



Gender Based Violence in the Commercialisation of Religion in Neo-Pentecostal Churches

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Abstract

The focus is women suffering due to commercialisation of religion in Neo-Pentecostal Churches. Most of the religion commercialists are men with women as victims of Gender Based Violence (GBV). The CRL Commission discovered that women participation in religious commercial practices is quite alarming in terms of the ratio between men and women. There is a very serious gender bias in these churches in terms of abuse and outrageous practices. This paper focuses on vulnerability of women caused by marriage expectations, barrenness, divorce, and lack of leadership. The methods and techniques of religious commercialists will be used as demonstrations that women are indeed the victims of these malpractices. The area of finances will be highlighted to capture the truth that indeed women are victims of commercialisation of religion. Literature and social media will be engaged to validate facts. Theology of dialogue (God-talk) contributes towards the solution to these practices that have tainted the Pentecostal faith with negative outlook. Appeal is made to male perpetrators to reevaluate their patriarchal egos at the expense of women and that their theology should take a new turn of embracing feminist theology, which helps to understand the women's value as God's image carriers.

Keywords: women, church, Pentecostal, patriarchy, religion.

Introduction

There has been an upsurge of new form of Pentecostalism throughout the world but significantly in Africa in the past two decades or so. Many young men and women seceded from their traditional faith communities – whether mainline Christianity, evangelical traditions or classical Pentecostal faith, to pioneer a new movement variously labeled as Neo-Charismatic, Neo-Pentecostal, New African Pentecostalism, or even New Prophetic Churches. These dissenters 'believe that their spiritual gifts are choked by rigid structures of ecclesiastical authority.' (McGuire, 1974). This is also attested by Resane (2017b:4) that:

It is not only the mainline denominations suffering this emptiness, but also the classical Pentecostal churches of the 20th century, such as the Apostolic Faith Mission, Assemblies of God, Full Gospel Church of God, et cetera. These churches are constantly experiencing schisms as some of their devotees catch the spirit of the age where gospel power is



witnessed in demonstrations such as healing, breakthroughs out of depression, wealth, et cetera.

Most of these dissenters are young male adults, who like any new movement, claim to have received some form of divine revelation to pioneer new ministry. In many instances they claim some dissatisfaction with established ecclesiastical order, based on either personality (church leader under which they serve), polity, or practice. As observed, many of them, though educated or academically inclined, carry no form of formal theological training. Part of their arsenal or skill is proficiency in the English language. Their preaching is always in English and in some instances with a parallel interpreter into one of the local native languages.

The legacy they carry

First, they are males, with inevitable male ego. Surfing through social media platforms, one observes that many leaders of Neo-Charismatic establishments are males displaying some charismatic influence and celebrant character. It's all about them, and them alone. As Mochechane (2018:19) alludes; 'the Pentecostal phenomenon revolves around single individuals.' Their ministries are the celebrity cult that Resane (2017a:4) defines as 'the elevation of a leader to some high status of beauty, achievement, prestige and power.' This *celebrityism* is sometimes called *apotheosis* of the leadership, which means 'to exalt something or someone to divine rank or stature, or in other words to *deify*' (Lambert, 2003:236). These leaders carry with them the theology of male chauvinism, which subtly and subliminally promotes women oppression by men. This theology despises women dignity by carrying the culture of degradation of women through 'sexual exploitation, domestic abuse and the lack of political and human rights' (Grady, 2000:28). In their elegance and charisma these prophets command people, majority women to eat grass, drink petrol, spray them with insecticides etc.

