

# Ndadhiniwa (I am fed up)

## A Missiological Framing of the Gendered Notions of African Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe

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### Abstract

Pentecostalism remains one of the fastest growing forms of Christianity on the African continent. Early scholarship on African Pentecostalism had shown it to be gender inclusive. However, current scholarship has begun to question the continued marginalisation of women, especially from leadership positions in Pentecostal churches in Africa. Women marginalisation from leadership positions in the church is a missiological concern. Frustrated by the continued marginalisation, women in African Pentecostalism are finding innovative and subversive ways of protesting. One of these ways is the formation of women only prayer groups such as the Ndadhiniwa Prayer Group in Harare, Zimbabwe, led by Memory Matimbire. This article, therefore, seeks to establish how this group helps us to frame the gendered notions of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe from a missiological perspective. The focus of the article is on analysing how the prayer group is pushing beyond the boundaries of patriarchy by creating spaces where women can freely express their spirituality with no patriarchal demands placed upon them. A missiological gender analysis is critical in analysing this group as it offers new insights on the gendered inequalities in mission, particularly as they relate to African Pentecostal ecclesiastical spaces. Using the African womanist theoretical framework, the article analysed the covert subversion of patriarchal dominance to women empowerment through Pentecostal performance by this group. In doing this, an engagement with Allan Heaton Anderson's analysis of gender in global Pentecostalism was done. Data for the article were gathered through online media (social media included) as well as an analysis of YouTube videos.

**Key words:** African Pentecostalism, Allan Anderson, Gender, Women

### 1. Introduction

Scholars studying Pentecostalism in general and African Pentecostalism in particular, generally agreed that this form of Christianity has grown and continues to grow tremendously across continents (Anderson, 2005; 2013a, 2013b, 2018; Hackett,

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2017; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2007). A number of works have traced the origins of Pentecostalism and its movement from the centre of origin to other parts of the world (Anderson, 2005a; Chua, Mirafuentea & Etcuban, 2017; Togarasei, 2018); others have focused on how Pentecostalism interacted with local cultures to the extent that it has become a contextual religion through the process of adaptation (Mayrargue, 2008; Biri, 2020; Kaunda & Sokfa, 2020); yet some works placed emphasis on the contribution of Pentecostalism to contemporary topical issues such as development, sexuality, politics, gender, among others (Haustein et al., 2015; Burgess, 2015; Kaunda, 2020). While some of these works have focused on the intersections of African Pentecostalism and gender (Mapuranga, 2013; Masenya, 2014; Dube, 2014; Soothill, 2015), it is apparent that those focusing on Zimbabwe have rarely paid attention to gender issues in African Pentecostal missiology. It is this gap that this article seeks to bridge by making a missiological gender analysis of an all women prayer group called Ndadhinhiwa in Zimbabwe. The intention of the article is to establish how this group helps us to frame the gendered notions of African Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe from a missiological perspective. The article is informed by the African Womanist theoretical framework. The strength of the theory lies in the fact that it allows women to tell their stories and experiences. In this case, the theory becomes crucial as it allows us to analyse how the Ndadhinhiwa Prayer Group has used the pulpit to tell women's stories of marginalisation, as well as challenge the source of this marginalisation, which is patriarchal culture that is both prevalent in society and in the church. Through the African Womanist theoretical framework, the article analyses the covert subversion of patriarchal dominance to empower women through Pentecostal performance by this group. Data for the article were gathered through online media (social media included) as well as an analysis of YouTube videos. Prior to focusing on the Ndadhinhiwa Prayer Group, the researcher engages Allan Anderson in making a general missiological gender analysis of African Pentecostalism.

## **2. A Missiological Gender Analysis of African Pentecostalism: An Engagement with Allan Anderson**

Allan Anderson is a renowned scholar of global Pentecostalism. As such, he has also written extensively on African Pentecostalism. While his focus has been on the development and spread of Pentecostalism globally, he has found time to also highlight the gendered power dynamics within this Christian tradition. Anderson (2013:265) agrees that gender studies are increasing in the study of global Pentecostalism and notes that this is for a good reason. For example, the very fact that the majority of Pentecostals worldwide are women makes this crucial. He further notes that official religion has usually oppressed and marginalised women, placing

them into a caste stratification that expects them to fulfil certain roles and excludes them from others (Anderson, 2013b:265). Anderson argues that it is clear for one observing Pentecostal activities to notice that most of those involved are women, even though the leadership is often male (Anderson, 2013b:94).

