CHAPTER TEN

A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON THE PLACE OF DISABLED PEOPLE IN PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES IN ZIMBABWE

DAVID BISHAU, PHILLIPA MUTSWANGA AND EUNICE KUDZAI MAKONI

Introduction

A number of scholars have defined Pentecostalism and delineated its history in so much detail that there is nothing new about these two aspects of the phenomenon that we can add in this study. Notable scholars in this regard include Allan Anderson (1992, 1993 and especially, 2004); Paul Gifford (1991 and 2004), and recently in Zimbabwe, Lovemore Togarasei (2005, 2006 and 2008); Francis Machingura (2010, 2011a, 2011b and 2012) and Kudzai Biri (2011, 2012 and 2013). A number of Eastern and Western scholars also have written extensively on Pentecostalism but the scholarship we have isolated above deals with a particular type of Pentecostalism found in Zimbabwe called African Pentecostalism, which is the focus in this paper for the obvious reason that we need to look at phenomena that directly affects us.

Anderson (1995: 283) offers a summarised definition of African Pentecostalism, but what is more interesting for us is his detailed classification of African Pentecostal churches and their characteristics. For him, the term "African Pentecostalism" refers generally to the following three different clusters of Christian denominations:

a) Churches originating from predominantly white Pentecostal missions and which are therefore called Pentecostal Mission churches. They are called African Pentecostal now because, despite their foreign origins, the leadership of the churches is now African and the majority of the members are black. Although Anderson

does not say so, we may give the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe (AFM) as an example of this first cluster of denominations.

b) African-initiated Pentecostal or charismatic churches that are not different structurally from those in a) but, unlike the first cluster of churches, are home-grown in that they were founded and are governed by Africans or, to be specific, blacks. Thus, they are independent from foreign or white control right from the onset. Again, Anderson does not say so but we may give ZAOGA and recently, United Family International (UFI), PHD Ministries and the churches led by Uebert Angel and Tavonga Vutabwashe respectively as examples of this second group of African Pentecostal churches.

c) The vast majority of the so-called African Independent Churches (AICs) that are structurally different from the above two clusters but, as Anderson argues, continue historically and theologically from the Pentecostal movement, as was the case with the churches belonging to the above two clusters. Examples include the Zion Mutendi church and the vast majority of AICs that use the term "Apostolic" in the respective names of their churches (see also Anderson's earlier definitions and explanations in 1992: 2-6, 64-72 and 1993: 5-6).

Indeed, as Anderson (1995: 283) notes, this classification, especially of the latter cluster, is not without its problems. Hans-Jürgen Becken (1993) is perhaps the sharpest critique of such a classification. Becken (1993: 334), referring to the Zion Mutendi Christian church in particular, finds it difficult to refer to these AICs as "Pentecostal" because they "parted ways" with the first two clusters of churches and found their own distinctive African expression of Christianity. Although Becken does not say so in exactly this manner, the Zion Christian church has developed ways of healing, regalia and leadership structure that are distinctively African (Chimininge, 2013: 23, 35ff). The same applies to other apostolic churches such as the Johane Masowe (Bishau, 2010).

However, Anderson (1995: 283) is correct that despite this distinction, these churches have common historical, liturgical and theological roots, as the first two clusters of churches are deeply rooted in the American Holiness movement founded by John Wesley and the resultant Pentecostal movements in America. In any case, that these churches developed their own distinctive African niche is neither here nor there because all types of Christianity in Africa whether Pentecostal or not, have been contextualised. We do not take particular interest in the debate regarding the classification

more than we do with Anderson's view that these churches called Pentecostal have common theological roots, because it is this point that is our rationale for looking at the selected Pentecostal churches together, without deliberately distinguishing between them. The same point is also our rationale for looking at the Azusa Street experience as the defining moment and genesis of the key Pentecostal doctrines that are subject to scrutiny in this study, with a view to establishing the extent to which Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe consider people with disabilities (PWDs) to be equal church members, as evidenced by what prompted it (see below).

A disability is either a temporary or permanent condition or impairment which may restrict a person's mental, sensory, or mobility functions in undertaking tasks that people without such conditions can do. Globally, there are many different types of disabilities. Disabilities do not have boundaries and thus may develop at any time in anyone's life through various means such as illness, age, accidents or medication. The Bible refers to these various conditions by using terms such as the paralysed, crippled, blind and deaf. According to the Disability Studies Field, some of these terms are derogatory to PWDs. The terms have seemingly contributed to ongoing stigma because some people find it difficult to change to more user-friendly terms and some even go to the extent of arguing that while paradigm shifts have taken place, the Bible's authors have not adhered to these shifts. Thus, PWDs historically continue to face stigma and discrimination in their day-to-day experiences and the reasons for this varies depending on the social context of the parties involved. This is explained by what prompted this study: one of authors accidently stepped on one of the gentlemen who questioned, using sign language (SL), how he was going to attend a church service with dusty and dirty shoes. Luckily enough, the author could sign so a conversation ensued between the two. The gentlemen further asked what PCs thought about disabled people, discrimination issues, and what they were doing about it. The same week, Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University (ZEGU) advertised a call for papers and the authors of this study grabbed the opportunity by submitting a proposal related to the incident above, which prompted this paper/chapter.