Second, they are patriarchal in their ecclesial outlook. Generally, South African society is patriarchally structured and cultured. One of the leading public theologians in South Africa, Koopman (2004:193) defines patriarchalism's underlying essence as 'independence and power' whereby men can control women as they please without any fear of being charged or blamed. This view is enhanced by Moltmann's definition of patriarchalism as an 'institutionalised system of sexual hierarchy and a psychological mechanism for its justification, according to which the man is born and made to rule, while the woman is born and made to serve' (2000:274). To take it further, according to Ademiluka (2018:340), patriarchy is 'an organisational system in which males have dominance over females.' The main features of patriarchy include domination, male supremacy, man's rule, control, man's advantage over women, and in some cases, negative attitudes towards females whereby females become tools to satisfy male ego. In patriarchy, men expect to be served by women to quench their desirable needs such as food, sex, and respect. These expectations manifest "in the values, attitudes, customs, expectations, and institutions of the society, and maintained through the process of socialization"¹ On Sundays, most people being prophesied are women. Prophecies revolve around finances, marriages, and witchcraft. Women are pressed to give whatever they possess to the prophet; and in most cases possessions to give up are finances, especially pensions investments, vehicles, and properties such as houses, land etc. Male dominance reverberates and echoes under the pretense of 'Thus says the Lord' or 'The Lord says to me that I should ask you to...' or 'Your breakthrough will come if you become obedient to this revelation.'

Third, they flaw personal ethics. One of the biggest cries regarding the legacy carried over by the religion commercialists is a disregard for ethics. Ethics is a wider field including behavioural

¹ Guarneri and Poston, "Patriarchy," <http://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/applied-and-social-sciences-magazines/patriarchy> (Viewed 28 February 2023).



patterns and attitudes. It covers the areas of self-discipline (hygiene, diet, sex etc.) self-management (work, relationships etc.), resources management (finances, properties, people etc.). Moral fidelity has become a great concern for Neo-Pentecostal leaders, as Resane (2018:348) points out: 'In this tradition, the pastoral career is marred by divorce, fornication, adultery, immorality, and the general promiscuous lifestyle among pastors.'

This assertion confirms that indeed some women are the victims at the center of certain pastors' moral failures. Women are made vulnerable to enter into some financial transactions. Media is loaded with how women are scammed online and lose their homes and life savings under religious pretenses. In 2018, the Free State Province Police in South Africa, were searching for a pastor and his accomplice, reported to have scammed a woman into giving them her pension money. This pair convinced the woman to quit her job and give them her pension savings of R250 000 which will miraculously turn into R4 million. After handing them the amount, the two disappeared never to be found.² The *modus operandi* and target of these bogus prophets is women who trust them wholly with their life savings, and in some cases women who are in some romantic relationships with the pastor.

Ethical deficiency in some Neo-Pentecostal leaders drives them to disrespect women. This disrespect is displayed when the South African-based Ghanaian Pastor Nana Poku in the name of delivering and performing miracles kissed a female church member.³ The public was shocked when one Ghanaian pastor shaved women's pubic hairs before the congregation.⁴ The famous 'biscuit pastor' referring to woman's sexual organ, Paseka 'Mboro' Motsoeneng ordered his female members to bring their underwear for anointing to protect them against evil spirit. He added that once he speaks the word to those undergarments, the power of God gets in and whoever wears it will feel the power of God. It is clear that women are the target here.

In an interview on Jacaranda FM, South Africa's independent radio station on Tuesday, the pastor reportedly said, "Instead of laying my hand, we call that the transfer of the anointing. "Any underwear anointed by me will keep my church members safe from evil spirits." I speak the Word to those underwears. "The power of God will get in, they wear it and God does something," he said.⁵

The YouTube channels show pastors touching women's genitalia, including breasts. Prophet Penuel Mnguni of End Time Disciples Ministries became famous for dropping snakes into the mouths of people during a deliverance session. He ordered his female members to strip while he removed evil spirits by seating on their naked bodies.⁶

This same disrespect is perpetrated by Reverend Njohi of the Lord's Propeller Redemption Church in Nairobi when in 2014, instructed the female members of his congregation to not wear

² <https://ewn.co.za/2018/02/25/fs-police-searching-for-bogus-pastor-accomplice-who-scammed-woman-of-pension> (Viewed 10 March 2023).