Anderson argues that from the onset of Pentecostalism, women played an important role. He makes a bold declaration that women were the main bearers of the Pentecostal message worldwide (Anderson, 2013:266). He argues that from its beginnings, the widespread phenomenon of women with charismatic gifts throughout Pentecostalism resulted in a much higher proportion of women in ministry than in most other forms of Christianity (Anderson, 2013a:266; 2013b:93). From his analysis, leadership and participation were based on the fundamental Pentecostal belief in the priesthood of all believers and the empowering and legitimising experience of the Spirit that is available to all, irrespective of gender (Anderson, 2013b:93). This is because early Pentecostals declared that the same Spirit that anointed men also empowered women (Anderson, 2013a:266). Utilising Paul's theology, they declared that there was neither male nor female as the Spirit had also anointed women to preach the good news to the world (Anderson, 2013a:266). Therefore, women were prominent because inspirational leadership was privileged over organisational leadership (Anderson, 2013b:93-94). In the same manner that men did, women were allowed to "exercise any spiritual gift, testify to their experiences, and witness through music, prophecy... and many other forms of participation in the services – and in most cases, they did so more than men did" (Anderson, 2013b:94). Tragically, despite all the practical involvement of women with personal charisma and authority in Pentecostal churches, the churches were not ready to come to terms with theological implications of women in ministry. In fact, there were patriarchal conservative voices that were advocating restrictions (Anderson, 2013b:94). The reluctance of many Pentecostal churches to allow women to teach men needs to be understood within the wider background of their conservative churches that encouraged the literal reading of Paul's injunction that women must not be allowed to teach or have authority over men (Anderson, 2013b:101).

For Anderson to put the issue of the status of women in Pentecostalism into perspective, he traces the history of Pentecostal women in the development of Pentecostalism. He highlights the experiences of both leading women pioneers and the ordinary women participants in Pentecostalism. His argument is to not privilege hierarchical, official leadership roles as this tends to obscure the important roles exercised by those women who never access the privileged offices reserved for men in many Pentecostal denominations (Anderson, 2013a:266). Focusing on American Pentecostalism, Anderson (2013b) discusses the changing gender attitudes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He notes that by the 1880s,

evangelical training schools for missionary women were being founded in the West and women were being enrolled in others. Anderson gives examples of pioneering women such as Phoebe Palmer, Catherine Booth, Carrie Judd Montgomery, and Maria Woodworth-Etter, who during their time, were preaching in mass gatherings (Anderson, 2013b:94). In the movements to which Montgomery and Woodworth-Etter belonged, they were free to exercise their healing ministry. However, Anderson notes that they did so in independent organisations that Pentecostal denominations could choose to ignore if they so inclined (Anderson, 2013b:94). For Anderson, the example of these Pentecostal women and those who went as missionaries to Africa, Asia, and Latin America deeply influenced communities in which they served, and though often subjected to patriarchy, they set precedents for leadership that echoed for a long time. He is, however, quick to notice that there were conflicting views on what women in the Pentecostal tradition could or could not be allowed to do even in North America. A profound example is an incident that happened between John Alexander Dowie and Alexander Boddy. Narrating the incident, Anderson (2013b:95) says, Boddy had written a letter to Dowie questioning why Dowie's leaders (men and women) dressed up like Anglican Bishops. To this, Dowie argued that God had called both men and women into ministry. He refused to make a distinction along gender lines in the way the leaders dressed. Analysing William Seymour's ministry, Anderson notes that though he acknowledged that the event of the Spirit baptism first given at Pentecost had demolished all gender discrimination, there was a portentous prerequisite to this seeming freedom. Seymour was convinced that "no woman that has the Spirit of Jesus wants to usurp authority over the man" (Anderson, 2013b:96). Such views led Seymour to amend his mission's constitution to pronounce that women may be ministers but could not baptize or be ordained for ministry (2013b:96). For Anderson, such contradicting views are a clear reflection of the ambiguity with which Pentecostal men and women approached the issue, having been immersed in a strongly patriarchal form of Christianity that was difficult to challenge (Anderson, 2013b:96).

