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The Significance of *Glossolalia* in the Apostolic Faith Mission, Zimbabwe

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to look at the meaning and significance of Glossolalia¹ in the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe.² This paper has also been influenced by debates surrounding speaking in tongues in most of the Pentecostal churches in general and the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe in particular. It was the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) that brought Pentecostalism to Zimbabwe.³ The paper situates the phenomenon of glossolalia in the Zimbabwean socio-economic, spiritual, and cultural understanding. The Pentecostal teachings on the meaning and significance of speaking in tongues have caused a stir in psychological, linguistics, sociological, anthropological, ethnographical, philological, cultural, and philosophical debates. Yet those in the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe argue that their concept of glossolalia is biblically rooted. Surprisingly non-glossolalist Christians also use the Bible to dismiss the pneumatic claims by Pentecostals. The emphasis on speaking in tongues in the AFM has rendered Zimbabwean 'mainline' churches like Anglicans, Catholics and Methodists as meaningless. This is the same with African Indigenous Churches which have also been painted with 'fault-lines', giving an upper hand to AFM in adding up to its ballooning number of followers. This is as a result of their restorationist perspective influenced by the history of the Pentecostal Churches that views all non-Pentecostal churches as having fallen from God's intentions through compromise and sin. The AFM just like other Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe exhibit an aggressive assault and intolerance toward certain aspects of the

Studies in World Christianity 17.1 (2011): 12–29

DOI: 10.3366/swc.2011.0003

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African culture, which they label as tradition,⁴ for example, traditional customs, like paying homage to ancestral spirits (*Kurova Guva* or bringing back the spirit of the dead ceremony), and marriage customs (polygamy, *kusungira* or sanctification of the first born ritual). The movement has managed to rid itself of the dominance of the male adults and the floodgates were opened to young men and women, who are the victims of traditional patriarchy. Besides glossolalia being one of the pillars of AFM doctrines, the following also bear some importance: personal testimonies, tithing, church weddings, signs/miracles, evangelism and prosperity theology.

Keywords: Glossolalia or Speaking in Tongues, pneumatics, Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe (AFM)

INTRODUCTION

Pentecostalism has taken the world by storm and it is not surprising to find Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe being representative of them. International dialogues have been likely since 1972; one was established in Harare (capital of Zimbabwe) between Pentecostals and the World Council of Churches through the Joint Consultative Group. This was an acknowledgement that Pentecostalism is a force to be reckoned with in the area of Christian faith.⁵ Religion offers a refuge to most Zimbabweans across the political, social, and economical divide. Even top-ranking politicians in the Zimbabwean political parties, veterans of the liberation war and former socialists, have turned to God. David Maxwell has rightly observed that in many African cities urban dwellers are continually provoked to reflect upon the state of their souls by scriptural banners heralding the latest convention led by the most recent preachers.⁶ Soulful singers usually grace the occasions during the crusades held in most parts of the country. During the week at lunch hours (between 1 and 2 pm), it is not surprising to find Zimbabwean cinemas, schools, hotels, universities, colleges, stadiums or sports centres and other open spaces in the street corners becoming theatres of the Holy Spirit for new Pentecostal/Charismatic churches and assemblies.

Each Sunday morning in the Zimbabwean capital, Harare, churches across the city are full of swaying, clapping congregations. It is abundantly clear that the US-style of evangelism is booming, complete with charismatic preachers and live bands that are accompanied by the faithful falling to the floor and speaking in tongues. With the economy

in its zenith years of recession and inflation climbing greater heights, bewildered by their ever-deepening impoverishment in what was once a thriving country, religion became a refuge for many Zimbabweans.⁷ Therefore every space where people are known to congregate, like parks, market places, bus stations, in moving buses, even taxis, beer halls, become targets of young preachers smartly dressed. They are known by carrying bibles, which have almost become their 'African weaponry' book and speaking in tongues in between their evangelistic sermons as a sign of being fully equipped. Weekends become a hive of activity, calling for those who want to experience the sweetness of the Holy Spirit. 'Worship stores' are littered around most of the towns in Zimbabwe, selling various biblical commentaries, devotional texts, spiritual biographies, magazines, Bibles, and song or hymn books. With the recent burgeoning of electronic media, the religious consumer has options to buy gospel songs and sermons on audio, video cassettes and CDs.⁸ The electronic media have become accessible to remote rural dwellers. However, most of AFM urban and some rural pastors are influenced by western and American forms of theological messages, preaching and worshipping, especially like Rheinard Bonnke, Ernest Engley, Benn Hinn, TD Jakes and Morris Cerrulo. Paul Gifford has recently observed that Africa's latest Christianisation is really a process of Americanisation; as shown by the use of a totally inappropriate American theological message to Africa's socio-economic malaise and lack of access to their local resources.⁹ In Zimbabwe Pentecostal graffiti stickers, church logos, especially those of AFM, are commonly seen on vehicles and buildings heralding the coming religious events and calling for people to come. The popular ones are conferences by AFM pastors like C. Makandiwa, T. Wutabwashe, O. T. Chipunza (who runs a ministry called 'The School of Delivery') and P. D. Chiweshe. Most of the conferences by C. Makandiwa and T. Wutabwashe are known by catch themes like *The Dream Part, Catch the Fire* (2008 Conference), *Ranks in the Spirit, The Blessing that Dominates, Resurrection from the Dead and The Name Jesus* (2009 Theme at City Sports Centre in Harare). This has also characterised the national annual general conferences of the AFM which have tended to attract many people, for example, the August 2009 conference which attracted 50,000 people. It was marked by the unveiling of one of the largest public address systems in the country supplied by Hard Sound Pro Audio. The Conference was held under the theme 'Embracing the Perfect Will of God through Transformation'. The president (Bishop) of the Church, Rev. Aspher Madziyire had this to say:

Other conferences in previous years were marred by poor sound systems but this year we were blessed to have our own state-of-the-art system which helped us in spreading our message. The sound system could be heard right at the back of the audience.¹⁰

This clearly shows that contemporary Pentecostalism as shown by AFM is strongly characterised by their use of media technologies with such zeal that it has defined their identity as progressive when compared to mainline churches, a feature which was formerly frowned on in the earliest stages of the AFM church. The first pastors of the church were against technology, preaching about prosperity. What has always vexed my mind is what is it that attracts, in particular the young (men and women) to the Pentecostal movement? This is where some would like to argue that glossolalia has been marketed through the electronic media for beneficial growth of Pentecostal churches like AFM, Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) and others, which are portrayed as reservoirs of God's spirit and power. Despite the phenomenal growth of Pentecostal churches, historians have somewhat ignored or have not paid much attention to African Pentecostalism. This is as a result of:

The religious framework of globalisation which is often studied restrictively limited to the West. Such an approach ignores Christianity's growth in the Southern Hemisphere, for example, sub-Saharan Africa.¹¹

This has motivated the present research to look at some of the doctrines of AFM such as glossolalia that seem to form a common ground across the Pentecostal divide. D. Martin noted that glossolalia animates the movement, especially the 'free and democratic availability of gifts of the spirit'.¹² It is these pneumatic practices of speaking in tongues, prophecy, divine healing and exorcism that are central to Pentecostals' self-definition, and those seeking to understand Pentecostalism must remain mindful of them.¹³ Speaking in tongues is practised by an estimated 100 to 400 million Christians in the world today and the number is growing annually,¹⁴ making its study a worthy course.

THE ORIGIN OF APOSTOLIC FAITH MISSION IN ZIMBABWE

The history of AFM and its connectedness to glossolalia is important in this paper. The experience which happened in 1901 in Topeka, Kansas (USA) resulting in 'tongue speaking' under the leadership of Charles Fox Parham and William Seymour is cited as having marked the origin of

AFM. The experience is cited in most of the Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe, for example, ZAOGA, Family of God churches. It was in 1906 when Parham formulated the basic Pentecostal doctrine of 'initial evidence', after a student called Agnes Ozman requested Parham to lay his hands on her as in the biblical fashion in Acts 19: 6.¹⁵ The subsequent meetings that were later held in the former Methodist Church at 312 Azusa Street in Los Angeles have consequently come to be referred to as Azusa Street Revivals.¹⁶ After two years of the Azusa Street Outbreak the Pentecostal movement had centres throughout the United States, many Northern European countries, India, China, West and Southern Africa.¹⁷ Pentecostalism is today found in all the regions of the world and is the largest non-Catholic Christian presence in Latin America.¹⁸ The Pentecostal missionaries were driven by Adventist zeal, leading them to embark on the third wave of mission. It was a desire to revive the enthusiasm of the original outpourings of the Holy Spirit, dampened by bureaucratisation and a growing clericalism.¹⁹ The AFM take the speaking in tongues in Acts 2, and its purported value enunciated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14: 4 and later at Azusa as having implied something of the importance of prayer language in world evangelism. The tradition in the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe is to take that event as an apostolic fulfilment meant to show that glossolalia was something continuous and valuable for generations to come; hence their present emphasis on its practice in the church.

John Graham Lake (1870–1935) took the revival to Africa in 1908 and led many people in glossolalia, for example, migrant workers from sub-Saharan countries.²⁰ This was later instrumental in the formation of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe.²¹ Paul Kruger's name then features a lot in the establishment of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe. His first converts were Chiumbu, Masembe and Gwanzura Brothers (Petros, Enock, John, Ezekiel and Samson), Mutemererwa, Mashavave, Mugodhi, Kupara who became pioneer pastors and evangelists in the church.²² Kupara was the first black superintendent of AFM and is highly respected in the history of AFM in Zimbabwe.

