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Articles	Page
Modern African Pentecostal Discourse: A Textual Analysis of Prayer Texts of a Word of Life Church Senior Pastor <i>Andrew Tichaenzana Manyawu</i>	1
Linguistics and HLT for Countries with Minimal ICT Infrastructure <i>L. Lerato, M.E.M. Machobane and M. Lephoto</i>	30
Proto-Type Practicum Case Report Guide and its Clinical Utility <i>Osiki, J.O.</i>	51
An Evaluation of the Poverty Reduction Impact of The Non-Contributory Old Age Pension Programme in Lesotho: The Case of Manonyane <i>H.M. Bello, E.M. Letete, M Rapapa and L.L Chokobane</i>	76



Articles	Page
History of Electricity in Lesotho and The Place of 'Muela Hydropower Plant in The Wider Context of The Southern African Power Pool <i>Tumelo Tsikoane</i>	107
The Electoral Process and the 2007 Snap Elections in Lesotho <i>Fako Likoti</i>	150
The Impact of Old Age Pension on Households and Social Relationships <i>Pius T. Tanga</i>	184
Does Long Run Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) Hold Within The Southern African Customs Union (SACU)? <i>Masilo Philemon Makhetha</i>	216
The Bard of Avon: Pedagogical Ramifications in Teaching Shakespeare as a Living Experience <i>Piniel Viriri Shava & Enobong Sonny Samson-akpan</i>	242

Modern African Pentecostal Discourse: A Textual Analysis of Prayer Texts of a Word of Life Church Senior Pastor

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Abstract

As the rampant forces of global capitalism relentlessly turn the world into a global village where the socio-economically weak are mercilessly marginalised, Southern Africa experiences a return to spiritualism as a strategy to ensure a sense of security and prosperity despite a gloomy material prognosis. Modern African Pentecostalism flourishes in Lesotho thanks to a discourse that seeks to portray the spirit world as real, tangible and controllable by the 'anointed' human being. This paper looks at the prayer text of a Word of Life Church Senior Pastor and co-founder from a perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis. The paper finds that her text depends heavily on contextualisation through the use of indexical meanings to "naturalise" Modern African Pentecostal discourse.

Introduction

As the rampant forces of global capitalism relentlessly turn the world into a global village where the socio-economically weak are increasingly marginalised, Modern African Pentecostalism proposes to counter the despair of many Southern Africans through faith and prayer. This Christian movement offers spiritualism as a strategy to ensure a sense of security and prosperity despite a gloomy material

prognosis. Such a strategy is not totally strange to the Bantu person whose traditional cosmology holds that success in life depends wholly on one's relationship with the spirit world. This paper examines the prayer text of Senior Pastor Maureen Beryl Shana, co-founder of the Word of Life Church (WOL), a Zimbabwean Modern African Pentecostal (MAP) movement that is currently spreading its wings regionally and overseas, from a perspective of textual analysis. The paper shall first review literature on the discourse of MAPs. It will then look at prayer in the WOL Church in general before presenting the text that will be examined. Key conceptual tools will then be presented and applied to the prayer text.

Background

Global Pentecostal discourse has been examined from a discourse analysis perspective. An example of this is John O. Thompson's "Voice genres: the case of televangelical language" (1996). Thompson's article examines what he terms "differentiation in manners of speaking" as well as "... the genesis of particular differentiations and the motives behind them" (1996: 90). It focuses on American televangelists, such as Kenneth Copeland and Charles Stanley. The paper thus takes, without explicitly stating it, an intertextual and interdiscursive view of religious discourse.

However, Modern Southern African Pentecostal discourse has not been subjected to any rigorous text analysis. Modern African Pentecostalism [as distinct from Western Pentecostalism (propagated by missionaries) and African Instituted Churches (Anderson, 2001)] has developed into a major aspect of the cultures of many Southern African countries. Modern African Pentecostal

movements are founded and led by Africans. The Word of Life Church was founded in 1992 in the Zimbabwean city of Bulawayo by the Shana family. What distinguishes Modern African Pentecostalism in Southern Africa from Global Pentecostalism is that it is marked by a Bantu worldview (see "Bantu Worldview" below).

Scholars who have dedicated works to the study of the impact of the relatively young African Pentecostal movement in Southern Africa include Amanze (1998) and Maxwell (2006). Most of these studies, however, take a historiographic or theological perspective. They also tend to dwell more on African Independent Churches than on Modern Pentecostalism. Those studies that do take an interest in discourse tend to explore discourse *about* and not discourse *of* African Pentecostal movements. This is the case of Kalu's (2006) who describes Pentecostal discourse from a religious-anthropological perspective.