Turning his attention to global Pentecostalism, Anderson highlights a worrying development when it comes to the roles of women. He notes that the early emphasis on the ministry of women formally disappeared later in classical Pentecostal missions (Anderson, 2013a:274). In most cases, women are being relegated to play active roles in charity departments in most Pentecostal churches. For Anderson, it is because this reflects stereotypical roles ascribed to women as 'mother' and 'homemaker', roles that are socially constructed (Anderson, 2013a:270). However, women play subordinate roles when it comes to preaching and teaching in a church service. Despite leading the way in the gifts of the spirit, women are often denied hierarchical positions of leadership in Pentecostal churches (Anderson, 2013a:270).

From Anderson's perspective; "Pentecostalism seems to reinforce traditional male dominance in the family and the church by its literal interpretation of such Pauline texts referring to the husband as the head of the wife and banning women from teaching or usurping authority over men" (Anderson, 2013a:270). This, to a large extent, has led to the trivialisation and invisibilisation of women's contributions in Pentecostal histories. In redress, Anderson (2004:8) has called for 'affirmative action' in the writing of Pentecostal history as a way of redressing the balance where the contribution of women is made visible. He argues; "we must listen to the 'margins' by allowing the hitherto voiceless and often nameless ones to speak, and by recognising the contribution of those unsung Pentecostal labourers of the past who have been overlooked in histories and hagiographies" (Anderson, 2004:8).

Anderson's gender analysis on Pentecostalism finds resonance within African Pentecostalism, particularly within the Zimbabwean context (this may also apply to the rest of the continent). Women in Zimbabwe have, however, responded to this marginalisation through subtle resistance and subversion. One of the ways that they have done this has been to form Christian women's groups. Historically, Zimbabwe's Mai Chaza of the Guta RaMwari church resisted the patriarchal dominance in religious spaces. Of late, Zimbabwe has witnessed the emergence of groups such as Victoria Mpfu's Women Weapons of Warfare, Florence Kanyati's Grace Unlimited Ministries, Patience Hove's El Shaddhai Ministries, and many others. In this article, the researcher focuses on a recent formation, which is the Ndadhinihiwa Prayer Group. This focus has been necessitated by its uniqueness in terms of approach and performance. Below, the researcher proceeds to give the historical background of this group.

### **3. Ndadhinihiwa Prayer Group: Historical Background**

The Ndadhinihiwa Prayer Group was started by Memory Matimbire in April 2018. On its Facebook page, the official name is indicated as *Daughters of Virtue: Ndadhinihiwa Prayer Group*. In Zimbabwe, it is just referred to as '*Ndadhinihiwa*'. The group is interdenominational and its mission is to deliver and equip women to their full potential while its vision is to build a generation of women who are fully equipped in prayer and in the knowledge of God until they inherit their God-given promises. Like the male leaders of New Pentecostal Movements (NPMs) in Zimbabwe who have called themselves 'prophets', Matimbire also holds the title of 'Prophetess'. It is not clear whether there was something that influenced the choice of this title. The group runs weekly prayer sessions that are held every Wednesday on the 'Prophetess Mountain' in Glen Norah B (a high density suburb in Harare). It is important to note that the Ndadhinihiwa Prayer Group emerges as one among many NPMs on the Zimbabwean soil. Its uniqueness lies in that it is being led by

a woman and appears to have taken Zimbabwe by storm due to the militancy with which Matimbire delivers her messages.

Memory Matimbire traces her call to ministry to her experiences as a barren woman (though she later gave birth to a baby boy). She was barren for years after marriage and was made to understand how women failing to conceive feel. It was from this experience that she claims God anointed her to go and help other women (hence, she holds prayer sessions for barren women so that they can conceive). After the 'anointing', she says she started fasting, as well as going for prayer retreats at secluded places such as Mutemwa, Domboshawa, Ngomakurira Mountains and other hills in Marondera and Goromonzi. It is during such times that Matimbire claims God dealt with her character and set her apart for an assignment. She also claims that God is the one who gave her the power to pray for people facing problems that forced her to fast, pray, and visit various places seeking his 'face'. Matimbire has led the group in various activities, some of which were at a national level. At the time of writing, the group boasted of an international presence. Hence, at times it is referred to as the Daughters of Virtue International Ministries. It is, however, not clear whether beyond Zimbabwe's borders it is also referred to as the Ndadhinhiwa Prayer Group. While she has been invited to preach in other countries under the banner of the group, the group has also invited other famous women preachers on the African continent. Apart from the visible leader, Memory Matimbire, the leadership structure of the group is not very clear. Perhaps as the group continues to grow, the leadership structure will also become visible.

