"PROPHETS OF DOOM": THE PHENOMENON OF HEALING AND POWER DYNAMICS IN NEO-PENTECOSTAL AFRICAN CHURCHES

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THESIS

ENGLISH ABSTRACT: In Southern Africa, there has been a rise of prophets who have resorted to dangerous healing practices such as the snake eating, petrol drinking and the popular 'Doom spraying' endangering the lives of congregants who are desperate for a special miraculous touch. Africa has been bombarded by poverty, several epidemics and illiteracy, leaving many lives in despondency and powerlessness. This has led to the abuse of many gullible lives by powerful prophetic figures who have commercialized the gospel for power and profit. This study is motivated by the need to analyze the phenomenon of healing and power dynamics that have dominated the Neo-Pentecostal African churches in Southern Africa, with a special focus on South African upcoming prophetic figures. The study analyses factors that have led to the acceptance and perpetuation of dangerous healing practices by certain Neo-Pentecostal religious leaders on their followers. This study is undertaken from a community development and theological perspective; intersecting gender, health and theology. The study investigates the conceptual understanding of healing and power within the Neo-Pentecostal African churches by examining the historical formation of this strand of Pentecostalism and how the movement got established in South Africa. A multidisciplinary approach that encompasses the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual aspect of healing will assist in bringing forth a holistic approach to healing. The healing and power phenomenon within such religious settings poses a threat to many who congregate within such churches, especially women and young children who are mostly, the majority in attendance. This places the healing and power phenomenon at play within the Developmental and Gender discourses, intersecting with other factors that lead to the perpetuation of poverty and health challenges. The spraying of 'Doom' insecticide on congregants as a healing practice by a Limpopian prophet raises concerns leading to an investigation of the implications and social economic challenges at play within such settings. Historically, the Classical Pentecostal healing tradition has been founded upon the general understanding of the Christian practice of laying on of hands when praying for the sick. Although there have been instances where symbolic and alternative healing methods became popular in the movement, the general practice of laying on of hands on the sick has been a standard tradition within the Pentecostal liturgy. Thus, making a theological contrast between the Classical Pentecostal views on healing and the Neo-Pentecostal understanding of healing and power has brought forth disparities as to how healing is conducted and gets accentuated religiously within African communities. Also, the gendered intersection with regard to power, sees women and children being mostly vulnerable to such healing practices making this study a gendered issue. This intersection suggests that the Neo-Pentecostal African churches healing practices are dangerous due to various socio-economic challenges leading to the perpetuation of poverty. This study recommends and seeks to acknowledge the urgent need for a discerning community. Findings within community development have noted that an impoverished society bears characteristics of vulnerability, disempowerment and high levels of gullibility. This study highlights the pressing need for religious communities, governments and organizations to stand guard against abusive healing and power tendencies.

AFRIKAANSE OPSOMMING: In Suider-Afrika is daar ‘n opkoms van profete wat begin gebruik maak het gevaarlike genesingsspraktyke, soos die eet van ‘n slang, die drink van petrol en die gewilde ‘droom spuit’ wat die lewens van gemeentes wat desesperaat is vir ‘n spesiale wonderwerk, in gevaar stel. Afrika word bombardeer deur armoede, verskeie epidemies en ongeletterdheid, wat baie lewens in wanhoop en magteloosheid laat. Dit het geleë tot die misbruik van baie liggevare lewens deur krachtige profetiese figure wat die evangelie vir mag en wins gekommerialiseer het. Die motivering van hierdie studie is die behoefte om die verskynsel van genesing en kragdinamika wat die Neo-Pinksterkerke in Suider-Afrika oorheers het, te analiseer, met spesiale fokus op Suid-Afrikaanse opkommende profetiese figure. Die studie beoog dus om faktore te analiseer wat sonder in aanvaarding en voortbestaan van gevaarlike genesingsspraktyke deur sekere neo-pinkster godsdienstige leiers op hul volgelinge. Hierdie studie onderzoek ook die konseptuele begrip van genesing en mag binne die Neo-Pinksterkerke, met ‘n kyk na die historiese vorming van hierdie strand van Pinksterisme en hoe die beweging in Suid-Afrika gevestig is. ‘N multidisiplinerre benadering wat die fisiese, emosionele, psigologiese en geestelike aspek van genesing insluit, sal help om ‘n holistiese benadering tot geneesing te bring. Die genesende en kragverskynsel binne sulke godsdienstige instellings vorm ‘n bedreiging vir baie lewens wat in sukle kerke vergader, veral vroue en jong kinders wat hoogstens die meerderheid bywoon. Dit staar die genesings- en kragverskynsel binne die Ontwikkelaars- en Geslagdiskopers in die gesig, met dit kruis dit met ander faktore wat lei tot die voortbestaan van armoede en gesondheidslidings in. Hierdie studie het die Limpopiese profete wat doom-insedskoder op gemeentes as ‘n genesingspraktyk guegos, klem op die ondersoek geplaas om te kyk na die implikasies en sosiale ekonomiese uitdagings wat op die spel is. Histories is die Klassieke Pinkster-genesingstradisie gegrond op die algemene begrip van die Christelike praktyk om hande op te lê wanneer hulle vir die siekes bid. Alhoewel daar gevalle was waarby simboliese en alternatiewe genesingsmetodes gebruik was, is dit algemene praktyk om hande op die siektes te lê, ‘n standaard tradisie binne die Pinkster-liturgie. Dus, om ‘n teologiese kontras tussen die klassieke Pinkster-sienings oor genesing en die Neo-Pinkster-begrip van genesing en krag te maak, het ongelykhede ontstaan oor hoe genesing gedaan word en word godsdienstig in Afrika-gemeenaskappe belemtoon. Ook, die geslags-kruising met betrekking tot mag, is vroue en kinders meestal kwesbaar vir sulke genesingsspraktyke wat hierdie studie ‘n gender-kwessie maak. Dus, dit dui daarop dat die Neo-Pinkster-genesingsspraktyke gevaarlik is as gevolg van verskeie sosio-ekonomiese uitdagings wat lei tot die voortbestaan van armoede. Hierdie studie beveel dus aan om klim op om die probleme te plaas aan ‘n krutse gemeenskap. Bevindinge binne gemeenskapsontwikkeling het opgemerk dat ‘n arm gemeenskap ‘n eierslag van kwesbaarheid, ontwapening en hoë vlakke van gulligheid het. Daarom poog hierdie studie om die dringende behoefte aan godsdienstige gemeenskappe, regerings en organisasies te wys, en om klem te plaas op die feit dat daar waarskynlik gewees moet word teen beledigende geneesing en krugtende.
Prophetic healing ministeries However, what brings these diverse forms of African Pentecostalisms under the same canopy, is the emphasis on the importance, power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of followers. Pentecostals also generally believe in speaking in tongues, prophecies, visions, healing, miracles, and signs and wonders. Lately, there has been a growth in prophetic healing ministries ("health and wealth gospel") in which 'neo-Pentecostals take the power of amulets and fetishes with utter seriousness [...] including alternatives in the forms of anointing oil, blessed water, ca According to the church's Facebook page, prophet Rabalago "begins to speak to demons in order to address problems people face each day. He then drives them out of their bodies to free the people." People out here getting "healed" by Doom...Now I've seen it all...If someone sprayed me with Doom it would "bug" me pic.twitter.com/Rm45KfSUrL. He sprayed Doom on her and she received healing and deliverance. We give God the glory! Maggie Maluleka. Click in the image gallery above to listen to an exclusive interview with the Doom prophet. Watch the gallery below for more bizarre 'healing' practises. Related. Violent gun crimes on the rise in Zimbabwe.