Within Christian circles, the stigma and discrimination which prompted this study are usually associated with the doctrines and practices of a particular Christian group and how it relates to PWDs. In this study, PWDs' experiences are analysed from a phenomenological perspective based on Pentecostal doctrines traced back to the Azusa Street experience

on 9 April 1906, and how this has influenced stigma and the discrimination of people with disabilities in Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. Guided by legislated international inclusive practices, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (2006) and African ubuntu practices, the study responded to the following questions: Are Pentecostal Churches (PCs) playing their role in reducing stigma and discrimination around disability? Where do PCs place people with disabilities in their structures and day-to-day endeavours? How can PCs help improve the livelihoods of people with disabilities?

Given this historical development, background and such fundamental convictions that are characteristic of an unshakeable quest for power, healing and miracles and related prophecies, the study sought to establish the extent to which PWDs could be accepted as equal PC members by members without disabilities. In other words, the study investigated whether or not PWDs were welcome in PCs in Zimbabwe, as well as examining the factors that influence the observed receptions.

The Ubuntu Philosophy and United Nations Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) Frameworks

This section addresses how PCs could apply emerging epistemologies and principles from these frameworks to guide this study. The UNCRPD is the world's highly recognised convention on human rights for all, to which many countries are signatories and/or have ratified. Zimbabwe ratified it in September 2013. However, as a major instrument in disability issues, it is criticised for a lack of specificity on issues of disability, law and religion, to mention just a few. Its focus is very noble but, despite Zimbabwe ratifying it, most of its churches seem to continue to discriminate against PWDs. The convention mentions that buildings such as schools, workplaces, health centres, and accommodation, and communication facilities such as Braille and sign-language interpreters should be accessible to PWDs (UNCRPD, 2006), but it does not provide a blueprint for issues of religion and PWDs, which leaves it open to loopholes. Such omissions are likely to be the reason for the experiences that most participants presented in this study. In other words, all African tribes share the ubuntu philosophy as a pervasive instrument. Thus, the sense of being is fundamental among African culture (Motsi and Masango, 2012) but despite that, according to Mashiri in Hapanyengwi (2009), like any other African tribe, Zimbabweans seek metaphysical explanations to

extraordinary or unusual issues such as disability. The Ubuntu principles of compassion, reciprocity, dignity, humanity and mutuality should guide this study. The two frameworks therefore urge policy-makers to revisit the UNCRPD, to mandate all churches to treat PWDs as equal members. The same signposted principles are expected to guide PCs in determining the place of PWDs in Zimbabwe.

The Azusa Street Experience and the Formative Years of Pentecostalism

While church historians differ in their interpretation of the meaning and significance of the Azusa Street experience — a historic Pentecostal revival meeting that started in Los Angeles, California, on 9 April 1906 and continued up until about 1915 — within the history of Pentecostalism, they at least agree in principle that this experience can be regarded as the event that marked the historic genesis of Pentecostalism (Corcoran, 2011). Led by William J. Seymour, the 34-year-old son of former slaves and interim pastor for a small holiness church in Houston, Texas, the revival was characterised by ecstatic spiritual experiences accompanied by miracles, dramatic worship services, speaking in tongues, and inter-racial mingling (Cloud, 2007).

It may not be possible, or even necessary, to get into the details of this revival. Of interest to us is the kind of doctrinal thrust that can be traced back to this revival. Evidence gathered from several sources, especially those that were not friendly to the revival, shows that from the revival onwards, the majority of the distinctive characteristics of Pentecostalism we find today took root. These include:

a) Frequent and spontaneous worship services that almost went around the clock.
b) Salvation by obeying Acts 2:38, through repentance, baptism and the infilling of the Holy Ghost, evidenced by speaking in tongues.
c) Belief in one God according to Deuteronomy 6:4.
d) Sanctification (or holiness) of the believer.

Several scholars have come up with lists of what they regard as characteristics of Pentecostalism, but for our purposes we will isolate a few scholars who point out key doctrinal features that may be regarded as representative beliefs and practices of Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. One scholar we take on immediately is Margaret M. Poloma (2000), who

is of the conviction that what defines Pentecostalism is not a single structure, uniform doctrine or ecclesiastical leadership, but a particular Christian cosmology comprising of the following:

a) An emphasis on a transforming experience of being "filled with the Holy Spirit".
b) A holistic world-view with God present in all events and causing all things to work together.
c) A belief that knowledge is not limited to the realms of reason and sensory experience.
d) A view of the Bible as a "living book" in which the Holy Spirit is always active.

We are particularly interested in some of Poloma's descriptions which we cite verbatim below:

> The Pentecostal world-view holds that ours is a world of miracles and mystery, where healings, prophecy and divine serendipity are woven into the fabric of everyday life […] Glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, represents another distinguishing element of Pentecostal experience […] Speaking in tongues has a great symbolic value […] (Poloma, 2000 :3).