There, however, appears to be no literature on the Word of Life Church apart from the church's brochures and other resources such as video and audio recordings of teachings and church services. For a fair idea of Southern African Modern Pentecostalism of Zimbabwean inspiration, one can read Maxwell's "African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism and the rise of a Zimbabwean transnational movement" (2006). Even though the book focuses on Ezekiel Guti's Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa church, it offers a relatively balanced account of the ambition, motivation and strategy of a Zimbabwean Modern African Pentecostal movement.

For discourse analysts, this paper thus fills a glaring gap in the area of textual analysis where Modern African Pentecostal discourse is so far not accounted for. It responds to the need for discourse analysts to describe the fast

growing phenomenon of a new and vibrant discourse vigorously participating in re-defining the Southern African socio-cultural landscape. Applying tools of textual analysis to this hitherto unexamined discourse enhances our understanding of those tools by adding an African perspective to their definition. Even though it is not a theological treatise, this paper adds a fresh perspective to the current debate on MAP theology in general and its pneumatology in particular, thanks to linkages revealed between Pastor Shana's voice and a mini-orchestra of other voices incorporated in her prayer text, all of them emanating from three main sources: the Bible, Western culture and Bantu worldview.

Prayer in Word of Life Church

This article examines a specific discourse event, a Word of Life Church prayer session, and focuses on the prayer text of Pastor and church co-founder, Mrs. Maureen Beryl Shana. This text was produced by the Pastor as she ministered at a Women's Conference held in Maseru in 2007. Prayer is one of the great pillars of Modern African Pentecostalism: "... like Christian Independency it (African Pentecostalism) focuses its activities on prayer, healing and family stability as a value for the poor" (Maxwell, 2006: 3). Prayer sessions take up a large portion of the 2-hour long service in the Word of Life Church. Services begin with a "Praise and Worship" session (song and prayer) lasting for about 30 minutes, followed by a session lasting about 30 - 45 minutes wholly dedicated to prayer. The prayer session comprises brief teachings about prayer and faith and actual prayer. Sometimes "healing" (prayer for miraculous healing) is included in the prayer session. Thus prayer and prayer-based activity become probably the most important preoccupation of the Word of Life Church after teaching.

This may appeal to the African worldview that lays great value on communication with the spirit world: "The universe is conceived of somewhat as a vast engine, ticking in neutral until a human hand engages the gear. The power indeed resides in the engine, but it is people who set it in motion" (Rakotsoane, 2000: 70).

A designated individual who can either be the Pastor or another "anointed" leader of the church leads the prayer session. This individual invariably leads and prays in English, the language of the service. An interpreter translates all his/her instructions and prayers into *Sesotho* (the local language). In the case of Pastor Maureen Shana's text, interpretation was necessary since she does not speak Sesotho.

Power in the church is clearly vested in the Pastors. For instance, on Sunday 02 September 2007, in a different service from the one examined here, Dumisani and Synodia Dube, a married couple and Pastors of Maseru WOL Church, were greeted not only as Pastors of the church but also as "Dad and Mom", parents of the congregation. Upon taking to the pulpit to greet the congregation, Pastor Synodia Dube emphasised her husband and her role as parents saying she knew "what some of you have been up to" during the couple's two-week absence and that, as parents, they would do their duty of rebuking and correcting those that needed such correction. What this means is that, being the founders of the church, Pastor Maureen Shana and her husband, Goodwill, are the church's "patriarchs" with more or less absolute authority and power over its members and affairs. This power relationship is clearly illustrated in the prayer text analysed below.

Pastor Shana's prayer text

Pastor Maureen Shana was leading a prayer session at a Women's Conference held at WOL Church in Maseru, Lesotho. She spoke in English and her text was simultaneously translated into Sesotho. This paper will examine her English text. The text was recorded in audio-visual format on DVD. Her text was preceded by a song whose refrain is "sweet sweet spirit of the Lord flow in my life". Her prayer-related activity lasted a total of 35 minutes.

Transcription

The transcription style adopted below favours readability. The transcribed text is organised into sentences. I have used cues such as syntax, intonation and pauses to punctuate the text. I have, however, limited myself to the use of only three punctuation markers: the full stop, the comma and the question mark. I have used three dots in brackets to indicate places where portions of text have been cut due to the constraint of space. Here is an extract of the transcription of the prayer text:

(...) Today I want to encourage you. Don't just listen to the words but catch the anointing that speaks to the heart. Some things are not learnt but they are caught. Sometimes it's a minister in the house. You may not even hear what they are saying but make a demand and say I want what they have. Say I want what's upon their lives, I want what they have. I can tell you there is an apostolic and prophetic anointing in the house this morning (...). But what I'm going [inaudible] to do this morning is to flow with the Holy Ghost [inaudible] present in this house. (...) Tell him your expectancy. (...) I want to tell you sitting where you are expect God to do the impossible. Expect him to intervene on your behalf. Expect a breakthrough. Expect him to touch you. Expect a turnaround. Expect a breakthrough. Expect the impossible this morning [inaudible]

because you are able, you are able [inaudible]. The God of the impossible, the God who is good to us, the one who was and is and is [inaudible] the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the one who is to come, the one who has no beginning and has no end [inaudible] is here today, is here today [prayer mode, sotto voce- inaudible]. (...) The doors have been opened. It's a new season, a season of grace. There is grace upon your life in this season. (...) Father, thank you for an impartation. (...) I thank you Father for a transfer of your anointing to the laying on of hands. An impartation of God in the name of Jesus. Thank you father for the anointing that is upon Word of Life, the same anointing that's upon Pastor Shana, the same anointing that's upon my life this morning. (...) In Jesus name impartation, impartation, impartation, impa [woman falls; glossolalia]. (...) Let the fire of God fall in the name of Jesus. You will live and not die. Impartation, impa (...). Oh, changing her into another woman. Impartation, impartation in the house. Impartation, impartation. Feel overflowing. Impartation, impartation. Your days of standing on the edge are over [inaudible]. Yes, woman of God, God will take you to the nation. You will rise strong. You are a [inaudible]. You will worship, you will minister. Don't look down upon yourself. Don't compare yourself. Don't say but the others, you are not others, you are a woman of God called by God to a time such as this. (...) Spirit of fear I bind you I resist you in the name of Jesus. Loose this woman and let her go in the name of Jesus. Speak life, life. Yes yeah it's not too late to jump into the things of God. (...) feel, feel the overflowing. (...) Fire of the Holy Ghost [glossolalia]. Church we are praying, church we are praying. (...) Yah, yah, yah, time to move. It's your move that will make a difference, it's your move, it's your move. Don't be too shy to make it, don't be too careful. Move and jump into the river. Yes, yes, the old is past. Everything has become new. Don't look, don't look at the past.

All things have become new. Things have become new. Yah, yah, yah, yah. Impartation, impartation, impartation. Yah, yah. Impartation, Impartation in the house! ... Change her into another woman... days of standing on the edge are over. Feel, feel, feel the presence of God. Don't be too careful. Don't think of the past. All things have passed away. All things have become new. Perseverance. Woman of God, full of the anointing of God, feel, feel, feel. Binding negative spirits. Favour, favour, favour, favour. (...).

Bantu worldview

Unlike African Independent Churches that openly claim to convey Biblical teachings as understood "... in the context of their cultural belief system" (Amanze, 1998: 116), Pastor Shana does not explicitly mention Bantu culture. Her text, however, admits salient elements of Bantu cosmology. This mostly manifests itself through the emphasis she puts on the literal power of God and that of her anointing. Salient in that emphasis is a sense of the power of the spirit world in general. Fernandez describes in these terms the conceptual conflict between Bwitists, a West African Bantu (Gabon/Cameroon) religious movement, and missionary evangelists on the definition of faith in the Christian God:

For these Bwitists... religion was not a matter of faith, of "belief in spite of" or "willing suspension of belief". It was a very pragmatic technique for understanding, predicting and controlling – in short a science or pre-science of hidden things. To believe in something despite lack of evidence or evidence to the contrary, which is the Western condition, was foreign to their attitudes. Fang had always had good evidence for their beliefs. That is why they gave up the ancestors when it became evident that Christian beliefs were more powerful (Fernandez, 1982: 281).

This observation holds true for Pastor Shana whose text talks of tangible transformation prayer can cause in believers' personality ("change her into another woman") and lives ("expect a breakthrough"). This is because for the Bantu person, interaction with what a Western worldview may term inanimate phenomena is not only possible but also inevitable. "In many parts of Lesotho people still associate their success or failure in life with their healthy or unhealthy relationship with ancestors" (Rakotsoane, 2000: 69). Another scholar puts it this way:

In African thought all things visible and invisible have a life. Nothing can be termed inanimate because everything that is has the ability to affect the life of another being of thing, especially so, the life of man. Everything has some force, some power, which can be tapped to increase or decrease the life span of a man. These forces are organized into a hierarchy of interrelationships. Above all is God... then divinities, spirits, ancestors... then man, animals, vegetation and other forces each reinforcing the other. The reality of their existence consists in their ability to reinforce each other in their web of interaction (Talboid, 1979: 27-28).

Pastor Shana's prayer appears to establish a hierarchy of interrelationships through this utterance: "Thank you father for the anointing that is upon Word of Life, the same anointing that's upon Pastor Shana, the same anointing that's upon my life". God is implicitly at the summit of the hierarchy since it is him who gives the anointing. In this paper, Bantu worldview shall therefore be seen as belief in the existence of spiritual interrelationships between the individual believer, the spirit world, the spirits of other people, both living and dead, and God.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA seeks to achieve enhanced understanding of texts and discourse through a two-pronged approach using both linguistic and intertextual analysis tools.

