (field notes 20/05/2018). To Joseph’s astonishment as the prophet was shouting, he received a message alert that he had received \$3,000. Joseph noted that this day marked the birth of his business. Although Joseph started small, he expanded and opened two more branches in Harare through support from church members who bought his vehicle spare parts. From the foregoing, I assert that the church should not only be seen as a socio-spiritual space, but also as a space through which business networks and economic ties are forged. Indeed, the Pentecostal “field” has become a landscape of opportunities for congregants. This finding confirms observations made by Coleman, Bourdieu and Putnam that social capital is a potential springboard for upward mobility. Thus, these ties and networks become not only a spiritual resource, but also a material resource that people can depend on in navigating socioeconomic precarities.

In a related scenario, during fieldwork, people were asked to write on small pieces of paper the financial problems that affected them. The papers were put in a small box which was later burnt in full view of the congregants. The prophet and pastors declared that as the papers were burning, so were people’s problems. While the act of praying and making declarations on people’s requests as was the case with Joseph’s story symbolised the spiritual connection to Godly blessings, the act of burning people’s problems can be viewed as an attempt to make a “complete break” or “rapture” from past problems (Meyer 1998; Engelke 2010). For my participants, this practice not only deactivated demonic misfortunes, but also upgraded the faith and the efficaciousness of their spiritual technologies in the spiritual warfare against poverty.

Interestingly, Joseph noted that although he had prioritised a job in his wish list on the paper he wrote, God had bigger plans for him which were better than employment. Indeed, during business seminars, Prophet Emmanuel always challenged members to think of themselves as employers, rather than employees. Taru (2019) reminds us that teachings in Pentecostal spaces (re)configure the ways in which Pentecostals like Joseph construct their personhood and how they imagine and position themselves in the world. In a

context where prevailing socioeconomic and political conditions are eroding and killing off young people's capacity to aspire (Appadurai 2004), GLC is trying to revive young people's hope for the future and also to reconfigure their orientation to the future. I argue that GLC's entrepreneurial teachings trigger what Appadurai (2004: 60) referred to as the “capacity to aspire” and shape people's aspirational subjectivities. For Appadurai (2004) the capacity to aspire relates to the future-oriented cultural capacity. Through business teachings and the impartation of entrepreneurial skills, GLC actively strengthens people's capacity to aspire. Indeed, Appadurai argues that strengthening the capacity to aspire could help people to contest and alter the conditions of their impoverishment. As such, GLC creates and sustains a culture of aspiration through the capacity-building activities discussed above. Capacity-building interventions instrumentalise people's engagement with community development. Appadurai (2004) argues that a culture of aspiration which in this case GLC instils, should be understood as “navigational capacity” in the sense that it provides young people like Joseph with a normative map that potentially leads to future success. Similarly, through prophecy, the future is foreshortened in very specific ways (Guyer 2008). As such, through cultural and spiritual resources (prophecy, prayer, seeding), young people are able to project themselves into their imagined futures.

By foregrounding the importance of business workshops and entrepreneurship training, I do not intend to imply that all these activities always succeed. In reality, some of these fail and do so dismally. Not all the people who are helped by the church to establish small businesses succeed. In some cases, some members end up worse off or financially more insecure than they were before converting to GLC. The story and experience of a rich business couple, the Oceans, is illustrative. When the Oceans converted to GLC they started donating thousands of dollars to the church through tithing, offerings and seeding. They were hoping that through such huge financial sacrifices, their businesses were going to thrive and expand, but alas, problems mounted for them. The Oceans claimed that their huge financial sacrifices were motivated by the prosperity theology of “seeding” and promises from Prophet Emmanuel that if they sacrificed huge amounts of money their business would miraculously grow. The principle of “seed faith” encourages Christians to expect future financial returns from their generous giving.

In GLC, the concept of seeding relates to a scenario where one sacrifices money and other material things to the church with the expectation of being rewarded tenfold in the future. This practice of seeding is deeply embedded in temporalities of “faith”. However, like the Oceans, not everyone who sacrificed their money to the church reaped what they sowed. Instead, some of the

people who sacrificed to the church closed their businesses due to bankruptcy. The Oceans are illustrative; they ended up demanding USD \$6.5 million they reportedly paid to GLC (Sunday Mail 2017⁵). The other case in a sister church involved Shava, who donated/seeded a \$300,000 Bentley to the church and was demanding the vehicle back.⁶

Joseph noted that he partners the church. In GLC, partners are people who commit consistent payment of certain amounts of money to the church monthly. For instance, Joseph was a “silver partner”. In GLC, partners are placed in the following categories: gold partner, silver partner and bronze partner (Biri 2012; Gukurume 2018b). These categories are based on the amount of money paid to the church. Apart from being a silver partner, Joseph paid tithes,⁷ offerings and seeding. For many born-again Christians, tithing is particularly significant. Failure to tithe is regarded as stealing from God (van Wyk 2014; Gukurume 2017). Although financial sacrifices in church often strained Joseph’s business, he was determined to continue paying. “This is the little I can do to repay what the prophet did to help me be where I am today”, Joseph said in an interview. For Joseph, financial sacrifices were a strategy to protect his business from demonic attacks.