What this means is that within its historical development, Pentecostalism developed certain emphases that placed miracles and healing, prophecy and such *charismata* as speaking in tongues at its very centre.

Kudzai Biri (2012: 37) talks of "dominion theology" that influences Pentecostals to deny poverty, sickness, failure and any negative development in Pentecostal devotees' lives. According to her, Pentecostals preach a "cross less Christianity" (Biri, 2000: 37) which, in our reading of what Biri says and what the devotees express in their testimonies, is based on the fundamental conviction that Jesus Christ is no longer on the cross but is alive among us and, therefore, if he is alive among us, we should not be sick.

Therefore, the key research question in this chapter is that, given this historical development and such fundamental convictions characteristic of an unshakeable quest for power, healing and miracles and related prophecies, to what extent can people with disabilities be acceptable among Pentecostals? Further, the aim of this chapter is to explore whether or not PWDs are welcome in Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe, as well as examining the factors that influence their reception. The chapter thus examines basic features of Pentecostalism from an historical perspective

and delineates disability in terms of its essential characteristics in a bid to access the extent to which Pentecostalism may either include or exclude people with disabilities.

The Methodological Basis for the Conclusion of this Chapter

What we are concluding in this chapter depends much on the methodology employed. An understanding of the methodology is germane to either accepting or rejecting the conclusion of this chapter. Therefore, it is critical to get into some detailed explanation of the methodology employed and the rationale for the steps taken. We employed the qualitative methodology of the phenomenology of religion. We are cognisant of the fact that the phenomenology of religion has taken various twists and turns in its historical evolution, not just in Zimbabwe but also globally to the extent that, as a methodology, it no longer has a single face. There is now talk of hermeneutic phenomenology (Laverty, 2003: 1), reflexive-relational phenomenology (Finlay and Payman, 2013: 144), feminist phenomenology (Simms and Stawarska, 2013: 6), and traditional existential, historical and comparative phenomenology (Taringa, 2013).

We did not want to get bogged down by terminology and typologies; our interest was more in the processes that allow us to process our data, to reach a fairly objective conclusion to our problem of investigation. In this study, we combined old and new paradigms in the phenomenological study of religious phenomena, to achieve our desired end. We recognise most of the stages that James L. Cox (1992 and 2006) outlined and examined in detail. We utilised the paradigms of *epochē*, empathetic interpolation, and eidetic intuition from the familiar paradigms of the phenomenology of religion that Cox examined in detail. From other disciplines, especially psychology and sociology, we utilised the paradigm of reflexivity which is now commonly associated with the phenomenology of religion because of its affinity in terms of its principles and applications to the methodology of phenomenology.

Without going into very detailed explanations, *epochē* refers to the principle of phenomenology that requires the researcher, during data collection and analysis, to suspend (bracket off) their preconceived ideas and judgements about phenomena formulated from academic theories on religion, thus allowing the believer to speak and the researcher to observe religious phenomena as they appear, rather than how they are understood

through opinions formed prior to observation (Cox, 1992: 24). It is apparent that by *epochē*, we are not talking about Ninian Smart's view of bracketing questions of theological truth (Smart, 1973: 56) but Cox's elaboration of the principle, following Husserl, entailing suspending judgement of what is taken for granted in the natural attitude (Cox, 2006: 21). Thus, through performing *epochē* and maintaining it, we could claim that in the conversations below, we were able to describe the experiences as they were told by those who lived them.

Empathetic interpolation refers to the principle of "entering", as it were, "into the experience" of the believing community that is under study and developing empathy — the cultivation of a feeling for the religious life of the devotees that overcomes cultural, symbolic and language barriers that may influence the researcher's efforts to identify with the attitudes, thoughts and religious activities of the believers (Cox, 1992: 26, 27). It will be noticed that, in our analysis of the conversations and descriptions of religious phenomena below, we tried to name phenomena which we used to then describe relationships and processes in a bid to construct a paradigmatic model, the essence of which is our statement of eidetic intuition. By eidetic intuition, Cox (1992: 35) refers to a construction from the phenomena of the meaning of religion. In our case, we do not just look at what Pentecostalism in essence really is, but what it means to the devotees with disability.

However, we are cognisant of the critique often raised against the phenomenology of religion, as described above, that it gives the impression that the researcher can turn into an analytical data-collection machine and not influence the two processes of data collection and data analysis in research. We do not get into the merits and demerits of this and other critiques about the phenomenology of religion as a methodology, suffice to say we have complemented the methodology with the principle of reflexivity.

