



Eschatological Prophecies before and during Covid-19: Female Pentecostal-Charismatic Preachers Self- Legitimation through Prophecy in Kenya

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Abstract

The paradoxical liberating but limiting impact of Pentecostal Christianity on women is well-known (Attanasi, 2013; Brusco, 2010). Female Pentecostal-Charismatic (PC) preachers are asserting themselves in Africa. However, not all female PC preachers lay claim to having a prophetic calling. Even fewer African female PC preachers proceed to share their prophecies through various fora and medium which in turn meet unique African interests. Self-asserting female PC's negotiate their claims to religious leadership or power at different levels by way of prophecies (Cox, 1995). The Covid-19 virus was identified as causing a cluster of pneumonia and deaths in Wuhan city in China on 31st December 2019. It has spread across the world and Kenya has not been spared of its deadly impact. This paper draws from empirical studies on a female PC leader in Kenya, Jane Ndegwa¹ of Hope Evangelistic Ministries (HEM)² and analyses select prophetic pronouncements and communication given from 2016 to 2021. Analysis is based on the concepts of modes of self-legitimation in a field of power, African eschatological hopes, Invasive versus non-invasive prophecy, Eschatological prophecy and the eschatological community. Findings indicate that Ndegwa's prophecies subvert the established symbolic priestly order, and challenge the legitimacy of other priests to establish her place in the narrative of herself as prophetess and as part of her identity and self-legitimation. HEM prophecies which are mostly non-invasive bring the hearers into an eternal presence which when experienced in the now, activate an eternal, eschatological dimension and eschatological community while at the same time, her prophecies show that present Covid-19 concerns in Africa have an eschatological dimension and must therefore not be relegated to the world to come.

Keywords: Prophecy, Communication, Covid-19, Female Pentecostal leaders, Kenya.

Introduction

Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) Covid-19 virus was identified as causing a cluster of pneumonia cases and deaths in Wuhan city in China on 31st December 2019. In recent times, it has continued to cause morbidity and mortalities due to its rapid spread to other parts of the world, Kenya not being exempted. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared Covid-19 a pandemic. The Kenya Government through the Ministry of Health (MOH) press release on 6th March 2020, banned all meetings with immediate effect, including conferences and events

¹ Pseudo name used throughout this paper.

² This is a pseudo name used for the paper.



and issued an advisory to all Kenyans to avoid any meetings or events where more than 15 people would be gathering. Soon after, there followed lockdowns and curfews, with social interactions and movements being curtailed.

In present day Africa, many female Pentecostal-Charismatic (PC) preachers have ministries and churches. However, not many of them lay claim to having a prophetic calling. Even fewer African female PC preachers proceed to share their prophecies through various fora and medium which in turn meet unique African interests (Maseno, 2017). These female PC's use of prophecy plays a role in their claims to legitimacy. As such, self-asserting female PC's negotiate their claims to religious leadership or power at different levels by way of prophecies (Cox, 1995).

Drawing from recent empirical studies on a female PC leader in Kenya, Jane Ndegwa of Hope Evangelistic Ministries (HEM), qualitative data was collected through participant observation, audio tapes and videos. Further, secondary data was obtained through books, journal articles, flyers, magazines, internet and the HEM ministry website. A selection of three prophecies by Ndegwa was made. The choice of these three prophecies is the context of their pronouncements; one was made within the context of the annual August prophetic conference, one in a monthly interdenominational meeting and the other in a usual Sunday service.

These prophecies may be considered to be eschatological in nature in that they activate an eschatological dimension. The perception that prophecy engenders a continuing experience of divine presence is, in itself, a perception of eschatological experience (Muindi, 2012: 103). HEM prophecies may be understood to bring the hearers into an eternal presence which when experienced in the now, activates an eternal, eschatological dimension (Winter, 1982:70). At the same time, HEM Eschatological Prophecies usher persons into an eschatological community. The Eschatological promise by the biblical prophet Joel and subsequent prophecies within Pentecostal settings accomplishes several things: that is, it ushers people from around the world to access an eschatological community, which has Christ as its head and it being the church, the bride of Christ in readiness of the marriage supper. Within Pentecostal circles, this promise moves persons to experience the gift of the Spirit and thus presents everyone with prophetic potential (Koester, 1991: 353-4). Thus, the prophecies given in FEM services have in mind the hope and the wider background of ushering members into an ultimate eschatological community beyond the current setting.