Indeed, for GLC, huge material sacrifices to the church represent a powerful weapon in the spiritual warfare against the devil and his demons. Like in other PCCs (van Wyk 2014; van de Kamp 2012, on the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in South Africa and Mozambique respectively), sacrificing money to the church helps to unblock God’s material blessings into one’s life (Gukurume 2020). During church services, congregants are urged to sacrifice money to secure prosperous futures and to overcome their own personal challenges like illness, unemployment or infertility. Due to its emphasis on consistent sacrifice, GLC is often criticised for swindling its congregants of their hard-earned money and becoming rich at their expense (Togarasei and Biri 2019). Similarly, other scholars assert that prosperity gospel churches like GLC provide a moral justification for individual accumulation and its tendency to divert attention from the structural causes of poverty (Gifford 1990; Smith 2001). Similarly, some newspaper articles have branded Prophet Emmanuel a “gosprenuer” using religion to make money and accumulate personal wealth while his congregants become progressively poor. Critics charge the church

5 www.sundaymail.co.zw/makandiwa-sued-for-fake-prophecies.

6 www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2015/03/03/bentley-purchase-was-above-board-angel-s-brother-claims.

7 Tithe is 10 per cent of one’s salary or monthly income which is a mandatory payment to the church by congregants.

for engaging in “Pentecapitalism”. This relates to scholarly arguments that Pentecostalism is not only a response to neoliberal capitalism, but also an extension of millennial neoliberal capitalism (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Lewison 2011).

9 Redistribution, and Patronage Politics

McCauley (2012) argued that Pentecostal leaders have developed into Africa’s new big men. Such PCC leaders establish patron – client relationships with congregants and this relationship is mediated through forms and modalities of gift exchange. Similarly, through charity activities Prophet Emmanuel developed into one of Zimbabwe’s Pentecostal “big men”. Although the concept of big man was originally developed by scholars like Sahlins to denote a kinship-based relationship between patron and clients in Melanesia (McCauley 2012), in this article I use this as a metaphor and as a category of analysis to unpack the complex nature of socialities forged between Prophet Emmanuel and his congregants. For McCauley (2012) the ongoing weakness in the state’s ability to provide social welfare to citizens opened an avenue for charismatic movements to complement and sometimes replace the state in the provision of social welfare and social security. Scholars assert that in a context of neoliberal capitalism and its attendant austerity measures, charity becomes a viable alternative to state provisions (Osella et al. 2015). In a context where traditional family networks are weak and sometimes absent due to mobility, PCCs became alternative forms of social and “ontological security” (Gukurume 2022). For my interlocutors, uncertainty and insecurity is counteracted by and through membership of Pentecostal communities like GLC. In fact, church colleagues become a new spiritual family and a big network of reciprocal social support – they become a social safety net.

Interestingly, Prophet Emmanuel is imagined as a father (*Baba*), embodying the status of a patron, while church members are his “spiritual children” and material clients. As a father, he is responsible for the spiritual and material needs of his many congregants. Indeed, as recipients of the church’s largess, congregants commit exclusively to their religious social network (McCauley 2012) and develop strong allegiance to the prophet. GLC successfully created pay-off structures that reproduce the interchange of resources for loyalty. This is in keeping with Mauss’ (1969) observation that exchange relationships which influence people’s socioeconomic opportunities are often mediated by and through kinship, real or imagined. In GLC’s case, these are spiritual kinship networks. Through its web of gift-giving networks, the church (GLC) becomes

a community of spiritual and material kinsmen helping to cement socialities and convivialities. Due to patrimonial networks, church members tend to be the key benefactors of the charity and development activities of GLC. This finding resonates strongly with Miller and Yamamori's (2007, 32) observation that some PCCs tend to restrict their social service provision to their own church members.

10 Conclusion

The foregoing article explored the ways in which a Pentecostal church engages in charity and development work in Harare. The article revealed that given its rapid growth, influence and involvement in community development, Pentecostalism can no longer be ignored in development discourse and practice. GLC helps congregants to start small businesses through entrepreneurship training and assistance with company registration as well as access to microcredit loans. In addition, given its membership, GLC also provides a huge market for the established businesses, as Prophet Emmanuel encourages members to buy and sell amongst themselves and promote church members' businesses. Networks forged in GLC also provide plenty of livelihood and employment opportunities to members, while the church has also become one of the largest employers itself. I argued in the article that although GLC helps to generate social capital and opportunities which promote socio-economic development, it also generates risks and uncertainties that may further impoverish people. Like many other PCCs in Africa, GLC has also started to play an important role in infrastructural development in Harare. By engaging in these various activities, I assert that GLC is actively enhancing the well-being of people and simultaneously promoting community development. However, I caution that not every church or community member benefits from these activities. Instead, there is a clear politics of inclusion and exclusion, a scenario where certain people, especially church members, benefit from these programmes. I assert that the practice of giving is a consequence of the socially internalised dispositions which foreground philanthropy as an important way of demonstrating God's blessings. As such, giving becomes a corporeal act and embodiment of Godly blessings. GLC actively produces and reproduces a particular habitus through everyday practices. Consequently, I make the case for the specific socialised Pentecostal habitus and argue that this habitus is critical in the attainment of sustainable development. I utilised Bourdieu's theoretical concepts to show how the ethic of charity and philanthropy is produced and

reproduced in time and space and how it embeds itself in people’s everyday lives and practices.

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