#### **4. Ndadhinhiwa (I am fed up): A subversive resistance to Patriarchal Dominance in African Pentecostalism**

As shown earlier, Allan Anderson has shown the general status of women in global Pentecostalism and how they have struggled to access full and equal religious authority. However, some scholars on African Pentecostalism have lamented the silence of scholarship on highlighting women's agency within a sea of marginalisation (Bhatasara, Shamuyedova, Zorodzai & Chiweshe, 2017:291; Mapuranga, 2018:140). Bhatasara et al., note that scholarly works have not focused on how women navigate around religious ideologies and discourses, particularly on leadership using various tactics and strategies to survive as leaders (2017:291). Within the Zimbabwean context, women in African Pentecostalism have, to a large extent, been relegated to supportive roles where they have to stand with a male figure who is usually their husband. It is usually the fame of this male figure that gives visibility and recognition to the women. In a bid to push beyond these boundaries, wives of NPMs founders have resorted to creating their own ministries within their husband's churches and create a niche that would enable them to be recognised

in their individual capacities. Mapuranga has called these “ministries within ministries” (2018:140). In her opinion, this has enabled women Pentecostal leaders to create, own, and control their space. She stresses the need to acknowledge the extent to which women have become subversive by taking over the structures that have been used to oppress them (2018:147). Yet, there are some who through the tactic of subversion have opted for a complete break away from established ministries and have started their own independent groups which are not under the tutelage of a male figure. As alluded to above, one such woman is Memory Matimbire. Matimbire frames the phrase ‘Ndadinhiwa’ as the motto of the Daughters of Virtue. For her, it denotes that women are tired of what they are going through, and they are saying ‘enough is enough’. She constructs the women who are part of her group as soldiers. However, she is quick to clarify that they are not soldiers in the physical sense of the word but are spiritual because they are fighting spiritual wars. She has constantly declared that “we are the Deborah’s of today”. In most of her online messages, Matimbire makes the story of Zelophehad’s daughters her special reference. The following is part of a sermon that was delivered by Memory Matimbire in South Africa at the Emmanuel Christian Fellowship (ECF) where she was a guest preacher. It has been chosen because of the way that it frames the gendered notions in African Pentecostal missiology. After citing Numbers 27 she went on to preach as follows:

“There were daughters of Zelophehad. The daughters who were now sick and tired. They heard the rumour that God had said to Moses, when you enter Canaan, as you are allocating land, give to male only. Do not consider the women. I don’t knowwhether you understand me. The Bible says the daughters of Zelophehad, they heard the rumour and they said; “Hey you women as we enter Canaan, there is no portion for us. There is no portion of cars for you, there is no portion of land for you, there is no portion in parliament for you. When you enter into Canaan, you are not allowed to preach, you are not allowed to sing, you are not allowed to dress well”. And the daughters of Zelophehad said “the devil is a liar, let us go and see that Moses”. And the Bible says they went after Moses and they entered the Tabernacle and they said; “Hey you Moses, can you go back to your God, and tell your God that there are daughters, there are mothers who are not smiling; there are mothers who are saying we are sick and tired. Why did you carry us from Egypt if you know that portions are for husbands only, that portions are for male only? Why didn’t you leave us in Egypt? We should have died there, but you told us that your God had said we are to enter into Canaan. How come in Canaan, we are not allowed to carry our possessions?” Today in the name of Jesus, today in the name of Jesus, I partake of my inheritance, I partake of my possession. As a mother, I can do it as well. I am a daughter; I can do it as well. Haaah (speaks in tongues)

