New Media and the Mediatisation of Religion

New Media and the Mediatisation of Religion:

An African Perspective

Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

GABRIEL FAIMAU,
WILLIAM O. LESITAOKANA
AND CAMDEN BEHRENS

In 2015, Calvin College's Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity with major support from the John Templeton Foundation in the United States of America published a call for research proposals focusing on religious innovation, competition and their impact in contemporary Africa. Responding to this call, we proposed a study focusing on New Media and Prophetic Ministries in Botswana. This proposed study was one of the 12 research projects selected for research awards under the social science research grants programme in January 2016. Our project commenced on 1 February 2016 and was completed on 30 June 2017. The aim of this project was to explore and examine the multifaceted characteristics of prophetic ministries in Botswana and how new media shapes religious discourses and the religious landscape in Botswana. While our study focused on Botswana, we determined that having different perspectives from other parts of Africa would enrich the current scholarship on new media and religion in Africa. This edited book, *New Media and the Mediatisation of Religion: An African Perspective,* emerged from this belief. In this introduction, we will first present a general overview of the intersection between religion and media in Africa followed by a brief note on scholarship related to new media and religion in Africa. It will conclude with an explanatory framework that guides the chapters in this volume and the structure of the book.

Setting the tone: the intersection between religion and media in Africa

The growth and spread of religion across Africa over the centuries have been predicated on colonisation (Etherington, 1996). Societies in the North, North East and Western parts of Africa are predominantly Islamic;

Christianity is common in the South and Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in the nations that were colonised by Europe. However, the traditional African religion is still prominent in many parts of Africa. The diffusion of religion across the continent has had to contend with a strong set of African values and beliefs, which are entrenched in societies' traditions. One widely reported example in this regard was when early missionaries in Southern Africa had to negotiate with the traditional Chiefs in order to introduce Christianity into the region. Several approaches, such as introducing education, trade and Western capitalist culture, were used to persuade the populace about the benefits of adopting Christianity (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1986). However, the African society remained very reluctant to change and believed that their traditions were instrumental to their socio-economic wellbeing. The diffusion of religions in Africa occurred as religious actors' devised ways through which they could engage and communicate with the society, thus amassing and enlisting a large number of followers. The adaption and continued growth of the devises of communication used by religious leaders have facilitated the continued development of religions on the continent.

Recently, religious actors have taken advantage of the prevalence and accessibility of mass media in Africa to continue the spread of religion and religious messages across the continent. Over the past two decades, the world has witnessed dramatic changes in the way media content is produced, packaged and disseminated. While conventional media remains fundamental to the delivering of news journalism and current affairs issues, new media has allowed a variety of different actors to produce and disseminate professional, social and/or personal information to a diverse audience. The use of new media by religious groups and religious followers has altered the ways in which religious messages are accessed and consumed.

The growth in technology has ensured the global accessibility of mass communication (Markus, 1987; Lister, 2009) and the innovations in information and communications technology (ICTs) has allowed media spaces to increase significantly. As such, audiences are no longer dependent on conventional channels of communication for information. Consequently, the new spaces and forms of communication provided for by new media have impacted human lives socially, economically and culturally (Hodkinson, 2010). New media have been beneficial to the provision of information but have also been detrimental in that it can influence and alter the values and principles that underpin societal traditions and cultures.

Although the African continent experiences a serious digital divide (Norris, 2001; Pick & Sarkar, 2015), the spread of digital technologies in the region during the last decade has been remarkable. Recently, there have been reports of an increase in the use and consumption of the internet, social media, and other information communication technologies in many parts of Africa (Ajuwon & Rhine, 2008; Sooryamoorthy, 2017). Moreover, the adoption and application of social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, has been increasing in the region. Digital media technologies, including social networks, are not only useful to individuals but they also influence digital cultures among users. For example, social networks are credited with advancing social movements in Tunisia and Egypt during the Arab spring (Rane & Salem, 2012; Wolfsfeld, Segev & Sheafer, 2013); political parties in South Africa use Facebook to engage the youth and share political information (Steenkamp & Hyde-Clarke, 2014); and the use of mobile phones has not only re-established the traditional lifestyle of youth in Botswana but also increased social crimes (Lesitaokana, 2015). The above examples demonstrate the influence that the media has in society and its impact on cultural behaviour.