³ <https://www.nairaland.com/3819346/nana-poku-heals-woman-kiss> (Viewed 13 March 2023)

⁴ <https://www.maravipost.com/shocking-ghanaian-pastor-filmed-shaving-female-church-members-private-parts/> (Viewed 12 March 2023).

⁵ <https://dailypost.ng/2016/04/20/why-i-anoint-underwears-of-my-female-church-members-south-african-pastor-paseka-motsoeneng/> (Viewed 10 March 2023).

⁶ <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/gauteng/prophet-makes-congregants-eat-snakes-1885321> (Viewed 11 March 2023)



underwear during the service and had also warned of grave consequences if they don't.⁷ Nothing was said about men's underwear, demonstrating patriarchal rule of men over women. This is the evil that Allender (in Lampman & Shattuck, 1999:50) describes as infusing shame and violating pleasure. 'It seeks to promote inner disintegration in order to gain power and destroy the integrity and beauty of the individual.' These practices are centered around pleasure, frankly, around sexual pleasure. Allender continues in this regard to point out that: "Evil uses the arousal of pleasure to make the victim feel responsible for what happened and inculcate the horrible fear that a darkness exists within that can never be named or expressed to any other person" (1999:50).

It is clear that the perpetrator (prophet in this case) appeals to sexual pleasure by using underwear, kisses, shaving pubic hairs etc. since the seekers (women) are always blamed for what happened in their sexuality, and that only the prophet can see the depth of the problem and be able to solve it. Women are targets, since no men's underwear are called for, no men are kissed, no men's pubic hairs are shaved! This is betrayal which 'is being used by someone who strains our dignity for their pleasure and then is unmoved by our pain' (Allender in Lampman & Shattuck, 199:49). When one is betrayed, she will be a victim of disrespect.

Under the human rights dictation, these pastors could be charged for disregard of health issues. In November 2014 the prophet of Mount Zion General Assembly, Lethebo Rabalago, used an insecticide to heal his followers during a service and prayer meeting. Also, he crushed a woman with a giant speaker to demonstrate God's protection.⁸ People queuing for this spraying were predominantly women. Another example is that of the Ghana-based man of God, Obinim, captured stepping on the abdomen of a woman, who was reportedly pregnant, to exorcise evil spirits. He is famous for using black leather belt for whipping a teenage girl accused of fornication, and another woman being whipped suspected for sleeping around with men.⁹ He continues to claim power to offer anything a human being needs, adding that he could also make women's butt bigger. Broadcast on Obinim TV gone viral on YouTube, the pastor touched men's genitals and declared: "If you want big buttocks, I can do it for you, if you want big breasts, I can help. If you have a small manhood, I can change them all when I come to the spiritual realm."¹⁰ In this prophet's ministry of prophecy, deliverance and healing, women are not left behind. They become victims and suffer some incredible and indescribable forms of denigration, abuse, and disrespect which undoubtedly scar them psychologically and also spiritually.

There can be a serious lawsuit for murder or manslaughter if Pastor Light Monyeki of Grace Living Hope Ministries who instructed his congregants to drink rat poison to 'show forth their faith' was taken seriously. The rationale given for this malpractice was given as to 'nourish their bodies' and 'heal their sickness.'¹¹ The highest number of people subjected to this abuse was women. People subjected to these practices have their health put at some serious risks. See how this was done by Pastor Lesego Daniel of Rabboni Ministries, who instructed his congregants to drink

⁷ <https://citifmonline.com/2014/03/kenyan-pastor-tells-women-to-attend-church-without-underwear-so-god-enters-them/> (Viewed 10 March 2023).

⁸ <https://www.news24.com/news24/video/southafrica/news/limpopo-prophet-sprays-doom-on-congregants-20161121> (Viewed 28 February 2023).

⁹ <https://web.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1738282089770535&set=a.1443893999209347> (Viewed 9 March 2023).

¹⁰ <https://dailypost.ng/2016/12/06/ghanaian-pastor-obinim-enlarges-mens-penis-womens-butt-touching-video/> (Viewed 11 March 2023).