Moses. Who told you [that] as a woman, you cannot occupy the greatest positions in the nation? Who told you [that] as a woman, you cannot contest to be president? Who told you [that] as a woman, you cannot own your company and become a billionaire? Who told you [that] as a woman, you cannot raise the dead? Who told you [that] as a woman, you cannot drive the most expensive car? Who told you [that] as a woman, you cannot own your own expensive house? Today in the name of Jesus, we have come for our inheritance. Today, in the name of Jesus we have come for our inheritance. Moses, listen to me, I have come for my portion. Give me my portion. Today, as you are going back, go back with your portion. Don't act as a woman. Rule and reign. The power is in you. I said 'Power'. I said 'Power'. The Bible says that power that raised Jesus from the dead, it lives in us as well. Not in men only, but in us as well, not fathers only, but in us as well, not in sons only, but in daughters as well. The Bible says, and Moses looked at them and said; "You have asked for a hard thing. And the daughters said whether hard or simple, we are here for our inheritance. Go and talk to your God. We are here, we do not care, whether you come back after seven hours or you come back after ten hours. Don't worry Moses, go and talk to your God, we are here, we are waiting for our answer". And the Bible says Moses went to God and he said to God; "Father, you haven't seen anything that is outside there, you haven't seen anything". And the Bible says, God said to Moses from today onwards, the law has changed. Aaaaaah! We are law changers, we are law changers, we are law changers. Today in the name of Jesus, I do not know about your generation. Maybe it's sons only who have got big names; maybe it's only daughters who are being looked down (upon). But today, in the name of Jesus you are going to break the law as a mother; as a daughter, you are going to break the law. You are going to take what belongs to you. You are taking it back home. You are taking your calling; you are taking your destiny. The power of the Holy Ghost is going to rest upon you, it is going to rest upon you. Go and change the law, change it, change it. If there has never been a female President in the history of South Africa, we are going to change the law. You are not hearing me. If there has never been in the history of South Africa, a female president, after this conference, by the reason of the anointing, we are going to change the law. You can do it as well. You can enter that state house; you can rule as well. You carry the anointing. You are not an ordinary mother, you are not a passive mother, you are not a common mother. You are powerful! You are powerful! In the name of Jesus (Uploaded on YouTube on 18 September 2018).

The above sermon can clearly be classified under what Tomlinson (2014) has termed 'performative paths' or what is referred to in this paper as 'Pentecostal performance' in Pentecostal preaching. In concurrence, Milovanovic (2017:279) argues that Pentecostal revivalist preaching needs to be seen as ritualised acts. In



a description of his experience at a particular crusade in Fiji, Tomlinson describes how the preacher followed a performative path in which rhetorical movement was designed to provoke physical movement to make people clap and shout with urgency, with exuberant joy. In conformity with Tomlinson's analysis, Matimbire's sermon needs to be understood as "performativity writ large because the preacher is attempting to compel not only [her] listeners but also to compel God to act for everyone [women in this case] in response to the entire performance" (2014:39). He further argues that the preacher's words and the audience's physical responses are meant to make divine action happen. Thus, van Klinken (2016:134) describes sermons as performative practice involving the preacher's body and voice, as well as evoking certain experiences and responses. For example, in the context of the above sermon, the repetition of phrases, the pacing up and down, as well as the claim that the audience is not hearing the preacher, yet she is loud and clear are all meant to convince the hearers to agree with her, particularly as she tackles one of the most ambiguous topics in African Pentecostalism.

This sermon speaks directly to the existential challenges and experiences of women in African Pentecostalism. It is an open challenge to and rebuke of patriachism that exists in this Christian tradition. Through Pentecostal performance, controlling and owning the space of the pulpit, Matimbire finds voice to challenge the existing patriarchal oppression and marginalisation of women within the church and in society. The pulpit is a 'neutral' space, but it gives authority and recognition to the one owning it at any given time. As a woman, Matimbire does not squander the opportunity that she has been given through the recognition of her prayer group. She utilises every moment to tell women's stories of marginalisation in religious communities as well as in society. She refuses to continue watching from the terraces, while "young, male and polished" (Chitando, Manyonganise & Mlambo, 2013) founders of NPMs in Zimbabwe run with the mantles of performing miracles. Hence, the question; "who told you that as a woman, you cannot raise the dead?" She understands that the performance of miracles is the spiritual capital that has given the majority of male prophets the fame and has ushered them into financial prosperity. In this case, the formation of her group, while presented as very spiritual, is a direct challenge to the monopoly by male leaders of NPMs, and as a woman, she is claiming her full share of that space.