Given the spread of religion on the continent and the accessibility of the new media, there is a dearth of literature that specifically examines the nexus between religion and the media in Africa. Consequently, there is an urgent need for research that considers how the various forms of media have been utilised for religious practice and the implications of mass media on religion. Further scholarship is required to demonstrate how the media use of religious groups in the northern states compares with the media use of religious groups in the southern countries of Africa.

Identifying the gap: scholarship of new media and religion in Africa

New Media, including digital and social media, play a central role in producing and reproducing socio-cultural and religious discourses and practices. The presence of new media has not only resulted in changes to the ways in which religious beliefs are practiced but has also altered the way religious meanings are expressed through new media. In the past two decades or so, scholars have studied the relationship between new media and religion. In general, scholars have addressed questions relating to the intersections between religious engagement, new media technology and digital culture. The focus has primarily been on how new media technology informs and influences religious engagement and how new media technology enables religious groups to practice and preach their

religious beliefs to a broad audience. Within this context, different terms have been used to explain the relationship between religion and new media technology. The term 'cyber-religion' is often used to describe and explain new expressions of religious discourse and religious practice that have emerged through the use of computer networks. 'Virtual religion' is another term that refers to the dynamic relationship and tension between the religious structures in "the real world" and those of the "virtual world". The term 'digital religion', which has become popular, refers to how online and offline religious spaces and practices are negotiated in the context of a digital world.

Digital religion, or new media and religion, has emerged as a field of study with its own area of interdisciplinary enquiry. In her article, "Surveying theoretical approaches within digital religion studies" published in *New Media & Society*, Campbell (2016) interrogates the increase in studies on digital religion and identifies four waves of theoretical approaches in the evolution of this field of study. The first wave, in the late 1990s, was a descriptive era in which scholars identified and described religious discourses and practices on the internet. The second wave emerged in early 2000 when scholars attempted to categorise and provide typologies for the religious internet practices. For example, Helland created a categorisation system with "religion-online" referring to traditional forms of religious practices that are made available online, and "online-religion" that relates to how religion is adapted on the internet to create new forms of networked spirituality (Helland, 2000). Campbell characterised the third wave as a "theoretical turn" where scholars paid more attention to the methods and explanatory frameworks they used when analysing the various strategies adopted by offline religious communities to adapt to the use of new media. In the fourth and latest wave, the focus is on how religious actors negotiate between their online and offline lives.

These theoretical approaches have influenced the studies of digital religion since the late 1990s. Although the study of digital religion has been established globally, it has been a neglected area in the African context. It should be noted, however, that studies on the intersection between the media in general and religion in Africa have been increasingly popular in the past two decades. This can be seen in the academic publications of African scholars, such as Afe Adogame, Walter C. Ihejirika, Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu and Asonzeh Ukah.

In reviewing the trends and debates present in research on media, religion and culture in Africa, Ihejirika (2009: 1) contends that "Africa has been conspicuously absent in the bibliographic essays and overviews of

research in the field of media, religion and culture". Ihejirika divides the study of media, religion and culture in Africa into two periods: the early period (1987 – 1998) and the coming of age (1999 – 2008). In the early period, the relationship between religion and media was studied from the perspectives of cultural or social anthropology and religious studies but did not include media theory. However, in the late 1990s, scholars began to explore the religious and cultural implications of media practices in Africa. *Religion, Media, and the Public Sphere,* edited by Meyer and Moors, was published during this period. The second period, coming of age, maintained the focus on media, religion and culture but also introduced the study of new media and religion. The International Conference on New Media and Religious Transformations in Africa held in Abuja, Nigeria in 2008 is often considered a defining moment in the study of media, particularly new media, religion and culture in Africa. The papers that were presented during this conference primarily focused on questions such as: how Africa's religious landscape has been changed and transformed by the emergence of new media; how new media has generated new religious communities; and how religious institutions use new media to advance their various religious, political and economic agendas. A good number of the papers presented during this conference have been published in the book "*New Media and Religious Transformations in Africa*", edited by Hackett and Soares (2015).

Although the study of new media and religion in Africa has become a field of research in the past decade, attempts to determine how the emergence of social media and social networking sites has influenced and shaped religious discourses and religious practices in Africa has been limited. This edited book attempts to address the gap in the scholarly studies on new media and religion in Africa and become an essential source of reference for further research, particularly in the area of new media and religion in Africa.