Reflexivity is perceived in various ways. Here, we adopted ideas about reflexivity advocated by Rachel L. Shaw (2010). Shaw perceives involvement in research in terms of two horizons: the horizon of the researcher and the horizon of the participant. Both the researcher and the participant have a particular "presence" in the research. Reflexivity refers to the explicit awareness of ourselves in research and entails the willingness of the researcher to acknowledge their own influence in the research, thereby offering transparency to the methods (Marie, 2011: 6). In other words, reflexivity recognises one indubitable fact: that researchers

are not neutral, data-collecting (and analysis) machines (Marie, 2011:6). Thus, it shows caution in data collection and analysis for the researcher to always be cognisant of this presence and to regulate their influence and place in the collection and interpretation of data. On the part of the participant, reflexivity helps the researcher to be cognisant of the participant's positionality, context, individual experiences, values and beliefs, interests and ambitions, and therefore approach data in a way that reflects critically on the influence of the horizon of the participant (Marie, 2011: 7; Shaw, 2010: 233-234).

In this study, we used the main methods of data collection in phenomenology: participant observation and interviews — while observing the underlying principles embedded in the above-mentioned paradigms of the phenomenology of religion — and recorded verbatim the conversations emanating from the interviews before we analysed them using empathetic interpolation guided by reflexivity. What results from our analysis of the "conversations" are statements that build up to our statement of eidetic intuition that we state as our thesis at the end. We deliberately do not mention the names of the churches involved because our focus is not on case studies but on Pentecostal churches in general, whose uniting points are the key doctrines stated earlier, and the common history.

Data were collected through non-formalised conversations with PWDs who were selected through purposive sampling from PWDs with experiences in Pentecostal practices. The participants were selected from Zimbabwean PCs. Through the phenomenological enquiry comprised of performing *epochē* (suspending preconceived ideas and judgement), reflexivity, and the formulation of a statement of eidetic intuition came from the conversations. The semi-structured interview questions were developed from the following objectives: (a) To examine basic features of Pentecostalism from an historical perspective; (b) To delineate disability in terms of its essential characteristics; (c) To access the extent to which Pentecostalism may either include or exclude people with disabilities; and (d) To make recommendations to Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe regarding the ways in which they could be more inclusive in respect to people with disabilities. The study investigated the insiders' (PWDs') views regarding whether or not they experience stigma and discrimination PCs in Zimbabwe, and it probed the possible reasons for this. The collected experiences were then read several times to analyse data and place it into emerging themes. The sample of 50 PWDs who had

experience with Pentecostal practices was considered large enough to allow us to reach a saturation point.

Data Presentation and Analysis: Describing the Phenomena

Conversation 1 is an almost verbatim description of a respondent who is deaf. Conversations 2 and 3 came from respondents each with a hearing impairment. Conversation 4 came from a respondent with physical challenges of walking and sitting. Conversations 5 and 6 came from respondents who are blind, and the last conversation came from a respondent with mental challenges. While the conversations are intermittent with comments from the researchers, the comments were released from the perspective of *epochē* and efforts to maintain *epochē* throughout were taken. We describe the phenomena first, so we present the "raw" conversations under the appendices section, after the references. Before we take the further step of naming the phenomena, the appendices are read several times to make meaningful insights from the experiences of the participants. Each experience is analysed, explained and supported by biblical quotes and literature where possible.

Analysis of Conversation 1

Lack of knowledge and detailed understanding of a variety of medical conditions associated with disabilities contributes to the stigma directed towards PWDs in Pentecostal churches. Medically epilepsy is a recurrent tendency to spontaneous, intermittent, abnormal electrical activity in part of the brain, which manifests as seizures (Oxford Handbook of Clinical Medicine). It is a neurological disorder and is not contagious yet participants in this study suggest that some church members did not want to associate with sufferers in case they became contaminated. This does not only apply to Pentecostal churches but extends to the community at large due to cultural beliefs that consider epilepsy a contagious condition. Although a paradigm shift is reported in the belief system, where Pentecostal churches claim to have nothing to do with cultural beliefs and values, they still subconsciously revert to their African tradition. Thus, from the ubuntu perspective, Rukuni (2007: 03) postulates that, "you can take the African out of the village, but you cannot really take the village out of the African." As revealed by this study, PCs advocate the healing of all kinds of diseases while at the same time indirectly segregating people with different medical conditions which are disabling but invisible in

nature. In this case, segregation is due to the fear of contracting similar disabling medical conditions. Hence, "stigmatisation is being masked by a 'fear of the unknown'" in Pentecostal churches.

Analysis of Conversation 2

In this conversation, the PWD admits that there is a remarkable amount of stigma in Pentecostal churches, overlapped by inadequate education in various key areas of disability. Most Pentecostal churches place emphasis on acquiring social skills as a necessary part of building strong relationships with PWDs. According to Conversation 2, PCs should engage in short courses on various disability issues to acquire basic knowledge about the development of certain disabilities. In most cases, retarded growth presents some form of irreversible disability which may not be miraculously changed, but some PCs deny this by placing the blame on the individual's inadequate faith. The disability may be due to a variety of causes related to heredity, hormonal disorders, malnutrition, and childhood chronic diseases. In most instances, it is not related to any extent with most of the African superstitious beliefs. Hence, Pentecostal churches should acquire adequate knowledge about the background of the majority of disabling conditions, so they can handle people with temporary and permanent disabilities. Attaining adequate knowledge will result in an increase in the level of acceptance of PWDs, which implies there would be a decrease in stigma. However, in some instances, PWDs are equally to blame, especially when they segregate themselves due to an inferiority complex, even though they should showcase their right to equality. As a result, they also need to be educated on how to claim these equal rights to free worshipping and participation, which are usually missing links in most PCs, as reflected by the lived experiences of Conversation 2.