These prophecies may be analysed variously. First; a consideration of the concept of modes of self-legitimation in a field of power. Ndegwa's first prophecy subverts the established symbolic priestly order (Bourdieu, 1991:24) so that it challenges the legitimacy of other priests, especially of the male priests and pastors. According to Bourdieu, the prophet serves as an independent entity who exercises authority outside of any institution. As such, the prophet acts as an independent entrepreneur who largely depends on the value of his or her discourse to mobilize a religious following (Bourdieu, 1991:24). Ndegwa asserts that there are 'fake' men of God and by virtue of calling them out, she acts out a performance signifying a superiority which can unearth these so called 'fake priests'. According to Bourdieu, the prophet challenges the legitimacy of the priest based on his position within the church (Bourdieu 1991:22-25). Ndegwa as a charismatic prophet has a following of faithful members who bank on the accumulated capital of symbolic power (Echtler and Uka, 2016:7). Prophecy in this case adds voice to Ndegwa as a minister.

The second prophecy engenders wealth creation in the present through entrepreneurship and touches on African eschatological hopes and its world-view. The African world-view is this worldly and seeks the good for the now, in this lifetime. By stirring people to believe that they



shall be millionaires, they are sent out with an assignment to work, labour and perhaps get into the league of the super-rich. This prophecy might just be a reason for any one person or more in the congregation to set their minds to pursue business opportunities in that direction with immediate effect. The rider that comes along with this prophecy is that besides this, Ndegwa is going to have more than 100 Millionaires in her congregation before the end of next year, her next annual conference, would be fully funded from one of these millionaires. The eschatological hopes from Ndegwa's prophecies show that addressing present concerns in Africa has an eschatological dimension and must therefore not be relegated to the world to come.

The third prophecy is one to warn, encourage and console, to cheer up and strengthen people in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic. This is very much in line with the majority of her members who are women. Many women in Kenya bear the brunt of raising and nurturing the ill in the families and fending for them. They are often times in places where they would need encouragement and a listening ear. Since HEM has an appeal to many women, such prophetic utterances play an important role.

Hope Evangelistic Ministry

Hope Evangelistic Ministry (HEM) is a ministry started by Jane Ndegwa. According to her autobiography, in 1988 after attending a meeting by Rev. Reinhardt Bonke, Ndegwa teamed up with a few ladies and started a fellowship in her house. The intention of this fellowship was outreach and prayer on a small scale. According to Ndegwa, this fellowship of believers showed a total dedication to God, as well as a unity of mind and obedience (Kinyanjui, 2011:185). This fellowship morphed from a ladies Fellowship into an interdenominational Fellowship when later some men joined the team and with the expanded group, they needed a more spacious venue (Kinyanjui, 2011:255).

Ndegwa was born in 1957 (Kinyanjui, 2011:95). She gave her life to Christ and in 1978 she got married. On the 21st July of 1985, she states that she had a supernatural encounter in which her calling and mission were comprehensively outlined to her. Her ministry was to be founded on prayer, grounded in faith and evidenced by the gifts of the Spirit with the demonstration of signs and wonders as stated in Mark 16: 17-18. This encounter laid the foundation of her ministry as she heard her name "Ndegwa" clearly called out to her the same way a man speaks to another (Kinyanjui, 2011:161-162). Towards the end of the 1980's she held mass meetings in different towns of Kenya. In 1989, she founded HEM International and registered it at the Office of the Registrar of Societies the same year.

One writer describes her as possessing an electrifying demeanor and a crowd puller (Parsitau, 2014:146, Parsitau & Mwaura, 2010). The salon magazine of May 2011 has it that for many years, Ndegwa preached at Uhuru Park where she would have over two hundred and fifty thousand people in attendance from all over the country and beyond. Clearly what remains is that she became a household name. Further, she prophesied of things concerning the nation of Kenya and some of these prophecies are said to have come to pass by many members of her congregation.

In the early 1990's having women preachers in large parks was unthinkable. Preaching and managing church affairs was considered too complex for women who are thought better off wearing aprons to cook and care for their families. To Ndegwa, women who pioneered public Christian ministry did not receive much goodwill from society in those days. This has now changed with the wider acceptability of female leadership in Churches. Consequently, in the



those days, obtaining an official permit to preach at Uhuru Park from the then Provincial Commissioner Waiganjo was not an easy feat (Kinyanjui, 2011:228-229).