I regard text analysis as subsuming two complementary types of analysis: linguistic analysis and intertextual analysis ... intertextual analysis draws attention to the dependence of texts upon society and history in the form of the resources made available within the order of discourse (genres, discourses, etc.) (Fairclough, 1995: 188-189).

The text is no longer regarded as a stable and finite entity due mainly to awareness of the roles played by literature pre-existing the text under study and by the reader in the construction of meaning based on that text.

In structuralist and poststructuralist theory, the 'text' comes to stand for whatever meaning is generated by the intertextual relations between one text and another and the activation of those relations by a reader. 'Text' becomes a term associated with the absence of stable and permanent meaning, while work is now associated with the idea of stable and self-contained meaning (Allen, 2000: 220).

Naturalisation of discourse

The strategic choices involved in getting an audience to adopt a discourse as the only one possible or as the absolute truth constitute naturalisation (Fairclough, 1992). "Critical Discourse Analysis has tended to concentrate on the ways in which much political discourse is produced by, and in the interests of, powerful elites; the studies show the strategies by which the ideologies of the powerful are presented as 'natural'" (Love, 2000: 29). This is achieved through linguistic strategies that exclude ideological alternatives.

Relations of power and dominance are an inherent feature of religious discourse. In Modern African Pentecostalism, ideology and doctrine are not negotiable (Maxwell, 2006). Naturalisation subsumes efforts to stabilise and “distribute” or “market” discourse. To stabilise discourse is to ensure that it is easily recognised by the audience as belonging in a particular context. Distribution involves getting the audience to subscribe to the discourse and adopt it as their own. Believers must not only be helped understand church discourse, but they must also be led to adopt and reuse it in their own texts. It thus must be presented in such a way that it appears to be the only possible discourse for believers in matters of religious faith. In the relatively new MAP movement,¹ stabilising and distributing discourse are bound to be priorities at this point in time.

There appears to be Biblical precedence for the concept of naturalisation of religious discourse. The individuals who accuse Peter of belonging to Jesus’ group base their accusation on the fact that he “talks like” Jesus (“the way you speak gives you away” (Good News Study Bible, Matthew 27: 73), meaning that Jesus’ discourse had been naturalised within the community of his followers. One way in which naturalisation occurs is through processes of contextualisation.

Contextualisation

An inherent feature of naturalisation is the notion of contextualisation. Bakhtin (1986) looks at contextualisation from a broader perspective of culture and what he terms “great time”.

Literature is an inseparable part of culture and it cannot be understood outside the total context of the entire culture of a given epoch.... If it is impossible to study literature apart from

an epoch's entire culture, it is even more fatal to encapsulate a literary phenomenon in the single epoch of its creation, in its contemporaneity, so to speak (Bakhtin, 1986: 2 – 3).

At a more analytical level Gumperz contends that

... conversational interpretation is cued by empirically detectable signs, contextualization cues, and that the recognition of what these signs are, how they relate to grammatical signs, how they draw on socio-cultural knowledge and how they affect understanding, is essential in creating and sustaining conversational involvement and therefore to communication as such (Gumperz, 1992: 42).

This explains why and how people pick up “unsaid” or unverballed meanings in interaction. “These are ... indexical meanings... the connections between language form and social and cultural patterns” (Blommaert, 2005: 41). Pastor Shana’s prayer text makes abundant use of “unsaid” meanings, making indexical meanings and contextualisation as a whole useful tools in the analysis of the text.

Naturalisation of Word of Life Church discourse

Pastor Shana’s prayer text is drawn from a women’s conference that she led in order to “equip” and “empower” women members of her church in Lesotho. Her central goal is to firmly anchor believers in the relatively young Maseru congregation in Word of Life discourse about faith. She thus must seek to “naturalise” that discourse as she teaches about prayer and actually prays.

Preparation for contextualisation and indexical meanings:

a) Structure of Pastor Shana’s prayer text

Pastor Shana’s prayer text can be divided into two segments. The first segment, which may be termed a prelude, prepares

the audience for prayer. In it, Pastor Shana orients the audience's faith by, for instance, telling the audience to "catch the anointing" that is upon her and to "expect a breakthrough". The second segment consists of actual prayer in the sense of talking to God. She lays hands on women's heads and prays for them.