In doing this, Matimbire dramatises the story of the Zelophehad daughters. A careful reading of the story shows that a lot of what Matimbire said never happened in the text. What she does is to read her experience as an African Pentecostal woman into the story so that she brings out her message to present day patriarchy. Through the process, she derides patriarchy by dissociating herself from a God that treats women as the 'other'. She rallies women to refuse the marginalisation that they face in the

home, church, and society as a whole. She reiterates that God knows no gender. As such, she calls on women to refuse the social construction of mothers as passive, ordinary, and common. What Matimbire is doing is to call women from the socially constructed realms of goodness to that realm of self-consciousness. Matimbire's call is a refusal for women to continue operating from the margins and ushers them to challenge those who are at the centre but shutting the door on women. While she notes that the Zelophehad daughters sought audience with Moses to register their displeasure in their ensuing ostracism which led to the change of the law, Matimbire seems not to be patient with the process of dialogue. She instructs her hearers to 'go and break' the law of patriarchy in their own contexts. From the message, one gets the sense that all along, she might have been waiting patiently for patriarchy to give in and recognise women's potential, and when this did not happen she got fed up, hence the birth of the 'Ndadhiniwa' Prayer Group. She challenges the religio-cultural beliefs and practices that elevate men over women, husbands over wives, and sons over daughters. Within the African Pentecostal tradition, her message is a direct challenge to Pauline's passages that silence and direct women to learn quietly while submitting to their husbands. By appealing to powerful biblical women like Deborah, Matimbire deploys positive femininity which rejects women's passivity in African Pentecostalism. Beyond agency, she calls for urgency. For her, the matter of women claiming their spaces is now, right there in the service and as soon as her hearers get home.

Through the message, Matimbire makes a date with patriarchy and in direct confrontation, challenges the sidelining of women from leadership positions at every level. She declares that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is in women as well, thereby blurring gender difference. By telling the women that they can do it as well (in the same way that men are doing it), she questions the inferiority complex that religion and culture thrust on women. Hers is a call that encourages women to refuse to be spectators when men are making it in this life. It is common cause that the gospel of prosperity largely propagated in African Pentecostalism is gendered. Therefore, for Matimbire, women cannot continue to live within the shadows of successful men. While calling her members to pray until something happens, she instructs them to actively participate in the social, economic, religious and political spheres of their nations. They should aspire to be presidents, estate owners, businesswomen, as well as land owners, preachers, among others. These are spheres that have generally been dominated by men, and women who have dared ventured in them have been heavily ostracised. By using the Zelophehad daughters as challenging Moses about why he had taken them from Egypt when he knew they would not partake of the inheritance, Matimbire is questioning why the Pentecostal message of salvation was preached to both men and women, if the preachers knew that women were not going to experience it in its fullest. Furthermore, the issue of women leading Zimbabwe is one of

the reasons that led to the 2017 coup when it was envisaged that Robert Mugabe, the then President, wanted to pass on the baton to his wife. In response to this, Matimbire offers a stinging rebuke to the political establishment. She chooses neutral ground (South Africa) to speak truth to power to the leaders in Zimbabwe. Though subtle, the message directly dares the view that preserves certain leadership positions to men only, particularly within the Zimbabwean religio-political context.

An analysis of the above message shows how Matimbire is challenging the way relations, hierarchies of power and authority are established and exercised in African Pentecostalism. She places herself in a position where she challenges what van Klinken terms the “Pentecostal masculinity politics” which foregrounds a notion of citizenship that is simultaneously deeply political, religious, and gendered (2016:130). In her study of African Pentecostalism in Ghana, Soothill (2007:139) argues; “the new churches tend to draw from traditional forms of authority and are susceptible therefore to reproducing the dynamics of local power relations”. It is, therefore, not surprising that when confronting patriarchy, Matimbire puts the church and society in the same basket. Though African Pentecostalism finds ways to reconfigure gender relations, it in a way re-legitimises the established African traditional cultural norms. Thus, van Klinken (2016:139) argues that Pentecostalism presents a complex and rather ambiguous response to the problem of male power and the crisis of masculinity in African societies that it seeks to address. Martin (cited in van Klinken, 2013:245) has called this the “Pentecostal gender paradox” in which we have on the one hand a Pentecostal form of Christianity that has a modernising egalitarian impulse where women are religiously empowered by the notion of spiritual gifts and they benefit from the discursive institution of a family discipline through which men are “domesticated” while on the other hand, Pentecostal gender discourse embraces traditional Christian notions of gender that are embedded in patriarchal lines of thought. Van Klinken does not agree with Martin on the idea that there is an egalitarian impulse in Pentecostalism. In challenging Martin, van Klinken (2013:245) argues that “there needs to be more evidence of the ‘egalitarian impulse’ in Pentecostalism to have a convincing account of a gender paradox.