Approaching the field: explanatory framework and structure of the book

The central focus of this book is the impact of the media on religion in Africa. Adopting the concept of "mediatisation", many of the chapters in this book consider the ways in which the media continues to shape religious discourse within some parts of Africa. Some authors focus on the role of the media in the social acceleration of religious discourses, while others deliberate on the manifestations of culture that are the result of religious practice in media spaces.

As a concept, "mediatisation" refers to the changes associated with mass media and their development (Hjarvard, 2017). Therefore, mediatisation is a social and cultural process through which the mass media influences the social changes that occur in any given society. Mediatisation differs from mediation. While mediation denotes the traditional and neutral function of the media in conveying or relaying messages, mediatisation considers how the media produce the content of relayed messages, on the one hand, and interfere with and transform the social and cultural processes, on the other hand (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). This line of proposition echoes the understanding that the media, as the medium through which the message is transmitted, also becomes the message because "it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action" (McLuhan, 2003[1965]: 20).

With the emergence of the new media revolution, the mediatisation process allows for, what Rosa calls, "social acceleration". Rosa states that "the logic of social acceleration is decisive for the structural and cultural evolution of contemporary society" (Rosa, 2003: 25). Considering the notion of "social acceleration", one could argue that, within the socio-cultural process, the mediatisation experience is the experience of social acceleration. Here "[s]ocial acceleration enables greater (and faster) mobility and disengagement from spatial determination; however, it simultaneously furthers alienation from our immediate material, geographical and physical surroundings" (Vostal, 2014: 104). The presence of new media has certainly changed the ways in which religious beliefs are practiced as religious meanings are now also expressed through new media. We are particularly interested in how the global revolution of mass media has provided a new space for various religious discourses, religious practices and religious participation. Moreover, the social acceleration mediated by the mass media not only increases the speed at which the Gospel is spread and increases competition among churches but it also provides a variety of ways to reconfigure the appropriation of mediating and mediatising the Christian faith (Faimau, 2007; 2017; Togarasei, 2012).

This volume consists of nine chapters. In chapter one, Gabriel Faimau explores the notion of prophetic activism. He discusses the role of new media in framing and articulating various prophetic discourses online and offline. Through this study, he examines the role of new media in circulating prophetic words online and determines how this has accelerated prophetic activism among prophetic ministries in Botswana.

In chapter two, Langtone Maunganidze explores the interconnections between cyber-sociality and religiosity with a focus on the Christian community in Zimbabwe. Maunganidze integrates ideas drawn from

Castells' theory of the "networked society" and Boyd's "context collapse" and supports these notions with evidence gathered through a combination of documentary evidence and a multi-case study of purposively selected individuals belonging to different Christian denominations or ministries. Through this research, he advances the argument that while the interface between the digitally-mediated sociality and religiosity is experienced differently by different individuals its overall impact has resulted in congregants being pushed to the margins and beyond their traditional denominational boundaries. He concludes that the interweaving of digitalised religious practices and social connectivity is both beneficial and problematic to both individuals and the church community at large. While new media's ability to influence communication is not in doubt, the reaction of individuals to these new 'technological architectures' has been agential and intersubjective.

Echoing the study of the digital space in the previous chapter, chapter three written by William O. Lesitaokana discusses the ways in which religion is practised in online spaces. Through studying the use of Facebook among prophetic ministries in Botswana, he notes how these religious actors epitomise prophets as central and powerful figures who are highly respected in prophetic ministries. He further demonstrates how the spiritual competencies of prophets are highlighted online, with regular discussions by group members outlining what the prophets do and say online. This allows members to promote their leaders and present them as powerful figures in their ministries.

Chapter four, written by Patience Mathambo, focuses on the popularity of religion and religious groups on Facebook among the youth in Botswana. Her discussion underscores the discourses of religious identity among Facebook users and suggests that this information is targeted towards the individual group member and his/her unique circles of friends rather than towards other members of the religious Facebook group. She concludes the chapter by demonstrating that, through religious communication, social media provides users with a sense of community.

In his chapter, chapter five, Lovemore Togarasei interrogates the implications of the appropriation of new media technologies, particularly the use of the internet, by modern Pentecostal Christians and its effects on Christian identity formation and negotiation. He analyses the history of Christian identity formation and negotiation and considers how the appropriation of new media technologies has shaped Christian identity while also raising questions concerning that identity. Togarasei concludes that Christian identity is pluriform and determines that the use of modern media technology allows for worship and Christian practice that is

completely different from the traditional approaches. As such, he suggests a new Christian identity, an e-Christianity. He further suggests that studies on the practices, beliefs and theologies of this new form of Christian identity should begin to manifest in the near future and urges scholars to continue to focus on this phenomenon.