Analysis of Conversation 3

As revealed by Conversation 3, Pentecostal churches have, to some extent, adapted ways of accommodating PWDs. They have given them the opportunity to participate in their various areas of interest and engaged them in discussions as well. However, taking into consideration the deaf community, what could be questioned is the method of communication used to relay information to make sure deaf participants equally benefit from attending church services. Denial of such chances is likely to be a barrier to the universal use of sign language (SL) and creates a negative impact on the deaf community. Establishing effective communication

skills with the people who are deaf is likely to make them feel more like equal church members. The UNCRPD (2006) equally emphasise the importance of sign-language interpreters for people who are deaf, and Braille for the visually impaired.

Analysis of Conversation 4

Conversation 4 and reflections from most participants who took part in this study indicate that today, the gospel of most churches is centralised from financial breakthroughs, faith and healing. According to participants in this study, this has left many PWDs who fail to receive their healing with many unanswered questions: "Are we people of little faith or is our believe in God disabled as well?"; "What else do we need from God if we are still disabled?"; "Our colleagues have had disabilities from birth to death despite being faithful church members — what did they gain and what are we to receive again from God?" Conversation 4 teaches that instead of the church condemning the disabled as people of little faith, they ought to teach and clarify the importance of salvation, which is a special need that leads to eternal life. In support, John 3:15 says: "There isn't any earthly gift or need that is worthy as the heavenly need". The conversation emphasises that salvation is the greatest need that every person should receive. Before we ask for any kind of blessing that might be in the form of healing, financial provision, or prosperity, we ought to seek the face of the Lord first. In support, Matthew 6:33 says: "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." God gives assurance that He will meet all our earthly needs but what we need the most is forgiveness of our sins and deliverance from the bondage of the evil one. Here equal treatment is emphasised.

Analysis of Conversation 5

People with disabilities are often aware and conscious of how they are severely stigmatised by the "norm". In the majority of the PCs, the church leaders (specifically pastors and elders) identify PWDs by using their family names, while the majority of church members identified them according to their physical outlook or the type of disability they possessed. Currently, most PCs have a lot of different support groups which offer consistent financial support to PWDs but they still lag behind in terms of providing basic psychological support. At times, the way that financial provision is presented to PWDs makes them appear and feel non-functional in the community, and yet they have their own capabilities

which can be put to use all for the glory of God, as exemplified by Conversation 5 (see Appendices). Every PC should therefore be the best environment for and accessible to all people with various impairments. The conversation suggests that church counselling and psychological support is likely to help church members to develop alliances with PWDs. Such motions are likely to help establish trust between PWDs and those without, while also encouraging PWDs to open up to the love of God. When people gather to praise and worship the living God, there is the presence of the Lord, as stated in Matthew 18:20. Wherever there is the presence of the Lord, there is assurance of rest and comfort from all afflictions of this world. In support, Matthew 11:28 says: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest." Such verses should help PCs revisit the place of PWDs in their churches and improve their inclusive practices, not only socially or educationally but spiritually too.

Naming the Phenomena and Performing Empathetic Interpolation

In this section, we analyse the conversations by naming the phenomena in terms of what themes can be seen to be coming from the conversations, identifiable rituals, myths, attitudes and implicit or explicit beliefs and practices. However, we do not stop at naming the phenomena. Using the conceptual model of reflexivity to complement the phenomenological tool of empathetic interpolation, we also enter into a detailed analysis of the named phenomena. We have briefly stated what we mean by reflexivity but reserved the definition of empathetic interpolation until now so that we can define the tool as we use it, to comprehend it 'in *praxis*' so to speak. The term has been defined on several occasions when scholars use the methodology of phenomenology, but Robin (2002) and Cox's (2010) definitions suffice for our purposes here. Robin (2002: 82) uses a term which we think summarises the essence of the method of empathetic interpolation: he refers to it as a systematic introspection not only of the description of what is visible from the outside, but the systematic introspection of the phenomenon as the experience born of what can only become reality after the experience has been admitted or accepted into the life of the observer by himself or herself. What we are interested in is Robin's description of the method as a "systematic introspection," but we are cautious with the insinuation that empathetic interpolation may be equivalent to the conversation of the observer. This is where Cox's analysis of Ninian Smart's view of interpolation comes in. Cox (2010: 54)

defines empathetic interpolation, following Smart, as the persistent and strenuous application of intense sympathy (empathy) in the interpretation of appearances (phenomena). Therefore, as we name phenomena below from the conversations, we carry out a systematic introspection into the described phenomena and a self-examination of how we are processing the descriptions in a way that empathises with the experiences of the devotees or respondents. Our reflexivity draws on what we already know about the phenomena from similar studies elsewhere.