The beginning of the second segment is flagged by an instruction to the audience to stretch out their hands in prayer. It is also marked by the end of the interpretation into Sesotho. Thus actual prayer (talking to God) is marked by ritual (posture and laying of hands) and a sense that the text of the prayer is not as important as the faith of both Pastor and audience. Interruption of interpretation may be symbolic of this latter point. The prelude has already prepared the audience for this through Pastor Shana's very first instruction: "Don't listen to the words but catch the anointing that speaks to the heart". The fact that the Pastor does most of the time use a known language (English) and that she frequently addresses her audience as she prays seems, however, to contradict this instruction. In the prelude, the Pastor goes on to explain that the said anointing is upon the Word of Life Church, upon Pastor Shana's husband and upon Pastor Shana herself. Pastor Shana then instructs the audience to tell God that they want her (Pastor Shana's) anointing. The prelude has thus drawn the audience's attention to the person of Pastor M.B. Shana. She is the central figure of the spiritual activity of prayer and, by implication, the audience must have faith not only in God but also in her. By placing her anointing in third position after that of the Word of Life Church and that of its co-founder and overall leader, her husband, Pastor Shana lays unassailable foundations for her authority. There is also a faint hint of the Holy Trinity in her list of those who have the

anointing: the church, her husband and herself. Her person is thus likely to be accepted by the audience as worthy of their faith.

Throughout the second segment, the interpreter prays into the microphone in glossolalia. The video's sound is "mixed" in such a way that, while all other sounds in the auditorium are muted, the interpreter's prayer continues to be heard, forming a constant background to the Pastor's text. This uninterrupted prayer "in tongues" is likely to be perceived as a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout the prayer session, further bolstering the impression of Pastor Shana's spiritual power and authority.

b) *Monologue*

Pastor Shana's text is typically monologic, "using linguistic choices which do not invite interaction" (Love, 2000: 30). The aim of the Pastor is obviously to persuade the believers that her interpretation of the Christian faith is the only possible, acceptable and viable one and that material and spiritual victory is certain only for those who believe and adopt her and her church's discourse. She is presenting herself as not just a human pastor (a professional employed by the church) but also as an anointed leader or bearer of the Holy Spirit, which she can impart to others. This aim is salient in all the textual strategies that the Pastor uses. As we examine these textual strategies we shall continually draw attention to their impact on naturalisation of her discourse, which may be viewed as being that of the church that she co-founded.

c) *Explanations*

Explanations are presented as absolute truths with no room for alternative thinking: "Some things are not learnt but they are caught". Even though the adjective "some" is selective and could imply that it is actually necessary and desirable to

learn (and not *catch*) certain things in the Word of Life Church, and even though an adversative *but* is used, implying opposition of ideas and therefore existence of alternatives, the context (the Pastor is urging believers to “catch” her own anointing) makes it clear only one behaviour - to catch - is desirable, acceptable and productive.

As a strategy that generally accompanies pre-prayer discourse and is virtually absent from prayer text per se, explanation fits into a broader didactic discourse and purpose of the church, which in this instance can and may be evaluated through the behaviour of believers during the subsequent prayer session. Explanation prepares believers for the Pastor’s prayer text by providing the ideological framework necessary to produce indexical meanings from the prayer text.

Contextualisation cues and indexical meanings

The use of indexical meanings is characteristic of the text’s second segment. This segment is located deep inside Pastor Shana’s text, after about 10 minutes of prelude. The audience has thus had access to her explanations about prayer, anointing and faith. Here is an example of a section of text relying on indexical meanings.

Impartation, Impartation in the house! ... Change her into another woman... days of standing on the edge are over. Feel, feel, feel the presence of God. Don’t be too careful. Don’t think of the past. All things have passed away. All things have become new. Perseverance. Woman of God, full of the anointing of God, feel, feel, feel. Binding negative spirits. Favour, favour, favour, favour.

This segment of the prayer text is situated 25 minutes into Pastor Shana’s prayer text. It consists of fragments of ideas seemingly juxtaposed with astounding lack of concern for

cohesion and coherence. There appears to be no link whatsoever between

1. Impartation, impartation in the house
2. Change her into another woman...
3. Days of standing on the edge are over
4. Feel, feel, feel the presence of God

There are no conjunctions or adversatives (Love, 2000) to guide the audience's interpretation of the sense of the text and to justify such choice, juxtaposition and sequencing of ideas. The audience is expected to be familiar with the discourse and should be able to fill the gaps left by the Pastor's strategy of systematic ellipsis. It appears to be a way of engaging the audience to participate in building the text and therefore feel like it is their own and actually claim it as their own and incorporate it in their prayers. Thus the audience must rely on its understanding of the context: "Contextualisation comprises all activities by participants which make relevant, maintain, revise, cancel... any aspect of context which, in turn, is responsible for the interpretation of an utterance in its particular locus of occurrence" (Auer, 1992: 4).