After fourteen years, HEM second Sunday of the month meetings did not remain at Uhuru park. The monthly meetings ended even as over the years, HEM metamorphosed into a family church. Ndegwa started to construct a large church in Karen, Kenya. Many church activities now take place at the Karen premises while they still keep the Ngara offices open. Yet, despite metamorphosing into a fully-fledged church, the ministry is still largely known by her household name HEM and Ndegwa's ministry to single women. Three decades after its inception, Ndegwa attributes the tremendous growth of HEM to the work of the Holy Spirit. Further, with the evidence of the power of God in her deliverance sessions, miracles and signs and wonders at crusades and other meetings has calmed the wave of skepticism she encountered at first and now attract many people in need of prayers and miracles (Kinyanjui, 2011:231).

HEM leadership comprises Rev. Jane at the helm, serving as director and founder of the ministry. After her are two senior pastors Pastor Tarry³ and Reverend Juliet⁴. Thereafter there are other pastors, Pastor Kaunga and Pastor Joshua. Then there are many ranked ministers overseeing the ministries that operate within HEM. Ndegwa says that during one Sunday service way back in 1978, Pastor Juliet ministered in song and this encounter resulted into a connection between the two. Later they prayed and fellowshiped together and in 1979 she got married. This relationship between Reverend Ndegwa and Reverend Lucy Muthoni Maina has lasted over thirty-two years and is characterized by common love and fear of God as well as respect, trust and support. Furthermore, in the early 1980's the two worked together as teachers at the same school, preached together as Lucy interpreted (Ndegwa's prophecies (Kinyanjui, 2011:157-158). Reverend Lucy Maina introduced herself indicating that together they have preached throughout the country- from schools to prisons, rural market places, parks and city halls. In 1987, she also had a divine encounter in which her role was spelt out, which is to support His servant Ndegwa (Kinyanjui, 2011:199). Ndegwa's is often referred to as the Prophet. In her meetings and Sunday services, when called to the stage, there is often reference to her as a prophetess of God.

Prophecy in African Christianity

Though Pentecostalism is on the rise in Africa, it is notable that few academic studies have been conducted on prophecy in Pentecostal churches in Africa. According to David Aune, the subject of prophecy is neglected in the church.⁵ At the same time,

There is hardly any popular literature on prophecy by the Kenyan Pentecostal-charismatics. A perusal of the church bookstalls and pastorate libraries in the congregations studied, as well as a perusal of internet sources, did not yield any significant literature on charismatic prophecy native to Kenya (Muindi, 2012: 151).

Yet, commonly found is literature of western Pentecostal- charismatics whose books are observed to be commonly available in the main bookshops and pastorate libraries in Kenya. In

³ Pseudo name

⁴ Pseudo name

⁵ See David E. Aune (1983). *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans).



order to access prophecies in Kenya arising from the Pentecostal-charismatic phenomenon Pentecostal oral theology needs be taken more seriously. Since not much is written in many Pentecostal Charismatic congregations in Kenya on important topics, such as prophecy (Muindi, 2012), an important way to glean from these congregations what they believe and practice is to immerse oneself (Maseno-Ouma, 2014: 45-55) in the particular congregation as an apprentice and take into cognizance the prophetic oral theology that is alive and vibrant. In general, charismatic prophecy in Africa Pentecostal-charismatic circles is often seen as an immediate revelatory divine-human encounter and much of charismatic prophecy praxis is orally archived, biblically allusive and culturally traditioned (Muindi, 2012: 47, 52).

According to Ogba Kalu, Africans have been in the past and also up to today intensely interested in the charismatic power within the Biblical narratives. Following many revival movements for example, the East African Revival, which occurred in the 19th century and intensified significantly at the turn of the 20th century, Kalu outlines various figures who would arise such as priests, prophets Zionists, classical holiness and Pentecostal groups and the 1970's youthful Charismatic movement. Mainly, the prophet would be endowed with an evangelistic ardour and healing powers that fast-tracked Christianization.⁶

The African patriarchal context has over the years made it difficult for women to assert themselves and be heard even within general religious settings. Many women therefore in Africa, would never be heard at all, save through the avenue of prophecy. However, women's ability to prophesy gives them a voice to be heard. Harvey Cox tells of the importance of these silenced women in Pentecostal settings hearing themselves speak in various forms (Cox, 1995).