NON-GLOSSOLALISTS' CONCERNS ABOUT SPEAKING IN TONGUES

S. Ferguson notes that Pentecostalism always gave rise to considerable controversy among Evangelicals in the first half of the twentieth century, especially over the baptism in the spirit or glossolalia as the second experience after conversion and the undue emphasis today on the pneumatic gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially speaking in tongues.²³ These

concerns are still raised today when it comes to Pentecostals' behaviour in relation to speaking in tongues. Concerns have been raised in relation to the encouragements they give one another at their services, for example, freedom to pray the way one feels; rolling on the ground, running, jumping and shouting at the top of their voices as a sign of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Critics take their behaviour and beliefs as divisive and unbiblical. Pupils have been expelled or withdrawn from Zimbabwean schools as a result of this questionable glossolalic behaviour. For example, fifty-six students of Eaglesville High School in Harare were withdrawn by their parents so as to keep them away from two Pentecostal girls. The headmaster said that:

There had been a spate of religious meetings at the school. These religious Christian meetings turned fervent with the participating students being violent. Students did this 'speaking in tongues, hitting the walls and windows. Some students went to the extent of "prophesying" against others, thereby harassing others'.²⁴

Therefore the issue surrounding the concept of glossolalia cannot be taken lightly in the contemporary Christian debate. This is despite the argument by Richard C. Schwab that glossolalia was a temporary gift of the Holy Spirit for the Early Church and hence not important today.²⁵ Some, like Archbishop Cramer of the Catholic Church think that (a position held by those against glossolalia), 'speaking in tongues is a sign of demon possession'.²⁶ The AFM church takes their beliefs and teachings as rooted in the book of Acts and 1 Corinthians, presenting a challenge on the contemporary status of certain biblical texts. The AFM church still continue to attract the rich and poor, old and young, educated and uneducated of society.

THE GROWTH OF AFM

The national records of AFM indicate that they have more than two million followers in a population of thirteen million people. However, the church records have not been updated for some time and hence are prone to exaggeration. Recently the Church's president Aspher Madziyire claimed that the church had more than 2.5 million members in Zimbabwe.²⁷ David Maxwell is right to say that accurate figures are hard to obtain, especially because Born-again or Pentecostals are obsessed with size and prone to exaggeration.²⁸ In terms of numbers of adherents and transnational reach, AFM is of Zimbabwe's most vital Pentecostal movements. S. Mujeyi postulates that in 2005 the Church had more than 700 assemblies run

by full-time Pastors in sixteen provinces and it has managed to plant assemblies in every district of Zimbabwe. The church runs two schools and an orphanage institution which target disadvantaged children of society.²⁹ The church has also established some branches in Africa, Europe, the United States of America, Australia, New Zealand, and Asia. David Maxwell is right to say that, in South Africa, the Apostolic Faith Mission is numerically as strong as the Dutch Reformed Church.³⁰ Presently it has two Bible Colleges (the main one in Harare and the other one in Bulawayo) which graduates over 120 pastors every year. The curriculum of the college emphasises the normative importance of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian, especially 'speaking in tongues', for all students who join the college. These pastors are expected to emphasise the value of glossolalia in the respective assemblies to which they will be ministering. The Bible College benefits other big and small churches in and outside Zimbabwe in training their pastors. It has established satellite colleges which are aligned to the college in most of the towns in Zimbabwe. These satellite colleges train lay-leaders about the church's beliefs. It targets those who intend to go into full-time pastoral ministry. This has made it become one of the largest and influential Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. As observed by E. Isichei in the 'Prelude' to her book entitled *A History of Christianity in Africa*, the expansion of Christianity in twentieth-century Africa has been so dramatic that it has been called 'the fourth great age of Christian expansion'.³¹ This portrays the global shift and attention not in economical terms but in African spirituality and AFM is one of the players in that battle for winning souls.

THE CENTRAL BELIEFS OF AFM

David Maxwell regards Pentecostal theological and cultural origins as fusing four theological antecedents, or set of beliefs, hence the Foursquare Gospel.³² The set of beliefs can be summarised as follows:

- An emphasis on personal salvation, the belief that forgiveness follows an act of repentance in the light of God's grace,
- An emphasis on sanctification which stresses the necessity to live a holy life as a second work of grace,
- An emphasis on the filling of the Holy Spirit resulting in speaking in tongues as an experience subsequent to conversion and also a sign of the revelation of the character, power of Christ in the believer, and belief in the imminent second coming of Christ,
- An emphasis on divine healing,³³ and tithing

Every formal or informal gathering of Pentecostals is characterised by celebrations which result in the speaking of tongues as a sign or biblical evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit.³⁴ Traditionally the Catholic Church has claimed to succeed to the apostolic office that was left by Peter and the other disciples. The emphasis in the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe is on pneumatic empowerment through glossolalia as a vital component of salvation and apostolic mission. Even in recent years where some classical Pentecostal groups started to downplay the role of speaking of tongues as evidence of baptism in the Spirit, they still value its legitimate charisms.