## **5. Breaking Free but Still Bound: The Persistence of Patriarchy in ‘Ndadinhiwa’**

In a study of patriarchy within African Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe, Mapuranga (2013) noted how women Pentecostal leaders find it difficult to make a total break from male domination to the extent that they opt to bargain with patriarchy. While Matimbire’s message mainly challenges patriarchy as well as push beyond its boundaries, there is a way in which she continues to be entangled in its web. For example, some of the activities carried out by her group appear to be reinforcing

the gendered attitudes towards women. It is tragic that despite trying to break from the past, she finds herself constrained to operate within the confines of African cultural constructions of what makes a woman respectable, that is, marriage and motherhood. In September 2018, Memory Matimbire's prayer group held an all-night prayer session which was dubbed '*Ndadbinbiwa: Munbu Wese Ngaaroorwe*' (I am fed up: Everyone must get married). It was specified that the prayer session was for single women only. Operation *Munbu Wese Ngaaroorwe* shapes woman's respectability as lying in marriage while at the same time presenting singlehood as dangerous and unacceptable within African Pentecostalism. Biri (2021:27) has critiqued this operation as discriminatory towards single women within the Pentecostal tradition. She sees the operation as clear evidence of the traditionally held views of the dangers of single women within African traditional cultures and now African Pentecostalism. For her, such an operation "gives a glimpse of the church's perceptions on single women and also the gender politics at play within the women's forums outside the domain of perceived male dictators and oppressors" (Biri, 2021:27). She, therefore, contends that while men remain the identified oppressive enemies in gender struggles for equality, recognition and inclusivity, the role of women should not be underestimated, downplayed or ignored in discourses on gender and specifically singlehood. What is clear from Biri's analysis is how patriarchy recruits women in positions of influence to speak and act on its behalf in reinforcing its oppressive tentacles on vulnerable women who at times lack the voice to speak for themselves, single women in African Pentecostalism included. The use of titles such as 'Prophets' needs to be understood within this context. Mapuranga (2018:147) argues that "the appropriation of such titles as women identify themselves in Pentecostal Christianity are there to reinforce power and authority as was/is the case with male Pentecostal leaders".

While her message tickles the women who are seen rushing to the front to throw money when she preaches (this also happens in the male led NPMs), it is not clear how they are going to challenge patriarchy in their own physical contexts and spaces. The questions that arise are: After the hullabaloo of the moment, what next? How can this message of liberation cease to be a pie in the sky for the women in African Pentecostalism so that it does not end with the women shouting "I receive!" repeatedly with no tangible results? Beyond the pulpit and prayer sessions, is there a clear programme of action which the women must follow so that the liberation message is brought to reality? The questions arise because Memory Matimbire has constantly constructed the struggles that women in Zimbabwe face as requiring a spiritual solution. The absence of a clear programme of action beyond the pulpit could maintain the traditional views of Pentecostalism as providing a route to escapism and temporary relief for the majority of subordinated African women.

## 6. Patriarchal Pushbacks: Zimbabwean Male Pentecostal Leaders respond to Ndadhinhiwa

It is interesting to note that some male leaders of NPMs in Zimbabwe have not taken this subversion lightly and have begun to push back. Talent Chiwenga, who calls himself an apostle, has openly attacked Memory Matimbire, saying she is a prostitute. In his own words; “*kana ichi chinzenza chinonzi ndadhinhiwa. Riya riya ijoki chairo*” (Even this loose one called ndadhinhiwa, sic. That one is a real prostitute). From Chiwenga’s assertions, Memory is a ‘prostitute’ on two fronts. First, she is a prostitute because he alleges that she sleeps around and fornicates with politicians. When making that allegation, Chiwenga highlights the fact that Matimbire is popular with women. Second, Chiwenga calls Matimbire a spiritual fornicator. Furthermore, Chiwenga is frustrated by the way in which Matimbire presents herself. On two occasions, Matimbire had her prayer sessions advertised online while she was clad in military camouflage. For example, on 15 January 2020, she was posted on her Facebook page in military gear for a prayer session dubbed “*Hondo neVatumwa: Deborah, Hande Kubondo YeMweya*” (War with the Angels: Deborah, Lets Go to a Spiritual War). Chiwenga was miffed by this and oblivious to the symbolism of the dressing, he opined that Satan cannot be shot using her guns and does not fear the army uniform. Yet, others have labelled her a ‘Satanist’.