Kalu contends that the Pentecostal movement in East Africa emerged historically from the revivals of 1930's and indicate indigenous appropriation and "setting to work" of the translated gospel and missionary message. To him, the 1990s, saw a reversal to holiness ethics, the prophetic/apostolic theological emphases, intense growth and expansion into other parts of Africa.⁷ This is also around the same time that Ndegwa started her monthly evangelistic and prophetic crusades.

The centrality of prophecy in HEM is undisputed. The second Sunday monthly interdenominational prophetic meetings show the primacy of the same. An annual August prophetic conference is such a place that stamps the prophetic inclination of HEM. The 2016 one week long prophetic conference held in August 2016, was well publicized at the Church. This conference was estimated to cost about ten Million Kenya shillings. Over 15 nations were scheduled to attend with 300 delegated from all over the world. This conference according to Ndegwa's would see Kings, prophets and priests sit together. The conference started on 15th August to 20th August. In her announcement for the conference, Ndegwa asked, where are the prophets? Then she goes on to list a number of guest speakers scheduled for the prophetic conference.⁸

According to one Pastor Donald Mwai, in his sermon on 7th August 2016 at the same venue titled, "From here to there", churches come in different flavours. The HEM flavour is that which

⁶ See Ogba Kalu (2007). A discursive interpretation of African Pentecostalism. <https://www.calvin.edu/nagel/resources/files/KaluASCH07.pdf> visited on 16.8.2016

⁷ See Ogba Kalu (2007). A discursive interpretation of African Pentecostalism. <https://www.calvin.edu/nagel/resources/files/KaluASCH07.pdf> visited on 16.8.2016

⁸ This announcement is made in the 7th August 2016 Sunday service.



likes prophecies accompanied by loud worship and praise.⁹ Many would agree that HEM services at Uhuru park, Nairobi was an avenue for the prophetic to be manifested. This brought in the crowds as many people sought to hear what God had to say to the nation and to their own lives and daily conditions.

Female PC leader Ndegwa as Prophet: Self versus others perceptions

On several occasions and in public meetings such as church services, Rev. Ndegwa's asserts her prophetic calling. Some select instances include: "Watch me if I be not a prophet, the judgement that is going to rain in 6 months". This self-assertion was made on Saturday 19 August 2016, and the specific context of this was a women's Saturday meeting in which after the main speaker calls Ndegwa back on stage so that they can minister together, as they prayed for the women in the service. The new church building had just been opened on the 14 August 2016 and the prophetic conference had a component that included a women's Saturday morning meeting. On this Saturday the 19 August 2016, Ndegwa had called forward some women to be prayed for. In this case the specific call was for women in leadership of certain churches whose leadership was considered to be fake. She stated, "fake, fake, fake, fake men of God and you know that you know. Cultic leadership of which you have tried to conform yourself to. Why do you want to be fake?" She then uttered the self-reference above.

On the 10th July 2016, when back on stage after the main speaker of the day, Rev. Ndegwa came to make her conclusions and stated: "The season, the promise, the purpose, the prayer...Let us shout to the Lord...The prophets, the folding of the tent. As a prophet I decree that there are things that shall not enter my house. I break them". Later on, after the congregation was led into prayer, she added: "You still have the keys. How many of you know that you have the keys and that the keys symbolize authority and power? I declare as a prophet of God... The gathering of prophets today say, no more chains and no more prison doors".

According to Ndegwa: "All the gifts that God bestowed in me - word of Knowledge, word of wisdom, healing and prophecy are for the edification of His church. I give Him all the glory" (Kinyanjui, 2011:166-167). She considered herself as a prophetess to the nation and a watchman to the country (Parsitau, 2011:138).¹⁰ In general, Ndegwa may be said to be a prophetess and a healer. Further along in the Saturday women's meeting she firmly stated, "I'll be happy to continue prophesying to the end. I always say that prophets don't die a death of honor. But I will not die before I finish my task. Later, towards the end of the entire Saturday meeting, she stated: "I have another word, not so good...You know I'm a prophet, not excuses, not explaining".

⁹ Pastor Donald Mwai was the speaker of the day at this service.

¹⁰ Damaris Parsitau. 2011. 'Arise O ye daughters of faith. Women, Pentecostalism and public culture in Kenya'. In : Englund, Harri (ed) *Christianity and Public Culture in Africa*. 131-145.