Conversation 1 raised a number of issues that we can relate and describe in terms of known religious phenomena. First, there was mention of the idea of uniforms for members in general and specifically for the choir. This concept of uniforms may, on the surface, just be treated as a theme coming out of the conversation. However, from the point of view of insiders, uniforms, especially in non-Pentecostal churches, are part and parcel of a series of rituals that make up the rite of confirmation into full membership of the various organisations, such as the women, men and youth groups respectively. So, the respondent in that conversation may have been reacting to the laborious confirmation rites which are usually characteristic of non-Pentecostal churches (commonly referred to as mainline churches). Perhaps the lack of such rites, which are discriminatory at times within Pentecostalism, is an attractive feature to people with disabilities. This concept ties in with the emphasis in many PCs that choirs must have uniforms so that dress does not become a discriminatory feature for those willing to join the praise and worship team. However, the lack of emphasis on, or the absence of, confirmation rites in PCs may have benefitted other members in general, but not necessarily people with disabilities because, as we observed, they are not included in the choir. As we observed from the other conversations, people with disabilities remain "visitors", as it were (see conversations 5 and 6).

All the conversations raised a number of issues that may point to the beliefs and practices of the PCs under study. Conversation 1 raised the issue of marriage as an attraction to the PC mentioned in that conversation. The respondent attended this Pentecostal church with the belief that he would get a God-fearing woman, but apparently without success. Further, he was of the belief that the church would minister to his material needs, like helping him to find the right life partner, so that he would have a family of his own, a job and money. Apparently these were not forthcoming as the emphasis in the church was on him getting healed from his hearing and speech impairments. While he does not doubt miracles (according to the respondent they have happened in the church before),

they are not his immediate need. He lost hope as his miracle was never forthcoming and he wishes the church would place emphasis elsewhere, rather than raising false hopes about miraculous healing of his deaf condition. Perhaps this is why he has not been fully integrated into the church-fold and remains a visitor without the full restoration of his sight and hearing. In fact, each time he comes to church and is not healed, he continues to be an embarrassment. This is an interpretation that can be drawn from all the conversations above.

Conversation 6 shows that there is a need for the Church to minister to the social, emotional and material needs of PWDs, apart from having a strong desire to have them healed. This is a belief and practice that Pentecostal churches seem to take from Acts and all those passages that encourage the religious practice of alms. However, as with Conversation 1, while the need for this is there, people with disabilities are not interested in hand-outs, but empowerment. They are proud of their talents and believe in the dignity of labour (see conversations 6 and 7). Why do the Pentecostal churches concerned not seem to see this? Our inference is that certainly the participants' interpretation of the religious practice of alms is slightly different from that of the PCs they attend. Since the PWDs, as they openly declare, have not been wholly integrated into the mainstream of the churches they attend, nobody has had a chance to listen to the articulation of their beliefs and what they value.

Conversations 4, 5 and 7 raised an interesting phenomenon we are calling non-verbal labelling. Apart from the verbalised labelling where the blind participant's child was actually called names, "*mwana webofo iri*" (this blind person's kid), for example, there is a kind of labelling which is not verbalised but manifests in people's behaviour (e.g. not sitting on the same bench as the one labelled, or escorting the labelled person to a particular seat). In a religious setting like church, such non-verbal labelling is informed by certain fundamental beliefs. For example, escorting the person with a disability to the front seat is like at Bethsaida (John 5: 1-15) — you take the person near to where the miracle is going to happen — at the centre or *axis mundi,* as it were, so that the miracle will happen in the sight of all. However, if it does not happen, especially if the person with a disability has attended regularly with nothing happening, the results may cause embarrassment, as discussed earlier, and the result is likely to be non-verbal labelling of the kind where people just avoid sitting with the unhealed person. It is this kind of treatment that PWDs are reacting to when they demand that they be treated like human beings.

The Study's Paradigmatic Model and Statement of Eidetic Intuition

From a phenomenological perspective, what could be at play here? Our paradigmatic model is that there is a kind of doctrinal thrust among Pentecostal churches that can be traced back to the Azusa Street revival. Of the beliefs and practices derived from the revival indicated earlier, the following seem to be influencing the behaviour of the Pentecostal churches cited in the conversations above:

a) Salvation through obeying Acts 2:38, through repentance, baptism and the infilling of the Holy Ghost and the subsequent emphasis on a transforming experience of being "filled with the Holy Spirit" evidenced by, say, speaking in tongues.
b) Belief in one God according to Deuteronomy 6:4; a holistic world-view with God present in all events and causing all things to work together.
c) The sanctification (or Holiness) of the believer.
d) A view of the Bible as a "living book" in which the Holy Spirit is always active and people have to be made whole again in accordance with the dictates of the Bible.
e) That Jesus Christ is no longer on the cross but is alive among us and, therefore, if he is alive among us we should not be sick (or, in this case, suffer disability).