There appears to be a salient pedagogical thrust in this strategy: the pastor's salient goal may be to teach the audience a new discourse, presented and explained in the prelude, and, through ellipsis, test and evaluate their knowledge of it. One must stress that as she prays, the Pastor does not make the conscious effort to leave gaps in her text but that it is a habit that she has developed over time and that seasoned believers can be identified by their ability to understand her text without any difficulty

whatsoever. Indexical meanings appear to be also meant to keep the audience's attention even as each individual says his/her own prayer: the gaps in sense, accompanied by gaps in time (pauses), seem to be invitations to the audience to (subconsciously) complete the Pastor's thoughts. This is a strong indication that the audience is being led to "learn" to pray "like the Pastor" and thus "sound" Word of Life, in other words adopt the Word of Life discourse.

Commands, orders and instructions

Pastor Shana's prayer text is firmly grounded in the imperative mood. "Feel, feel, feel the presence of God" is an example of this strategy. She frequently gives orders or instructions to someone/ something or some people/entities. Often, it remains unclear, outside intertextual analysis, who might be the Pastor's interlocutor. Let's start with those commands that target clearly identified subjects.

Some commands/ orders/ instructions are clearly ascribed to a subject: "Woman of God, full of the anointing of God, feel, feel, feel". The Pastor's interlocutor is the "woman of God". While this could mean the particular woman the Pastor is laying her hands on as she prays, it has the ability to extend to all other women of God in the audience. The use of descriptors ("of God" and "full of anointing") appears to indicate that the Pastor has authority to judge and define the status of believers in the spiritual realm.

Elsewhere, the devil is told in no uncertain terms to "loose his hand" on a believer. This ability to engage in dialogue with Christ's adversary is a sign of divine power and authority. It is a clear sign that the speaker has the Holy Spirit without which no human being can free him/ herself from the devil's hold, let alone free others. In fact, this

strategy elevates the Pastor to Christ's level, thus suggesting the superiority of the Holy Spirit, which the Pastor has, in the Trinity (Amanze, 1998).

While commands with a clearly identified subject can show the Pastor's authority over specific individuals, commands with no clear subjects appear to be a sign of the Pastor's absolute authority. "Don't think of the past" is an order reminiscent of *Isanusi's* instruction to Chaka (the Zulu King) not to look back after a ritual to prepare him for his conquests (Mofolo, 1981). It also evokes the Biblical story of Lot's wife who turned to look back at the burning city of Sodom: "But Lot's wife looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt" (Good News Study Bible, 1994, Genesis 19: 26). In all these cases, the order contains an implicit choice between two terrible alternatives: life in the case of obedience and death in the case of disobedience. It is thus significant that the order not to look back comes after the Pastor imparts the anointing to a believer. The Bantu audience is likely to interpret the Pastor's dire warning not only from the Biblical perspective of the demise of Lot's wife but also from that of their own traditional Bantu experiences of the dire consequences awaiting those who don't respect the conditions attached to a spirit-related healing.

In the case of "don't just listen to the words but catch the anointing that is in the house" the desired behaviour is explicated while the undesirable alternative remains unsaid. This implies that the believers are to consider the behaviour "listening to the words" as less repugnant than "looking back" after receiving an anointing where the undesired alternative is so repugnant it has to remain unsaid. One can thus talk of implicit contrast. This strategy relies on negative motivation whose persuasive power is grounded in threat.

Un-ascribed commands tend to suggest that the Pastor's authority extends not only over human church members but also over spirit beings. Pastor Shana's text clearly suggests that she takes humans to be not only physical beings but also hosts to spiritual entities such as the Holy Spirit and evil spirits. Her text, therefore, contains commands that seem to be addressed to all three entities: the human individual, the Holy Spirit and evil spirits.

"Change her into another woman..." can only be an instruction to the Holy Spirit that the Pastor is imparting to a particular woman. The instruction tells the Holy Spirit how it should behave in relation to that woman now that she has received it. The absence of politeness formulas (such as "please", "I am asking you to...", etc.) seems to imply that the Pastor is treating the Holy Spirit as her messenger or servant. The authoritative mode of the imperative "change her" leaves no doubt in the audience's mind that being born again is no mere abstraction and that the woman in question (*her*) will immediately be transformed in some tangible way. This impression is further strengthened by the designation of the target of the Holy Spirit's action through the use of the direct object pronoun *her*. The idea here appears to be to persuade the audience that the action of the Holy Spirit is determined by the Pastor and that that action must be perceived as being precise and specific. The overall aim of the strategy seems to be to persuade the audience that they too can have the Holy Spirit's personal and undivided attention in the Word of Life Church; that the Holy Spirit is at their service the moment they are born again and "anointed". It also tells the audience that they are under the authority of the Pastor who tells the Spirit of God what to do to them, when, and how, much like a *sangoma* may tell ancestral spirits how to treat a particular individual (Mofolo,