Others' reference to her as prophet

In the second Sunday afternoon meeting, the members are said to be a gathering of prophets. Generally, these are interdenominational meetings which emphasize prophetic declarations and announcements. On different occasions, the speaker of the day refers to her as a prophet. One pastor Sam, the speaker on the 11th September 2016 states upon finishing his sermon, "Let us welcome the prophet of God". Similarly on Sunday 24th July 2016, the speaker of the day refers to her as a prophethess.

According to one Revered Juliet, a senior pastor at HEM, walking with Ndegwa has been eventful. They have known each other since 1978 and she adds: "we had received her prophecies before and seen them come to pass... She accurately foretold and prepared me about my dad's death in 1986. This is proof of the level of prophetic anointing that God has entrusted her with" (Kinyanjui, 2011:195, 201).

The main Sunday service speaker on 31st June 2016 invited Ndegwa by saying she is inviting the prophet of God to take over. Earlier, upon the launch of her three books on 17 August 2016, the writer states, "I take this opportunity to thank God and honor servant and prophet of God, our mother for giving me this opportunity to use my skills for the glory of God..." According to Rev. Reinhardt Bonke's website,

It was early morning on 21st July 1985 at 3:00 a.m. when God gave Reverend Jane Ndegwa a life changing experience. Her room was filled with smoke and a loud voice called her name "Ndegwa". The glory of God filled the room and although she was fearful, she perceived that it was the Lord speaking. She sat up and the Lord spoke to her about her calling, her service to God, and what He was going to do in the church through her ministry. One week later, at a Sunday service, God manifested His power through Reverend Ndegwa through the gift of prophecy and word of knowledge.¹¹

Similarly, on 14th August 2016 upon the dedication service, the Master of Ceremonies stated, "We are celebrating this great general (Ndegwa) who has walked with God.... This prophet of God, this woman of God who has set an example...."

It is clear that beyond her self-assertion, there are many who consider her as such. Many of these could be said to have some connection to her, by way of having her as their mentor, Ministry partner, founder, mother and such-like. This identity in a way sets her apart from other Evangelists who rarely lay claim to a prophetic anointing.

In the New Testament, there is a record of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. According to Muindi, looking back, this day became the programmatic onset of Joel's eschatological prophecy which declared that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all flesh with prophetic manifestations (Muindi, 2012: 124). Yet according to Helmut Koester, Pentecost's experience of the gift of the Spirit was closely related to the rite of entrance into the new eschatological community. This Eschatological promise by Joel ushered people from around the world to access this eschatological community, experienced the gift of the Spirit and thus presented the notion that everyone had prophetic potential (Koester, 1991: 353-4). Consequently, the prophecies given in HEM services have in mind the hope and the wider

¹¹ See <https://www.bonnke.net/cfan/en/soe/645?tmpl=component> visited on 20.8.2016



background of ushering members into an eschatological community beyond the current setting. This ultimate eschatological community has its head as Christ and it being the church (*Ekklesia*), the bride of Christ in readiness of the Marriage Feast. This is echoed by Nicolaides (2010) who asserts that “The ‘people of God’ are the pleroma of the church, or the congregation of God’s people”. According to Winter, giving prophecy manifests divine presence and thus brings the hearers into an eternal presence (Winter, 1982:70). This eternal, peaceful presence when experienced in the now, activates an eternal, eschatological dimension.

During one meeting, reference to a school of prophecy run by one of the guests at the HEM prophetic conference added to the significance placed on prophecy. The leader at this school, is described in Ndegwa’s words, “Everybody, his children, grandchildren are prophets. He’ll make you prophesy and prophesy and then a time comes when he ties your eyes and then says, prophesy to the person who is walking in. You amaze me prophet”. Such reference to the prophetic from the pulpit is a performance, which highlights the importance of this particular HEM prophetic conference, the signified and the signifier. It is one that leaves impressions in the minds of the audience and sets apart the one who is indicated as the main actor. This reference clearly shows that beyond the gift of prophecy, persons are able to join schools of prophecy in order to advance in their prophetic operations, which is therefore another dimension of the prophetic dimension.