Chiwenga’s voice cannot be ignored because it may as well be representative of the attitudes of the majority of the leaders of NPMs in Zimbabwe despite their silence. The sexualisation of women who dare trespass into traditionally defined male spaces is not new (Manyonganise, 2010, 2015). It is, therefore, not surprising that Chiwenga views Matimbire as a prostitute because it is a label that is easily picked to describe women who provoke patriarchy in every sphere particularly in Africa. Chiwenga is particularly threatened by the way Matimbire presents herself, that is, a fearless masculinised female in the ‘spiritual’ battlefield. It is not only this courage that unsettles male leaders in NPMs, but also the fact that Matimbire has appealed to a section that has traditionally filled their ministries, women. African Pentecostalism is a game of numbers. She is, therefore, seen not as a complementary but a destabilising force of the male-led Pentecostal churches. She has disrupted the whole African Pentecostal missiological thrust that centred on men while women were called upon to offer support.

## 7. Insights for a Gender-sensitive African Pentecostal Missiological Praxis

Memory Matimbire’s Ndadhinhiwa Prayer Group is a call for a paradigm shift in African Pentecostal missiology. She highlights the existential needs of women in African Pentecostalism, one of which is the recognition of women’s potential in mission. Bo-

tha (2003) has called for the need to engender mission. The militancy with which Matimbire delivers her messages is a clamour for the urgency with which attention should be paid to women's marginalisation within African Pentecostalism. Matimbire has clearly verbalised the African Womanist jargon of self-assertion, self-transformation, as well as self-empowerment. These are important for a new African Pentecostal missiological praxis. It requires both men and women to voice and emphasise it. This points us to the need for a rebirth of African Pentecostalism (African Pentecostalism needs to be 'born again') so that it finds courage in dissociating itself from contextual and biblical cultures that dehumanise women. If anything, the African Pentecostal crusades for soul-winning need also to be directed within African Pentecostal churches themselves for the repentance of men within to turn away from a masculinity that seeks absolute authority aimed at subordinating women. Hence, contestations around women leadership in African Pentecostal Churches as well as national decision-making levels cannot be allowed to go unchallenged beyond the rhetoric of sermons. Instead of male Pentecostal leaders vilifying women who are venturing into leading their own ministries, they should be supporting them. Commenting on Kenya, Mwaura (2007) sees the founding of churches by women in Africa as the ultimate act of religious independency and self-determination. Matimbire's use of the Numbers 27:1-11 story in the above sermon in a bid to provide a narrative of women's oppression within and outside the church, and the breakthrough for women in the text, offers hope to women that there is a possibility for a shift in favour of the disinherited and the disempowered even in a predominantly patriarchal society.

## 8. Conclusion

The intention of this article was to analyse the Ndadhinhiwa Prayer Group in Zimbabwe as a lens through which we could missiologically frame the gendered notions within African Pentecostalism. The aim was to understand the gender power dynamics within African Pentecostal ecclesiastical spaces and how women are navigating and pushing beyond these largely patriarchal zones. An engagement with Allan Anderson's gender mapping of Pentecostal missions provided a necessary platform on which to stand in a bid to analyse specific African Pentecostal contexts such as Zimbabwe. The article has shown that the Ndadhinhiwa Prayer Group clearly fits within the discourses on gender in African Pentecostalism, particularly in so far as it challenges existing oppressive structures against women in African Pentecostalism, as well as society at large. It has highlighted how the founder of the Ndadhinhiwa Prayer Group is taking patriarchy by its horns through the 'neutral' spaces of the pulpit. What can be noted in the context of the present case study is a rejection of an African Pentecostal femininity that is passive, common, and ordinary, as well as the unacceptability of a subordinated womanhood. Despite the courage, the arti-

cle has also shown how the group continues to be entangled by patriarchy through its narratives of marriage and motherhood as concepts of respectability. In the final analysis, the article has called for action towards the adoption of a gender-sensitive African Pentecostal missiology. Further research is required on how this is concretely possible in Zimbabwean Pentecostal women's lived experiences.

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