PAUL'S POSITION ON SPEAKING IN TONGUES

Paul's letter to the Corinthians has been used abundantly by various scholars, academics, religionists, and theologians in determining the meaning and significance of glossolalia. Paul appreciated the gift, but proposed some pre-requisite regulations to avoid giving it undue priority in the life of the church. Paul saw the dangers in the practice, perhaps being more than its value (1 Cor. 14: 9, 14: 28).³⁵ He further confirmed that he would have liked everyone to be able to speak in tongues. It is clear that Paul did not dismiss the gift of tongues but sought to redress the imbalance in the Corinthian worship.³⁶

SPEAKING IN TONGUES AS UNDERSTOOD IN AFM IN ZIMBABWE

Glossolalia is regarded as one of the important gifts in the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe which every Christian should have. David and Johanne Wyns take speaking in tongues as undoubtedly the most distinctive doctrine of Pentecostalism which has also become the cornerstone of the beliefs of Pentecostal movements like the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe.³⁷ The experience of speaking in tongues is required as a condition *sine qua non* for membership, for instance, a pre-requisite for holding any position of responsibility in most of the Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. Those who do not speak in tongues are regarded as not having the full consecration and spiritual empowerment for service. An Elder³⁸ in the AFM described the position as follows:

Speaking in tongues is a weapon that every Christian must have in this fight with the devil just as every soldier must have adequate weapons when going to war. Every Pastor or Leader in AFM must

be able to speak in tongues for him to perform miracles like healing, casting out of demons. Those who do not speak in tongues in our church lack faith or are just visitors'.³⁹

This view is widespread in AFM, where glossolalia becomes a measurement of commitment. Their conversation and interaction with other Churches is centred on one's relationship to the gift of tongues. The gift defines and describes whether one is part of the group or not.

The Primitive and Pragmatic Impulse on Speaking in Tongues in AFM

Speaking in tongues is believed to be the evidence and the only experience a Christian needs in order to have the fullness of Christian life; an irrefutable evidence for baptism or filling with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2: 4,10: 44-7, 19: 4-6). Had Cornelius not spoken in tongues, Peter would not have known that he had received the Holy Spirit. There is that urge in the AFM to make every follower of theirs experience what happened to the disciples at Pentecost. They are motivated by a genuine pious devotion, a sincere desire to act decisively on their faith. It is a motivation that is driven by the primitive impulse to smash all human traditions in order to return to a first century world where they believed the Holy Spirit could have reigned supreme.⁴⁰ This is done in violation of the context of the text as they take every text as devoid of history. The reading and meaning that the reader establishes on a given text is what is important. J. E. Stiles adds that the more one prays in tongues, the more the manifestation of other gifts of the Spirit. Glossolalia is the door into the rest of other gifts.⁴¹ There is a radical change in the meaning and significance of glossolalia in the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe as compared to what is found in the New Testament in broad, let alone Paul's view. Concerns have been raised that inconsistent methods are applied to make followers 'speak in tongues'. Methods are usually applied by which people are told to open their mouths, lift up the sound of their voices and speak forth whatever words the Holy Spirit places on their lips. Some have claimed to have started speaking in tongues when they began by making noises with their mouths.⁴²

The Pentecostals in general are regarded as driven by 'the Pragmatic impulse' that reflects the desire 'to do whatever is necessary in order to accomplish the movement's purposes'.⁴³ So making noise or sound is taken as a sign of faith which gets rewarded through speaking in tongues. Accusations have been made that there are some AFM and ZAOGA pastors in the cities like Harare who go to the extent of giving some 'tongues

notes' to new members who are hesitant to produce the required sound. Followers are usually encouraged not to pray in their mother language but recklessly, say out whatever sounds that seem easy to the speaker. They are usually encouraged to speak in English or any other foreign language that comes to mind as preparation for receiving of the gift. This is based on their understanding of glossolalia as a foreign, earthly and understandable language. As this takes place, an emotional piece of music is played on the piano or keyboard. It is important to note that, music through the use of instruments plays a leading role in leading people to glossolalic utterances. Usually new people or visitors to this church are asked if they have ever received the 'holy spirit' and in this sense implying speaking in tongues. If it is a 'no' answer, they are invited to the podium where the pastor first gives them a lecture on the importance of glossolalia. Sometimes a programme described as the 'Holy Spirit Service' is created to target those who are regarded as not yet able to speak in tongues. People are encouraged to invite followers of other churches to that service, especially those who are regarded as lacking the 'spiritual power' that can be found through speaking in tongues. I interviewed a couple who attended an AFM church service in Harare who had this to say:

The Pastor moved from one person to other laying hands on each person's head as a sign of imparting the power of the Holy Spirit through the gift of tongues. He/she uttered words like, 'say after me' and started saying certain words which everybody must say. They were then said to have received the Holy Spirit. They claimed to have noticed that the same words get repeated in various assemblies of the same Church throughout the country and sometimes in other Pentecostal churches that take glossolalia as vital in the life of the believer.⁴⁴

This has resulted in uniformity of the vocabulary that one hears when glossolalists speak. This then makes the understanding of glossolalia in the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe controversial when related to what Paul says and even what one finds in Acts. Even if related to the Corinthian understanding of glossolalia there seems to be some developmental changes in the meaning and significance of the phenomenon for the believer. The changes become clear when it comes to how the phenomenon is acquired. David Maxwell is correct in his analysis of charismatic or Pentecostal movements in claiming that, 'this type of Christianity is unashamedly proselytising, creating its own missionary movements'.⁴⁵

The Purported Benefits of Speaking in Tongues

This celebration of the importance of glossolalia in AFM has resulted in various explanations being given to celebrate the benefits that those who speak in tongues should expect. It is claimed by D. W. Bashau that the gift of tongues is a sign of the power of the Holy Spirit upon obedient people, an assurance of the presence of God and the belief that those who are sinners will never speak in tongues. It is God's desire as seen by Paul that 'all' should speak in tongues (1 Cor. 14: 5).⁴⁶ John Kildahl adds that some claim that:

Once possessed of this gift, a person retains it such he can speak in tongues even while driving a car; swimming or eating. Some claim that they kneel to pray and speak in tongues. They may be washing dishes and the lord tells them to speak in tongues, whether alone or with others. It may happen on the Fresh Market or along the road.⁴⁷

What is clear is that in all this there is no emphasis on the interpretation of such utterances. The places where the utterances are made seem not important. Every space and place is turned sacred, for example, who would ever imagine someone claiming to speak in tongues in a swimming pool. P. Courtney argues that some of the tongues, whether done in public or in private, need no interpretation at all. Devotional or private tongues are not a separate gift from congregational tongues or public tongues, but are another manifestation of the gift. Private tongues are for everyone's personal edification; simple tongues of praise and worship (1 Cor 14: 15, Rom 8: 26–8 and Eph 5:19) which are only there to edify the individual, not needing any interpretation.⁴⁸ L. Stoneking argues that whether one speaks in heaven or earthly tongues, or whether one can be understood or not understood is immaterial, but the benefits that one accrues from that experience become important. Emphasis must be more on having the gift than on interpretation.⁴⁹ It is really interesting to note that justification of such actions is made when by quoting Paul in 1 Corinthians 14: 5 ('I would like every one of you to speak in tongues'). Surprisingly, as already mentioned, Pentecostals (AFM) are accused of literally ignoring the context of the Pauline texts so as to make the text serve their interests (eisegesis).

Aside from a contestation on its biblical roots, a demand for the universality of tongues could be explained as arising from a possible influence from the African cultural and spiritual worldview, where possession is one aspect that makes communication with the spiritual

divine world possible among Africans, especially the Shona of Zimbabwe. The emphasis on pneumatic gifts among the Pentecostals, especially the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe is not surprising; the Shona regard it as not enough for the spirit to merely exist without publicly manifesting itself to its audience.⁵⁰ So such memories and beliefs of the Shona spiritual worldview are invoked in Pentecostal churches by taking glossolalia as a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit. M. Gelfand adds that it is an established fact among all Shona people that a person owes his safety and protection entirely to his 'Vadzimu-Ancestral Spirits', and if that protection is removed for any reason, one may suffer any kind of illness, tragedy, or misfortune. The Shona also believe that every Shona person has a 'Shavi' (alien spirit) which bestows individuals with various skills, for example, hunting, healing, fighting, and witchcraft.⁵¹ The same understanding has been related to the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe teaching on speaking in tongues as the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is further a sign of assurance that one is protected from evil forces. So those who do not speak in tongues are made to believe that they are without any protection. They associate the gift with protection against Satanic or evil forces, sickness or diseases and pain in whatever form. J. N. Chacha adds that 'if one speaks in tongues; one becomes a powerful and effective witness of Jesus and gets protection'.⁵² A. N. Chinyemba⁵³ in his unpublished research claims that:

Glossolalia has ritual value for the sick when they pray in tongues, becoming a divine therapist. Those who speak in tongues automatically receive or mysteriously accumulate blessings in all forms as long as they regularly speak in tongues.⁵⁴