HEM prophecies as performance may also be noted as those which are carefully choreographed, and when given, seem to indicate that there was prior reflection. Words such as the Lord spoke to me last night, give the impression that these prophecies were already communicated in advance to Ndegwa and were not a spontaneous call out. As such most HEM prophecies are non-invasive. Max Turner draws a distinction between invasive and non-invasive prophecy. To him, the latter is essentially a prophetic report of a prior revelation in which the prophet appears to have reflected on the revelatory encounter and formulated it in the form of a report. The former is said when the Holy Spirit is conceived of as strongly stimulating the speech event itself in real time, and providing immediate inspiration of its revelatory content (Turner, 2000). In what follows are prophecies that are presented and analyzed considering the eschatological dimension of the same and its speaking to African concerns.

Prophecy 1

On the Saturday of 19th August 2016, as already indicated above, within an interdenominational meeting, Ndegwa made a call for women in leadership of certain churches whose leadership is fake to come forward for prayer. She stated:“...you are in leadership of a ministry under fake, fake, fake, fake men of God and you know that you know. Cultic leadership of which you have tried to conform yourself to. Why do you want to be fake?” She then uttered, “Watch me if I be not a prophet, the judgement that is going to rain in six months”.

This prophecy was to come to pass later in February 2017 and this would perhaps vindicate the speaker of the same. However, we do not know which exact fake male preachers to look out for, yet in analyzing this particular prophecy, it is clear that other ministry women leaders we are at an altar in her church. To whom was this prophecy addressed? It was addressed to male ministers of God, men of God who knowingly mislead others and take advantage of their congregations knowing well that they are fake persons. Ndegwa’s prophecy subverts the established symbolic priestly order (Bourdieu, 1991:24) so that it calls to question the authenticity of some of the male priests and pastors in Kenya. Given that there are these ‘fake’ individuals, by virtue of calling them out, it is a performance signifying superiority that can unearth these so called ‘fake priests’. According to Bourdieu, the prophet challenges the legitimacy of the priest based on his position within the church (Bourdieu, 1991:22-25). Ndegwa



as a charismatic prophetess has a following of faithful members who bank on the accumulated capital of symbolic power (Echtler & Uka, 2016:7).

Ndegwa's social function through HEM, elicits dynamics within the religious field due to competition that is evident in every religious field. At the same time, there is a cast of actors who seek to legitimize their activities (Nandera et. al., 2018). In seeking self-legitimation, Ndegwa's interdenominational meetings pull crowds of people beyond her usual reach. These people consider themselves to be members of other congregations. By calling out women leaders of these other congregations and having to pray for and over them, the performance legitimizes her cause. It signifies her standing and through this a number of others opt to quit their own churches and align with her.

When calling out these women leaders in other churches or ministries and explaining that they are under a corrupt priesthood, she places herself as an alternative, one that they can emulate and take after as a role-model. She posits herself as a possible alternative and mentor who though is not serving under a fake male priesthood, is flourishing and doing well. Her ministry, commonly directed at vulnerable women is among these interdenominational members then considered a preferred place of worship. Self-legitimation in a field of power, takes into consideration the acquisition and conversions of capitals in a bid to occupy positions of power in a landscape of contestation (Bourdieu, 1986: 1991).

The content of the prophecy is one of impending judgment. She points out that this judgment shall be realized within a span of six months. The eschatological significance of this prophecy is that just as in the African world-view, wrongs were judged and punishment meted out to those who violated the laws, so this prophecy is in sync with that view, that judgment shall come in due time.

Yet, the effect of this prophecy was to yet again get women in ministry and in leadership from other denominations to present themselves and seek prayer from Rev. Ndegwa to avert the judgment that has been pronounced. Just as judgment elicits effort on the part of the offender in the African world-view to right the wrong or to atone for it, it was clear that some women owned up to be prayed for and thereafter they were instructed to leave that ministry and church immediately without any notice or explanation required.

Prophecy 2

Ndegwa¹² gave a sermon titled "From Zero to Heroes", she stated: "Let me prophecy. The ships of Tarshish will come loaded to Mombasa and before the end of next year, I will have more than 100 Millionaires. Let me prophecy, Oh let me prophecy again. Before the end of next year, I will have more than 100 millionaires. I know I'm talking to Kings. Come the next conference, one of these shall ask for the entire budget of the conference to fund".

This prophecy is addressed to the members in the audience of her second service meetings. The intention of this prophecy was to suggest that good fate awaits many people in the audience and that they shall obtain much financial gain. The African world-view is worldly and seeks the good for the now, in this lifetime. By stirring people to believe that they shall become millionaires, they are sent out with an assignment to work, labor and perhaps get into this league. It is possible that the ships at the coast may typically be related to the expansion of the

¹² This is gleaned from the interdenominational Sunday service of 11th September 2016.