¹¹ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4211320/Christian-pastor-tells-congregation-drink-RAT-POISON.html> (Viewed 11 March 2023).



petrol assumedly turned into pineapple juice. He had earlier commanded his members to eat grass, and later to eat millipedes to be close to God and to prove that God commanded people to eat anything.¹² The majority subjected to these health risks are women. Questions arise as to why these women succumb to these maltreatments? Remember, religion is an *opium*. In it there is good and evil. Allender (in Lampman & Shattuck, 1999: 52) asserts: 'It is impossible to make sense of evil. Evil is unexplainable. It does not make sense; it is non-being and non-sense. It is, therefore, contrary to logic to attempt to fully comprehend any evil act or any evil person.' Human depravity succumbs to any instruction issued by an authoritative figure, especially in the religious realm.

Fourth, they disregard proper church administration. Since many of these pastors dissented from the established religious institutions, they start their ministries without solid foundations of theology, especially of church polity. Church polity puts structures for accountability to ensure orderly service and worship. Where there is no accountability, moral flaws and ethical dissonances are inevitable. The problem with these new prophetic ministries is that 'There is not much written on structural conflict, especially in relation to the nature of church polity within the Pentecostal church' (Matshobane & Masango, 2018:1). Resane (2018:349) adds this as 'a lack, if not the ignorance of the church polity or discipline as per historical and constructive theology.' Matshobane and Masango (2018) found out that the use, misuse and abuse of money is a Pentecostal polity problem. It causes structural problems that result in and promote power struggles and financial abuses.

Fifth, they, though not all of them are for the commercialisation of religion. This practice of self-enrichment by religious commercialists is an old phenomenon found in the Bible, Ancient Church History and in Modern History. Wiersbe (1991:35-36) compares the Old Testament prophets and today's prophets that 'the false prophets were covetous men who used religion for personal gain. They gloried in their own prosperity and in the prosperity of the temple and they nation.' Religious commercialists thrive in the viable economies where socio-political systems are fluid regarding religious practices. Behind the freedom of expression and religion lies an open door of some greedy preachers taking advantage of the system. Lampe (2003:91) highlights that the Shepherd of Hermas' subject of social stratification in the first half of the second century, is that the Christian community provided a subsistence through its deacons, and he quips that 'Some deacons, however, shamefully enrich themselves instead of faithfully distributing it.' This was always accompanied by moral abuses. In most cases on social media, religious commercial gains are not for the church as it is in this case, but for personal opulence.

They capitalize on women's vulnerabilities

Women consult the prophets, or any agent of healing because of various personal challenges such as a failing or dysfunctional marriage. The marriage might be in trouble because of the third party or the irresponsible husband. The husband may be failing to provide for his family or failing to fulfil the coital rights either due to medical conditions or supposed witchcraft. A woman whose marriage is failing is always blamed for the breakdown that results. Like in the case of the Samaritan woman that Jesus encountered in John 4, she is perceived by the public as 'disreputable, probably promiscuous, and perhaps a prostitute' (Sim, 2015:5), a moral suspect that carries social stigma, therefore should be shunned, derided, and avoided. Women flock to the prophets in order to avoid or allay this ensuing stigmatization. Like the Samaritan woman, they are trapped within the cultural dictates where their unfortunate marital disreputations leave

¹² <https://www.iol.co.za/mercury/news/pics-pastor-feeds-his-congregation-millipedes-and-beer-42878203> (Viewed 11 March 2023).



them as victims of the patriarchal view of 'women as shown in the Mosaic laws' (Ademiluka, 2023:3) that regard them as the property of their fathers or their husband (Fox, 2002). In our society, a woman is blamed for failing home life, and patriarchal views justify men's unbecoming behaviours, hence that Sesotho proverb; *monna ke mokopu oa nama, empa mosadi o iphutha joale ka kolo* (A man is like a pumpkin plant that spreads around, but a woman must control herself like the inner leaves of cabbage). This proverb suggests that it is permissible for a man to be unfaithful, and his wife should remain silent on this matter. It is some sayings like these that contribute towards justification for men to mismanage their relationships, despite the realisation that this hurts their wives immensely. Wives endeavor some remedies, and one of those is to run to a trusted prophet – not knowing that is where the woes are going to escalate.