Therefore, our statement of eidetic intuition from this study is that, inasmuch as the Pentecostal churches under study would have liked to welcome the people with disabilities into their fold, and indeed efforts to do so are evident, a literal adaptation of the beliefs and practices above that must have been derived from the Azusa Street revival, a fundamental experience within Pentecostalism in general, seems to be inhibiting the wholesome reception of people with disabilities in Pentecostal churches. They will remain, as it were, "visitors" among the Pentecostals. The presence of people with disabilities in Pentecostal churches does not necessarily mean inclusion and, furthermore, inclusion does not mean belonging.

Lesson learnt

With respect to the findings from this study, some churches could be described as partly contributing to disabling rather than enabling PWDs.

For example, failure to appease one's God(s); disability as a symbolic lack of faith; and negative attitudes towards PWDs may provide answers to the two-fold perspective suggested. Despite all this, a person is created in the image of God and, in the Bible, God is portrayed as able-bodied and super-abled and never disabled, as evidenced by the book of Isaiah, 59:01, which says that "*surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.*" One may further argue that the theology of disability, symbolised by the blindfolded Jesus Christ, represents the inclusion of disabilities, removing man from darkness through his suffering and dying for us on the cross. On the other hand, by restoring the sight of Bartimaeus (Mark 10 verses 46-52), Jesus Christ enabled rather than disabled PWDs. In other words, he brings light to the darkened world of PWDs. The UNCRPD (2006) guides this study by emphasising the need for appropriate provisions such as Braille. Such provisions would enable the visually impaired to "see" with their hands and the hearing impaired to "talk" with their hands through sign language. Insights from the study reveal that not all churches are enabling PWDs in their churches because of differences in Bible interpretation and belief systems. For example, in Luke 9, verses 1-4, disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" and in Luke 5, verses 20-24, Jesus' response was "man your sins are forgiven", before asking the paralysed man to get up and go. Some suggest that it depicts disability as unworthy, but this study sees them as equally worthy people, as in Proverbs 22:2 and Galatians 3:28. Luke's case teaches respectively that works of God and the Son-of-Man had the authority to forgive sins. It justifies why people shouldn't read the Bible with words of human wisdom. Thus, Hosea 4:6 forewarns us: "my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge" and never from lack of limbs or eyes. In other words, PCs are urged to see a person first before his/her disability.

This study reveals that subtle stigma and discrimination against PWDs exists in Pentecostal churches under the pretext of lack of faith or not being a born again Christian. Thus, the findings are in agreement with the statement of eidetic intuition which points to Pentecostal doctrines as a major factor contributing to the stigma and discrimination directed at PWDs. This study recommends that Pentecostal churches re-examine their doctrines, especially their interpretation of the Azusa Street experience of 1906, in a bid to embrace members with disabilities in their folds. The study teaches us that, as human beings, we are physically and intellectually different from each other but that despite the psychological belief that no two people are identical, the reality is that there is only one human species created in the image of God. The differences come in

diversified forms but we are all human beings created in the image of God and should always learn to respect each other. As guided by this study's framework, PWDs should be allowed to enjoy their being-ness — or ubuntu — at PCs, something which is contemporaneously enshrined in the UNCRPD (2006) as the human-rights-based approach.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Therefore, without tabulating them, this study makes the following recommendations: Pentecostal churches in general need to revisit their fundamental beliefs and practices, especially with regard to miracles and healing if they are to make people with disabilities feel a sense of belonging in their churches. Apart from making their churches structurally user-friendly to disabled people, there is a need to change attitudes and include disabled people in programs, avoid verbal and non-verbal labelling and, should resources permit, transform the religious practice of alms into a practice of empowering those with disabilities. People need to feel whole and accepted, including people with disabilities. This is the greatest miracle that disabled people are waiting for: the transformation of the church for the better. Mandates from the UNCRPD, plus the ubuntu philosophy, should guide churches in placing PWDs as equal members in everything they do. Such actions should reduce the kinds of experiences noted by the participants of this study; stigma and discrimination towards PWDs at churches should diminish after reading about their lived experiences in the appendices section.

References

Anderson, Allan. 1993. "African Pentecostals and the ancestor cult: confrontation or compromise?" *Missionalia* 21:1, 26-39.

—. 1993. "The struggle for unity in Pentecostal mission churches in South Africa," *Journal of Theology in Southern Africa* 82, 67-77.

—. 1995. "Challenges and prospects for research into AICs in Southern Africa," *Missionalia* 23:3, 283-294.

—. 2001. *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc.

—. 2004. *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Becken, H. 1993. *The use of oral tradition in historiography, some pitfalls and challenges*. Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae xix No 1:81-88.

Biri, Kudzai. 2011. *African Tradition Religion and Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe: The Case of Zimbabwe Assemblies of God, Africa (ZAOGA)*. Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing.

—. 2012. "Silent Echoing Voice: Aspects of Zimbabwean Pentecostalism and the Quest for Power, Healings and Miracles. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae Vol. 38 Supplement.* 37-55.

—. 2013. "African Pentecostalism and Politics in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe: A Comparative Critique of the Leadership Styles of Ezekiel Guti and Robert Mugabe," in *Prayers and Players: Religion and Politics in Zimbabwe.* Ed. by Ezra Chitando. Harare: SAPES Books.