1981). The Pastor, “mother” to the congregation, may probably be perceived by believers as being naturally designated for the role of “giving birth” to new believers, “born again” through her partnership with the Holy Spirit. One could even extend the metaphor to seeing the female Pastor as casting herself in the role of Mary mother of Jesus who conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Maureen Shana’s predilection for the command as a discursive strategy evokes God’s use of language in the process of creating the universe. “Then God commanded, ‘Let there be light’ – and light appeared” (Good News Study Bible, 1994, genesis 1: 4). This is God ordering phenomena to appear from nothingness. Through her discourse, the Pastor clearly strives to achieve the same. She is “creating” not only a new kind of believer but also a new spiritual world order.

Declarations

Several declarations are concerned with the presence of God in his various forms (“God is here”, “the anointing is in the House”). The declaration centres on the verb of state *to be* conjugated in the present tense to suit the various persons (is/ are). This is meant to portray the presence of God not as a general truth but rather as a dramatic event, a favour bestowed by God on those who are faithful. As a result, it is often qualified by restrictive clauses such as “this morning”. The use of the adverb “here” or the clause “in this house” is also in itself restrictive of the presence of God. God is no longer omnipresent but selectively visits those he wants. The strategy implies triumph since the presence of God cannot be taken for granted but occurs only in particular conditions such as those that obtain in that Word of Life Church.

Other declarations are concerned with the spiritual state of believers. “Days of standing on the edge are over...” is a

declaration ostensibly addressed to the individual believer even though any other individual in the audience guilty of the same behaviour can also respond to it as if it was addressed to him/ her. Although this utterance is in the declarative mood it also connotes an instruction: "Stop standing on the edge". It is an admonition critical of behaviour patterns deemed undesirable by the church such as the "English reserve" (*standing on the edge*) that Maxwell (2006) displayed during an enthusiastic Pentecostal prayer session. The phrase "are over" is absolute and shuts the door to any other possibilities in the believer's mind.

Yet another set of declarations is concerned with the believer's mindset and circumstances. An example is "all things have passed away". In Pastor Shana's prayer, "things" appears to signify both the believer's mindset (desires and fears, etc.) and circumstances. Such declarations stress the changeable and temporary nature of "things" which can begin and end (be over or pass away). One cannot miss the finality of adverbs such as *over* and *away* that Pastor Shana uses. The change is presented as irrevocable and applicable to all *things* or aspects of the believer's life. Such declarations point to the church's prowess as an agent of desirable change and renewal.

Declarations are meant to convince the believer that God works through the Word of Life Church, which in turn works through the Pastor, to change people's lives for the better by giving them a new character, transforming their circumstances and introducing them to a new life defined by absolute power over evil and prosperity. They also position the Pastor as a mouthpiece of God sent to announce the divine truth to the community of believers. Thus the Pastor is perceived as possessing what she calls a "prophetic anointment" (ability to see into the invisible, hear the

unuttered and see into both the past and future). Pastor Shana's recourse to the declarative mode is thus clearly illustrative of a drive to naturalise her church's discourse and her own authority. It leaves no room for doubt in the audience's mind as to the absolute truth of what she asserts.

Exclamations and/or chants

Some single-word utterances are shouted or repeatedly chanted slogan-like. Such is the case of "Perseverance!" and "Favour!" (four occurrences one after the other). Perseverance appears to be an elliptic command to (the spirit or character trait of) perseverance to "anoint" the particular woman the Pastor is praying for. In more mundane terms it could be interpreted as advice or encouragement to the woman to persevere in life. Either way, exclaiming the word is a communicative strategy meant to instil that new quality (perseverance) in the concerned woman. Again, one notices that the Pastor seems to know the individual's weakness without her (the individual) having to confess it. Exclamation is thus a strategy that seems to persuade believers to give the Pastor licence to announce "truths" about them without seeking their permission. We note once again that this exclamation has the discursive values of the instruction or command speech acts.

The shout "Favour!" appears to be an elliptic instruction to the Holy Spirit to bestow favour on the believer. It is further proof to the audience that the speaker has power to command both believers and the Holy Spirit to do things, thus underscoring her divine authority. The ellipse (indexical meaning) gives the command/ instruction the poetic power of brevity as it compels the audience to participate in building the Pastor's text.

Self-commentary

These utterances are generally in the continuous tense. "Binding negative spirits" is one example. The subject of the act of binding is not specified as the Pastor continues to use indexical meaning. Its object (negative spirits) is explicit. It can be assumed (and believers will most likely assume) that Pastor Shana, who is engaged in the act of imparting the Holy Spirit to a believer, is also telling her audience that she is also at that particular moment in time "binding" (incapacitating) some evil spirits that may be in or assailing the woman she is praying for. Self-commentary can also be in the simple present tense as in "spirit of fear I bind you, I resist you". The act (to bind/ to resist) is located at a particular moment in time that coincides with the Pastor's utterance. It is complete within that moment. There is thus a sense of finality in this version of the strategy.