Barrenness is one of the reasons women flock to the prophet for a fruit-bearing womb. Many African women are abused because their barrenness thwarts child-bearing expectations. Some cultures regard the unfruitful womb as being a curse. For many African cultures, the ultimate purpose of marriage is procreation, as Gyekye (1996:83) says women are married 'to produce children who will continue with the heritage and name of the family, so that the family does not diminish or disappear.' Woman infertility becomes a social stigma and is a prejudicial weapon especially by the in-laws, and a patrimonial heritage against the barren womb. Barren wombs inevitably inculcate in women the 'sense of disorder, the sense of isolation, the feeling of being out of control and cut off from others who have not shared the experience' (Zehr in Lampman & Shattuck, 1999:139).

The male child is an epitome of womanhood, as demonstrated by Hannah who incessantly and specifically prayed for a male child (1 Samuel 1:10-11). A woman can be discriminated and violently abused for giving birth only to female children without a male child. It is defined by Agbor (2016:5):

Male child preference is a socially determined bias in a patriarchal society where couples prefer to raise a child who has the culturally accepted characteristics, status and economic potential associated with the male gender. It often influences behaviour and may result in gender biases that negatively affect girls and women's welfare, health and survival.

Stigma is a common societal attitude. It carries with it some shame, therefore becomes unbearable for a woman. Stigmatized women suffer the loss of status due to their victimization, and hence they opt for the divine intervention. Childless women are in some cultural societies marginalised in family gatherings or rituals. Their voices become unheard in some community issues. Think of the sufferings of childless Hannah in the beginning of the book of 1 Samuel. In some patrilineal societies, son-lessness is sometimes regarded as childlessness. 'Women with female children but without a male child suffers, to a large extent, the plight of a childless woman' (Abasili, 2015:599). A woman who does not bear sons opens possibility for her husband to opt for a second wife.

Another reason for women's vulnerability to some Neo-Pentecostal pastors is the sense of the lack of protection or leadership especially in areas of finances. This opens the hole for religion commercialists to pound on fragile women without husbands or proper mentoring leadership. Many South Africans are inspired by miracles more than faith, they run to the prophet for miraculous interventions, therefore foreigners realize that being a pastor or a prophet in South Africa is one of the biggest businesses. The populace is more after miracles than salvation of their souls, giving rise to many fake pastors and prophets who scam people in the name of God. The premise of absolute submission is the bedrock of some authoritarian doctrines, combined with the enslaving organisational and authority structure as the primary components that make these



prophets' techniques and mechanisms effectual and effective (Lambert, 2003:236). This usually happens to women, they fall for fake pastors' scams and some even give them everything they have in order for them to pray for them.¹³ The controversial prophets turn churches into unsafe spaces, particularly for women and children (Banda, 2020).

Felicia Sibeko of Pretoria was asked to invest in Prophet Bushiri' s gold forex commodity scheme in 2017. With her husband, they sold their then income-generating asset, Toyota Quantum for R130 000, and invested the money in order to become millionaires within six months as prophetically promised. By 2020, no finances or profits were found; and nowhere to find Bushiri. She told Daily Sun: "I'm heartbroken, abused and I'm struggling to send my child to university. There is no more peace at home. We are suffering."¹⁴ It is common for some women to be scammed by intimate partners, claiming to be pastors, to draw their pension investments, promised that if it is in the hands of the man of God it will increase manifold. The pastor disappears after conning the vulnerable woman and will never be traced anywhere. The press releases of this kind are galore in social media spaces. Damage control is inevitable, bearing in mind that the majority of women coming to the prophet come from other church formations. After being victimised, they return to their original churches to receive pastoral care and counseling.