The subject of speaking in tongues in most Pentecostal churches is also regarded as closely tied with the word of prosperity, faith, and healing. The saying goes as 'God grants material prosperity to all believers who have enough faith', as manifested in their speaking in tongues.⁵⁵ The prosperity gospel is based on the view that a Christian's inward and spiritual manifestation of tongues will automatically result in an outward working that takes effects in every area of the Christian's life. Just like the emphasis on tongues, prosperity of all kinds is taken as the right of every Christian; true Christianity necessarily means wealth. Poverty is associated with personal sin, a curse from God (Dt 28–30), deficient faith or an inadequate understanding of God.⁵⁶ It is not surprising to find many Africans embracing such prosperity gospel as this is not something new in African spirituality. M. L. Daneel claims that, 'In the

traditional concepts of Africa, wealth and success are naturally signs of the blessing of God or the ancestral spirits'.⁵⁷ African spirituality understands salvation manifesting in health, fertility, success, and material goods in the 'here and now', not the 'hereafter', as emphasised by mainline churches. That gospel, besides Pentecostals claiming to derive it from the Bible, already exists in the African spiritual worldview. The other reason for its acceptance is the high level of poverty in Africa; the prosperity message gives hope to the 'poor majority' that one day they will also be rich. It can also make poor Christians despondent as they continue to sink in poverty. However, the message can be dangerous as it can promote crime when people do not follow the right channels to getting wealthy.

The emphasis on glossolalia has a spiritual appeal to Africans. Africa has always recognised the link between body and spirit. Africa further recognises that there are good and bad spirits which can inhabit man (possess him). Bad spirits are associated with witchcraft and sometimes cause the body to be ill. It is for this reason that evil spirits, called demons in the Biblical context, are cast out. The casting of demons goes together with divine healing, another of the several gifts of the Holy Spirit. At a time when medical costs are beyond the reach of many, it makes financial sense to go to the Pentecostal church where there is an assurance of healing.⁵⁸ J. Jensen adds that many testimonies have been given of speakers in tongues who experienced healing.⁵⁹ What is interesting is that these claims have never been verified and have remained religious statements made at religious gatherings. Accusations have been levelled against Pentecostal churches that some people suffering from HIV and AIDS have ended up claiming healing the moment they started speaking in tongues. Some even claim to be under protection from various diseases, thus exposing them to further diseases. Instead of heeding informative guidance about preventive measures against HIV and AIDS they end up regarding themselves as disease-proof. Critics regard Pentecostal claims to protection against diseases as mere propaganda, meant to win unsuspecting people running away from insurmountable socio-economical and spiritual problems, disease (some incurable), and poverty. They use the so called 'gift of tongues' to fill their churches with hopeful people who want to be saved from poverty. Both rich and poor tend to have different problems some of which cannot be solved through money alone, such as is the case with spiritual problems.

Besides the above mentioned benefits, glossolalia is also regarded as a sin-buster, where those who speak in tongues are assured of victory. For

F. D. Goodman, if one receives the gift of speaking in tongues one will never sin again, as speaking in tongues is a powerful weapon that makes one's mind conscious of God's presence.⁶⁰ This emphasis on tongues possibly explains the reason why Pentecostals get so disturbed, and even backslide, when their leaders fall or fail in areas like marriage, monetary issues, or getting arrested. Most of the people who come to these Pentecostal churches traditionally were in mainline churches which are labelled as lacking the 'power of the holy spirit'. So speaking in a strange language is associated with the Holy Spirit and gets marketed more than any other gift. The focus is then not on preaching Christ to unbelievers but preaching glossolalia to people who are already believers, but put in the place of unbelievers by virtue of not being able to speak in tongues. All such claims have been associated with fundamentalism and the manipulation of people's minds for various reasons, which cannot be discussed in this paper. Some critics point to a Gnostic mentality where certain people genuinely think that they are 'almost there' in terms of salvation, by virtue of speaking in tongues. This then results in a false concept of perfectionism where some people assume they can achieve it. This study has clearly shown that the concept of glossolalia cannot be related to Paul's understanding in 1 Corinthians, although they (Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe) sometimes quote Paul to support their claims.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the discussion above that the Bible is literally read and not contextually interpreted. This has resulted in Paul being used to either justify a total censure on speaking in tongues both publicly and privately, or quoting Paul out of context. It does not follow that such tongue speaking is necessarily evil or demonic: that cannot be proven. The understanding of speaking in tongues in the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe basically needs a holistic analysis as to the reason why it has received so much more attention than other gifts and causes divisions among Christians on its meaning and significance as claimed by glossolalists. So for the glossolalists it is not a change in meaning but a confirmation of what is expected of them by the Bible as Christians. However, such statements on the significance of speaking of tongues could be a tool used by Pentecostals to religiously disarm other Christian groups of authority by luring people to their churches. They use the aspect of tongues to seek members, which possibly explains the phenomenal growth of Pentecostal churches. The emphasis on speaking in tongues seems to

have born some fruits for the Pentecostal churches like Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe in deriving members from traditionally established churches like the Catholic, Anglican, and Methodist Churches. The agenda, as argued by critics, has possibly been to turn the tables against such established churches for their own benefit.