The persuasive power of this strategy lies in the use of verbs with material/ concrete connotations (to bind and to cast out) to depict an abstract process. The use of the continuous tense tends to involve the audience in the Pastor's action. It is like she is inviting the audience to witness, step by step, her power in action. This verb tense also has value of a performative speech act, which underscores the feasibility and credibility of what the Pastor is doing ("I am binding negative spirits"). It is self-commentary meant to locate the Pastor at the heart of the spiritual activities that she names. It is also a performative strategy that leaves no room for alternatives like failure to achieve the said actions.

Labels

This is a naming strategy that involves the use of epithets such as "new", "careful" and "negative". Choice of adjective

is calculated to paint a vivid picture of an object in terms of its goodness or evil nature, its desirability or repugnance. Terms like "careful", which frequently have desirable values such as wisdom and self-control in non-Word of Life discourse, are re-invented in the Pastor's prayer text so as to contain exclusively negative devil-inspired values such as frustration, slowness to act, fear, doubt, reserve and resistance to the church's teaching. All these are actually evil spirits that Pastor Shana sets out to cast out of believers.

Phrases such as "woman of God", "full of the anointing of God" or "spirit of fear" contain phrasal descriptors using the preposition *of*. The semantic values of the preposition *of* in such contexts are: (a) *origin*, as in anointing of God (anointing emanating from God meaning the Holy Spirit); (b) *belonging* or *ownership*, as in woman of God; and (c) *nature* or *type*, as in spirit of fear. The use of the preposition *of* tends to underline the semantic value in question as compared to an alternative such as "God's woman", for instance. It is reminiscent of the Biblical "Son of Man/ God". It is a way of couching an object's identity in absolute terms creating the impression that that identity is incontestable and final.

Labelling is a powerful way of dividing the audience into two camps: the good (of God) and the evil and persuading the audience join the former. In fact, by giving herself right of naming, Pastor Shana is assuming re-creating individual believers. This is proven by the fact that videotapes of other church services show that phrases such as "woman of God" are actually being turned into stable lexical items by the church's leadership through frequent and consistent use. The labels are becoming easily recognisable labels that believers can use among themselves and even in non-religious social environments. These labels refer to the entities that the church leadership, represented here by

Pastor Shana, addresses in its prayers. They are protagonists in the spiritual warfare in which the church is engaged for and with its members.

Conclusion

The CDA concept of naturalisation has been used to characterise the extent to which Modern Pentecostal discourse is being produced, consumed and distributed (as natural and sole truth) in a Southern African world characterized by rapid socio-cultural change and competing value systems. The WOL Church is in the process of introducing its Basotho believers to a new discourse containing a new worldview and cosmology. It is an elaborate didactic project characterized by forceful and efficient strategies meant to persuade prospective believers to adopt the new discourse. Its persuasive power probably lies in a subtle use of a Western (and therefore "modern") Pentecostal discourse to respond to needs and concerns emanating from an ancient African (Bantu) cosmology and worldview.

This paper has shown how a pastor seen by her audience as their "mother" uses language to persuade believers that she is causing things to happen that would normally be viewed as "miraculous" and thus unnatural. Pastor Shana's prayer text was examined primarily through the prism of naturalisation. Textual examination revealed that her dominant communicative behaviour is the command. All other strategies are subordinate to the command. This is significant in that the command is the most direct way of achieving naturalisation of discourse since it activates instincts of obedience and submission in believers. Pastor Shana's speech acts target God, Satan and the human believer. It is a three-dimensional strategy that puts the

Pastor and the church she represents at the centre of the eternal triangle of good (God), evil (Satan) and man. She thus claims the role of mediator between these three forces to the benefit of man, a role traditionally attributed to Christ². This makes the Pastor a necessary and vital part of the believer's life, if not a substitute for Christ. It gives her immense power over the believer's behaviour and resources. This strategy underscores the goal of naturalisation of discourse by lending absolute authority and credibility to the Pastor's voice. The strategy turns the believer into an individual confessing liberation while in actual fact s/he can be perceived as an ideological prisoner free only to roam unhindered within the confines of the church's faith and doctrines. This paradox is the very essence of the impact of a naturalised discourse.

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Endnotes

- 1 Anderson (2001b) refers to movements such as the Word of Life Church as New Pentecostal Movements(NPC).
- 2 See amanze (1998) on the concept of "Black Messiah" in African Initiated Churches of Zimbabwean and South African origin.



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