Anger in the situation is inevitable, as Zehr (in Lampman & Shattuck, 1999:139) alludes; anger at the perpetrators, anger at themselves, anger at the system, anger at friends who refuse to listen or who blame the victims for what happened, anger at God who allowed this to happen. 'In fact, many victims experience a religious crisis as they try to reassess their assumptions about a God who could allow or even cause this to happen' (1999:139). Women who are victims end up into an emotional doldrum of the blame game, and rightly so. They blame the prophet, themselves, religion, relationships, and ultimately God.

How to Address the Problem?

This kind of discussion raises the question of rationality in Christianity. To many, victimization of the vulnerable such as women and children is irrational. However, one should recall that to a certain extent, religion can be an *opium*. People fall victims under the influence of religion. When coming to religion, people succumb to any command without applying their minds. The common assertion is that Christianity sidelines rationality by believing impossible things. This is a panacea that needs to be dealt with. Christian theology cannot be exempted from rationality. Anizor (2018:123) is correct that 'while it is true that we are summoned to believe incredible, unfathomable (though not impossible) things, we are not at the same time called to forsake rationality.'

Inclusive and eclectic dialogue is to be initiated to assess the spiritual-rational methods of doing the ministry. It must be an open interdisciplinary forum where scrutiny, transparency, and correction should take place for the sake of the ministerial ethics and the purity of the gospel. It is

Being open and responsive to conversations with other, nontheological disciplines and fields in the conviction that these conversations may help to clarify, develop, revise, and improve one's theological reflections (Ottai in Lovin & Mauldin 2017:140).

The *modus operandi* applied by Neo-Pentecostal pastors should be understood, if possible, addressed by other practitioners working for human good, such as the police, sociologists,

¹³ <https://opera.news/za/en/religion/85e120c8a5c6c6cde9a4457b3a49d746> (Viewed 1 March 2023).

¹⁴ 'Wankolota Bushiri' article by journalists by Stephen Molobi & Aaron Dube. <https://www.sn124.com/dailysun/news/wankolota-bushiri-20200908-2> (Viewed 10 March 2023).



anthropologists, politicians, psychologists, etc. Theologians or religionists cannot work alone in trying to resolve women and financial abuses. Though the practices are carried out within the religious realm, interdisciplinary approach is a necessity. This justifies the rationale for this full community involvement as these abuses affect humans who are the social beings governed by civil laws. The victims are affected psychologically and socially. Specialists from different disciplines or professions collaborate in order to come up with some comprehensive solutions or answers, because the contexts require collaboration and consultation between professionals and non-professionals from multiple disciplines in the process of providing service (Okech & Geroski, 2015:458; Nancarrow et al., 2013).

This is very crucial in South Africa where ministerial or pastoral accreditation requirements is abhorred, as it calls for one's qualification in the particular field of operation. Collaborationists from other disciplines do not have problems as they are accredited by professional bodies or the government agencies. Religious practitioners in South Africa are exempted from any legal accreditation except by their denominational formations. Most of the commercial religionists are not attached to any denominational structure, hence are free to practise even in and/or through some questionable means. However, if these prophets believe in the authenticity or genuineness of their ministry, they should represent their credentials by boldly collaborating with secular practitioners to ensure that they do not move out of boundaries of the constitutional rights of the citizens.

Theo-social reflections on commercial religionization of the gospel and women dignity should be the major item of these dialogues. The ideal here is talking it over together. Transparency and authenticity should govern the dialogue. Richie (2011:179) is correct that 'Being real, that is, acting and speaking with authenticity in the sense of congruity with one's experience and perception of reality, is required for effective dialogue.'