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NOTES

1. Glossolalia is the term commonly used to apply both to a particular kind of linguistic event and also to religious experience with which it is associated. It comes from two Greek words, *glossa* meaning tongue and *laleo* meaning to speak. This is for many people by definition a Christian experience which is mostly identified with speaking in tongues referred to in the New Testament. Whether or not the event is an actual recurrence of the early phenomenon, as claimed by glossolalists, is then up for debate, http://www.philosophy-religion.org/handouts/pdfs/Samarin-Pages_48-75.pdf, 10 March 2010.

2. Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe is one of the biggest Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. Most of the Pentecostal churches like Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa or Forward in Faith International, Apostolic Faith Mission Mugodhi had their founders emanate from the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe. This is also the same with some big African Independent Churches like the Johane Masowe and Johane Marange whose preachers were once initiated into AFM. Unfortunately no academic research or if so only brief academic papers have been written about the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe although it commands the biggest following. A lot of focus was originally on mainline churches and then African Independent Churches or the Zionist Movements: (the works of Ian Linden, Lapsley, Ngwabi Bhebhe, T. O. Ranger, Ambrose Moyo, Paul Henry Gundani come to mind).

3. Phathisa Nyathi, Friday, 1 January 2010. 'Pentecostalism Links Man's Condition and his Spirituality', *The Herald*.

4. David Martin, 1996. *Forbidden Revolutions: Pentecostalism in Latin America and Catholicism in Eastern Europe*, London: SPCK, p. 9.

5. World Council of Churches, *Pentecostal Churches*, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/church-families/pentecostal-churches.html>, Accessed Online-12 March 2010.

6. David Maxwell. 2006. *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism and the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement*. Oxford: James Currey, p. 6.

7. 'Zimbabwe: People flock to Church as inflation tops 1,000 percent', 16 May 2006, <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=59039>, Accessed on 15 March 2010.

8. David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit*, 7.

9. See P. Gifford. 1987. "“Africa Shall be saved”: An Appraisal of Rheinard Bonnke’s Pan-African Crusade”; *Journal of Religion in Africa* 17(1); P. Gifford. 1989. *Religion and Oppression*, Harare: Ecumenical Documentation and Information Centre(EDICESA).; P. Gifford. 1991. *The New Crusaders: Christianity and the New Right in Southern Africa*, London: Pluto.
10. ‘AFM Conference attracts 50,000 Worshippers’, Friday 11 September 2009. *The Zimbabwe Herald*.
11. David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit*, 10.
12. D. Martin, *Forbidden Revolutions: Pentecostalism in Latin America and Catholicism in Eastern Europe*, 10–11.
13. David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit*, 15.
14. Arbert Barnes, *Speaking In Tongues-Glossolalia*, <http://www.speaking-in-tongues.net>, 12 March 2010.
15. M. J. Erickson. 1984. *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company Ltd, p. 855.
16. S. B. Ferguson (ed.). 1988. *New Dictionary of Theology*. Leicester: Inter-varsity Press, p. 503.
17. Roberts Liardon. 2006. *The Azusa Street Revival: When the Fire Fell-An in-depth look at the people*. Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers, p. 224.
18. World Council of Churches, *Pentecostal Churches*, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/church-families/pentecostal-churches.html>, Accessed Online-12 March 2010.
19. David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit*, 8.
20. N. Lossky (ed.). 1991. *Dictionary of Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva: WCC Publications, p. 791.
21. B Hwata. 2005. *An Investigation of Different phases of Pentecostal experience in the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe*. South Africa: University of South Africa, p. 28.
22. S. M. Mujeyi. 2006. *Apostolic Faith Mission’s Magazine*. Harare: Living Waters Bible College, p.17.
23. S. B. Ferguson (ed.), *New Dictionary of Theology*, 504.
24. ““Cult” forces 56 girls from Eaglesvale’, Tuesday, 17 November 2009. *The Zimbabwe Herald*.
25. Richard C. Schwab. 1985. *Let The Bible Speak-About Tongues*. USA: Kregel Publications, p. 113.
26. ‘Vatican:10% of People are possessed by the Devil’, Tuesday 08 January 2008, <http://archbishop-cranmer.blogspot.com/2008/01/vatican-10-of-people-are-possessed-by.html>, Accessed on 11 March 2010.
27. ‘Zimbabwe: People flock to Church as inflation tops 1,000 percent’, 16 May 2006, <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=59039>, Accessed on 15 March 2010.
28. David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit*, 6.
29. S. M. Mujeyi, *Apostolic Faith Mission’s Magazine*, 18.
30. David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit*, 6.
31. E. Isichei. 1995. *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present*, London; SPCK, 1.
32. David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit*, 7.
33. Lyton Chandomba. 2007. *The History of Apostolic Faith Mission and Other Pentecostal Missions in South Africa*. London: AuthorHouse TM UK Ltd, p. 8.