Chinese goods in ships at the Mombasa coast in readiness for the standard Gauge railway consignments.

This prophecy engenders wealth creation through entrepreneurship. Whether this particular entrepreneurial inclination has a cultural background and world-view in focus is something for further investigation. Yet, it might just be a reason for any one person or more in the congregation to set their minds to pursue business opportunities in that direction with immediate effect. Those who believe this would set out and see what comes out of it. This prophecy also suggests that once that wealth is created, it shall duly be redirected to the house of God for the purposes of the congregation. Indeed, the wealth of the members in a congregation adds to tithing, giving and the offerings that may be made. As such, this prophecy suggests the continuity of giving and of givers in the congregation because they have reaped large benefits elsewhere in the market-place.

Prophecy 3

Ndegwa states¹³ that, in 2021 that it was good that we knew to wear the mask and that God preserved our lives. If about two million people died, she pondered on why would we would be preserved. Further, she noted, "...2021, I sound a warning on what is ahead of us...2021 will be interesting but globally we shall experience what is called a shaking...Nations and their systems will be shaken...We are looking at very tough economic times. I want us to take note that it will take longer than they expected for the nations to recover and rebuild themselves after the Covid-19 pandemic. The damages have been done will be felt stronger in the days ahead. In 2021, some nations will experience political unrest...We shall witness some nations facing conflicts and rage. If we have ever prayed for the nations, let us know that nations are going to be shaken. We had issues over hospital beds, and now we are going to deal with angry people. In 2021, it will be intense in terms of struggle... She saw infections and diseases that people do not understand.... The living conditions of many Kenyans will worsen".

This communication to the congregation implies that persons hearing her should brace for very difficult times ahead as the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic will take longer than it is envisioned to. According to Clement, the prophetic word should give hope and help God's people understand that He has a destiny for their lives. Observing this view, prophecy encourages the hearers with eschatological hope (Clement, 2005:82).

This prophecy is intended to forewarn and encourage the listeners in the HEM morning service that there are hard times coming their way. This was after members had been led into prayer and encouraged to speak in tongues as they prayed in the spirit. This charismatic encounter and environment prepared room for the charismatic prophecy which came to forewarn those who felt helpless in the face of global distress.

Muindi made observations, namely that

charismatic prophecy is a revelatory experience of divine presence in congregational-liturgical settings; it is often presaged by visionary experiences, voices within or words coming to mind, that a charismatic encounter is a prerequisite for charismatic prophecy manifestation, and that charismatic prophecy serves to enliven congregations with revelatory edification, encouragement and consolation. (Muindi, 2012: 156).

¹³ This was a Prophetic service of January 10, 2021. Nairobi Kenya.



Clearly, this prophetic communication was given at a HEM service in January 2021 before Kenya experienced a third wave of Covid-19 which started mid-February 2021. Muindi is also clear to note that further studies need to be made on whether these listed observations above resonate African perceptual experiences or whether they affect the African perceptual experiences of prophetic manifestations at all.

Conclusion

Prophetic utterances in the New Testament Church came to strengthen, encourage, and comfort the Church throughout the ages. These prophecies necessarily addressed a word to the community concerning its present life, its present needs (Gaybba, 1987). Within the African context, present concerns are central and vital. A peaceable and good life in the now is often sought after since African eschatology remains an eschatology of life and solidarity flourishing on earth.

Ndegwa's prophecies subvert the established symbolic priestly order. Ndegwa further challenges the legitimacy of the priest based on her position within the church even as she keeps members who count on her accumulated capital of symbolic power. For women who have in patriarchal religious settings been silenced, prophecy was an important route for Ndegwa whose early ministry days were wrought with many challenges. Prophecy adds voice to Ndegwa as a minister, and when confirmed by those who hear her prophecies, she realises a firmer place in the narrative of herself as prophet, her identity and also of her self-legitimation.

The eschatological hopes presented from the prophecies above show that addressing present concerns such as Covid-19 has an eschatological dimension. The place of the church is to comfort, encourage and support and must therefore not be relegated or ignored. HEM prophecies manifest divine presence and connect the hearers' and Ndegwa into eternal presence in real time. This dimension allows for a merger between the present and the future, divine presence in the now.

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