The mainstream theology should revisit the cries for women dignity called upon by the feminist theologians, especially those from the African framework. There is a need to seriously consider African women's theologies as critical dialogical partners in order to understand the causes of women's miseries, particularly a struggle against socio-cultural and religious patriarchy (Phiri, 1997). These African feminist frameworks consider women's experiences as a starting point of theologising. These theologies call for the 'incorporation of the women into the community of interpretation of what it means to be human' (Oduyoye, 1986:121). They focus on the oppressive areas of women's lives perpetrated by injustices, patriarchal domination, colonial ideologies, racism, capitalism, globalism and sexism. African women suffer enormously in the hands of religious leaders, politicians, traditionalists, patriarchists etc. (Phiri, 1997; Wang'ondy, 2019:1).¹⁵ Dialogue regarding religious abuse, where women and their bodies are used for commercial purposes should be addressed, any vision of doing theology must have women in the community at the centre of that theology if it is to make sense (Njoroge, 1997). Rationale behind this assertion is clear because 'in their quest for God's response to women's experiences, African women theologians engage these experiences as both participants and scholars' (Mujinga, 2022:2). Their concerns go beyond the articulation of statements of faith. They do theology to undergird and nourish spirituality for life (Oduyoye, 2001).

The whole community, religious or secular should seek after women's liberation from the clutches of the prophets who abuse them by stripping them of their dignity, respect, and integrity. I concur with Elizabeth Achtemeier that:

¹⁵ *What is African feminism? An introduction* International Youth Coalition. <https://iycoalition.org/what-is-african-feminism-an-introduction> (Viewed 12 March 2023).



All sorts of means are to be taken to insure the well-being, the honor, and the dignity of others in our society. Human beings are valuable in God's sight. And we love God by considering all persons valuable in our sight as well (in Lampman & Shattuck 1999:103).

Attempts to protect women should be the priority focus in communities. Faith communities should promote and embrace African womanism, which is the concept referring to women who 'reject the status of victim, who consider themselves as victors and sisters in charge of their own destiny' (Hudson-Weems, 1993:24). African womanism invites boldness of women into dialogues on issues that affect them in societies. Women should engage in interrogating the authenticity, qualifications, and validity of the prophets turned oppressors. Prophets' theological acumen should be re-examined; and their ministry credentials be assessed. Commercialisation of the gospel through abuse of women should be stopped. Women's vulnerabilities such as relationships breakdowns, barrenness, and financial precariousness should not be taken advantage of. Dialogues on these issues and listening to women's theologies contributes towards the solution of these ecclesial menaces. The creation of new dialoguing communities to combat women abuse is a need, because communities 'whose members stay together connected and are mutually supportive flow from interactions over a period of time' (Gould, 2015:31). Dialogue and listening to women's theological voices will contribute towards the solution of commercialisation of the gospel through women abuse.

Conclusion

Commercialisation and commodification of the gospel is rampant within some Neo-Pentecostal communities. Women are the victims as they are always seen at the forefront lines of strange and dangerous practices such as being sprayed with insecticides, eating grass, drinking petrol, scammed financially in order to get their lives aligned with the purposes of God. Women are victimised due to failing relationships, especially in marriage, and also due to infertility problems. They are always asked to 'plant a seed' for their breakthroughs or deliverance. Prayers and ministry of deliverance are up for sale. To address the issue, there is an appeal for men and women to dialogue among themselves and seek the solution to this disrespect of women. Furthermore, theologians from all walks of life are encouraged to revisit the cries of feminist theology that cries for respect for women and values for their contribution in epistemological areas of concerns, especially in theological fields. Whatever endeavors are undertaken to address the women's plight in the hands of religious commercialists, they should seek to empower women so that they can develop their human potential and fully contribute to society. It should elevate downtrodden women so that 'they can radiate their goodness' (Ekeocha, 2018: 79). Sharing their experiences and exposing these destructive prophets will be remedial for other women not to fall victims of this abuse. There is, however, the acknowledgement that these remedial proposals are like treading on the rocky and thorny paths. Resistance from some ideological corners such as theology, philosophy, male supremacism, and anthropology is inevitable, but trying cannot be totally fruitless.

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