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34. W. A. Elwell. 1985. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, p. 835.
35. See C. Pfeiffer. 1974. *Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Chicago: Moody Press, p. 1725; Rick Walston. 2003. *The Speaking in Tongues Controversy: The Initial Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit Debate*. USA: Zondervan Bible Publishers, p. 22.
36. T. R. Schreiner, *Paul*, 365.
37. D. Wyns. 1993. *A Reader on the Holy Spirit: Anointing, Equipping and empowering for service*. Los Angeles: International Church of the Four Square Gospel, p. 25.
38. Elder is one of the religious titles used for senior lay leaders in AFM and most of the Pentecostal churches. In terms of hierarchy, it is a title held by senior members of the Church especially those who have been serving the church for more than ten years. Elders play a leading role in the running of the church, advising the Pastor and keeping the Church's traditions. After Elders, then come Deacons and lastly other general church positions in the youth or womens' departments.
39. Interview with an Anonymous AFM Elder, Harare, 10 January 2010. The AFM Elder indicated that glossolalia was one of the chief pillars of the Church and it had become their identity tag symbolising AFM as a Church of power. The Church is known as 'Kereke yeMweya' (Church led by the Spirit). The opposite is then true for other Churches 'Kereke Dzisina Mweya' (Churches lacking the Spirit); hence they are labelled as lacking the power of God.
40. David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit*, 14.
41. J. E. Stiles. 1970. *The Gifts of the Holy Spirit*. London: Intervarsity Press, p. 917.
42. J. E. Stiles, *The Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, 918.
43. David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit*, 14.
44. Mr and Mrs Simangaliso Sithole, Interviewed, 28 August 2009.
45. David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit*, 6.
46. D. W. Bashau. 1969. *A Handbook on Holy Spirit Baptism: 37 Questions and Answers on the baptism in the Holy Spirit and Speaking in Tongues*, Springdale: Whitacker House, p. 80.
47. John P Kidahl. 1972. *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues*. Harper and Row Ltd, p. 68.
48. D. W. Bashau, *A Handbook on Holy Spirit Baptism*, 90.
49. L. Stoneking. 1975. *The Gifts of the Spirit*, New York: Schenectady Pvt Ltd, p. 23.
50. M. F. C. Bourdillon. 1976. *The Shona Peoples*, p. 271.
51. Michael Gelfand. 1977. *The Spiritual Beliefs of the Shona: A Study based on field work amongst the East-Central Shona*, Gweru: Mambo Press, p. 121.
52. J N Chacha. 1991. *Three Dimensions of Spiritual Warfare: A New Perspective on Spiritual Warfare*, USA: Baker Books, p. 6.
53. A. N. Chinyemba is an AFM Senior Pastor and Overseer of Harare North Province. He also lectures at Living Waters Bible College. In most of his lectures, he is known for his emphasis on the importance of glossolalia. His emphasis on the blessings that one incurs through glossolalia has led to the controversial debates that surround the prosperity gospel as understood in Pentecostal churches. Poverty is treated as either a sign of being cursed or something demonic which needs deliverance. Those who speak in tongues are then assured of that protection from the 'demon' of sin and poverty. They are not concerned about the factors that lead people to be poor especially in Africa.
54. A. N. Chinyemba. 1999. *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Unpublished Master's Thesis) Harare: Living Waters Bible College, p. 49.

55. Ted Olsen. 'What Really Unites Pentecostals? It is not Speaking in Tongues. It may be the Prosperity Gospel', <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/December/16.html>, Accessed Online, 24 March 2010.
56. Paul Gifford. 1990. 'Prosperity: A New and Foreign Element of African Christianity', *Journal of Religion* 20 (4): 373–88.
57. M. L. Daneel. 1987. *Quest for Belonging; Introduction to a Study of African Independent Churches*. Gweru (Zimbabwe): Mambo Press, p. 46.
58. Phathisa Nyathi. Friday 01 January 2010. 'Pentecostalism links man's Condition and his Spirituality'. *The Zimbabwe Herald*.
59. J. N. Chacha, *Three Dimensions of Spiritual Warfare: A New Perspective on Spiritual Warfare*, 13.
60. D. A. Wynn. 1993. *Reader on the Holy Spirit: Anointing, Equipping and Empowering for Service*. Los Angeles: International Church of the Four Square Gospel, p. 26.