Bishau, David. 2010. *Reign with Him for a Thousand Years (Rev 20:6) A Socio-hermeneutical Exposition Of Biblical And Contemporary Millenarian Movements In Zimbabwe As Radical Responses To Deprivation.* Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.

Chimininge, V. 2012. *An Analysis of Myths and Rituals Associated with the Origins of and Development of Zimbabwean Christian Church of Samuel Mutendi in Zimbabwe*. Doctoral Thesis: University of South Africa**.**

Cox, James, L. 1992. *Expressing the Sacred: An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion.* Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications.

Cox, J.L. 1993. *A Guide to the Phenomenology of Religion: Key Figures, Formation, Influences and Subsequent Debates*. New York: T. and T. Clark International, A Continuum imprint.

Cox, James, L. 2006. *Guide to the Phenomenology of Religion: Key Figures, Formative Influences and Subsequent Debates*. London: Continuum.

—. 2010. *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion.* London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Finlay, L. and Payman, B. 2013. *'This Rifled and Bleeding Womb.' A Reflexive –Relational Phenomenological X=Case Study of Traumaic Abortion Experience***.** Janul Head (Special Issue) 13 (1) pp. 144-175.

Gifford, Paul. 1991. *The New Crusaders: Christianity and the New Right in Southern Africa.* London: Pluto.

—. 2004. *Ghana's Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy.* London: Hurst and Co.

Hapanyengwi, O. 2009. A Synoptic View of the History of Special Needs Education in Zimbabwe. University of Zimbabwe. Free online library:

http://www.uz.ac.zw/index.php/faculty-of-education/96…ed/ed- (Retrieved 12/11/2013).

Laverty, Susan, M. 2003. "Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods 2(3),* 21-35.

Machingura, Francis. 2010. "The Shona Concept of Spirit Possession (Kusvikirwa) and Pentecostal Phenomenon of Getting into the Spirit (Kupinda Mumweya) (85-102), *Hope's Reason*, *Volume 1, Number 1*, 85-102.

—. 2011a. "The Significance of *Glossolalia* in the Apostolic Faith Mission, Zimbabwe," *Studies in World Christianity* Volume 17, Issue 1, April 2011. pp. 12-29.

—. 2011b. "A Contextual Analysis of Acts 2:1-13 and its Implications in AFM," in *From Text to Practice: The Role of the Bible in Daily Living of African People Today*, BIAS Series, edited by Masiiwa R. Gunda. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.

—. 2012. "Pentecostal Churches' Attitude towards People living with HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe: Exclusion or Inclusion," *Praktisch-theologischen Werkstatt*, LIT VERLAG GmbH & Co. KG.

Marie, Clancy. 2011. 'Is Reflexivity the Key to Minimising Problems in Interpretative Research?' *Lecture, University of Wolverhampton.*

Motsi, G. and Masango, M.J. (2012). Redefining trauma in an African context: A challenge to pastrol care. *AOSIS Open Journals*. 68 (1).

Poloma, Margaret M. 1982. *The Charismatic Movement: Is there a new Pentecost?* G.K. Hall & Co.

Robin, Sylvan, 2002. *Traces of the Spirit: Religious Dimensions of Popular Music.* New York: New York University Press.

Rukuni, M. (2007). *Being African: Rediscovering the Traditional Unhu-Ubuntu-Botho: Pathways of Being Human*. Cape Town: Manadala Publishers.

Shaw, Rachel. L. 2010. "Embedding Reflexivity within Experiential Qualitative Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 7(3), 233-243.

Simms, Eva-Maria and Beata Stawarska. 2013. "Introduction: Concepts and Methods in Interdisciplinary Phenomenology," *Janus Head Vol.* 13 Issue 1*,* 6-16.

Smart, N. (1973). Bracketing Questions of Theological Truth Taken for Granted in the National Attitude?

Taringa, Nisbert, T. 2013. "Historical – Typological Phenomenology of Religion: Problems and Promises," *ALTERNATION Interdisciplinary*

Journal for the Study of Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa. Special Issue Number 7, 87-109.

Togarasei, Lovemore 2008. "Review: *African Gift of the Spirit: Pentecostalism and the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement*," *Africa Today, Volume 55, Number 1,* 138-141.

—. 2005. "Modern Pentecostalism as an Urban Phenomenon: The Case of the Family of God Church," *Exchange: Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 34(4), 349–375.

—. 2006. "The 'Birth' of a Prophet: Andrew Wutawunashe's Break from the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe (formerly Dutch Reformed Church)," *Exchange: Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 35(2), 215–224.

United Nations CRPD (2006), United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability. *www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/context.htm* (Retrieved 09/12/2014.

Online Sources

Cloud, David W. Azusa Street Mission. *http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/strange1.htm* Retrieved 2007-05-24.

http://web.archive.org;

http://www.lutherproductions.com/historytutor/...azuza.html

Other Sources

Corcoran, Michael. "How a humble preacher ignited the Pentecostal fire". *Cox News Services*. Retrieved 19 November 2011.