The chapter written by Gabriel Faimau and Camden Behrens, chapter six, considers the digital religion and the technologisation of discourse. They begin this process with a review of the research and scholarly works in this area. The chapter then provides an analysis of the Facebook page of a popular prophetic Christian church in Botswana, the Gospel of God's Grace (3G Ministries). Faimau and Behrens consider how the linguistic strategies used in the Facebook posts, reviews and comments create and shape religious discourses and form the narratives of religious practices. Using the case study, they advance the argument that the technologisation of discourse enhances the religious authority of the prophet, allows for the construction and negotiation of religious identity, particularly among Facebook users, facilitates the formation of a virtual religious community, and expands religious product attachment.

Motilola Akinfemisoye's chapter, chapter seven, has many views in common with the previous four chapters. The analysis in this chapter is based on the social shaping of technology theory and interrogates how online platforms, in particular Facebook, provide spaces for increasing levels of religious satisfaction among the followers of 'popular' Christian preachers in Africa. Akinfemisoye examines the posts on the Facebook pages of five popular Nigerian preachers, with churches and followers across Africa. Through this study, Akinfemisoye concludes that the appropriation of new information and communication technologies, particularly the internet, not only provides an outlet for 'global' evangelism but also creates space for 'new' forms of Christianity that are performed through 'likes' and 'shares' online.

In chapter eight, Anthony M. Gunde considers new media, religious rhetoric and gendered power relations in the context of Malawi. This chapter is based on a case analysis of a YouTube campaign slogan "*Sesa Joyce Sesa*" which was created by the then opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and promoted by the online news media platforms. This campaign slogan, Gunde determines, was an attack on the then Malawian President Joyce Banda during the country's 2014 elections. Gunde suggests that while democracy has allowed more opportunities for the participation of women in the political arena, the internet and the multiple media platforms it provides has offered increased opportunities to

promote patriarchal religious and cultural beliefs through the manipulation of various religious and cultural texts.

Using the case of the Boko Haram insurgence in Nigeria, chapter nine, written by Edlyne Anugwom, demonstrates that the media has become a critical and invaluable tool in the dissemination of radical Islamic doctrines. Moreover, the chapter examines the extent to which the Boko Haram Islamic fundamentalist group in Nigeria has deployed new media to propagate its violent radical doctrines, on the one hand, while seeking some form of negotiation with the state and the public, on the other. Anugwom argues that, contrary to the dominant discourse on the role of the media in contemporary religion, Islamic fundamentalist groups may have made more exploitative usage of new media than mainstream Islam or Christianity.

As already indicated, this volume attempts to address the gap in the scholarship related to new media and religion. As such, the chapters in this book interrogate the intersection between new media and religious discourses as well as religious practices in the context of Africa. It is our hope that the volume stimulates discussion and scholarly engagement for further research on new media and religion in Africa.

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CHAPTER ONE

NEW MEDIA AND THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ACCELERATION OF PROPHETIC ACTIVISM IN BOTSWANA

GABRIEL FAIMAU

Introduction

In this chapter, the notion of prophetic activism will be explored as well as how the use of new media accelerates the prophetic imagination among prophetic ministries in Botswana. An examination of how new media plays a role in framing and articulating various prophetic discourses and activism will be presented, as well as a consideration of the positioning of a prophet and his prophetic ministry in both the online and offline worlds. This analysis is informed by data collected for a study on "Marketisation of Religion in Botswana"[1] and a larger research project focusing on "New Media and Cultural Application on Religion"[2]. Fieldwork for these studies took place between September 2014 and April 2015, and between April 2016 and March 2017 respectively.

To locate the emergence of prophetic activism among prophetic ministries in Botswana, this chapter draws on positioning theory (Davies & Harre, 1990; Bamberg, 1997; Harre, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart & Sabat, 2009) and social acceleration (Rosa, 2003; 2013) as explanatory frameworks. Although positioning theory is predominately used to explain individual identity construction, the theory has also been applied in an

institutional context, including religious institutions. Institutional self-positioning relates to the meaning-making activities conducted by an institution in order to ensure that it is timely and relevant. Self-positioning of an institution therefore plays a crucial role in determining its distinctiveness, credibility, and relevance. In this chapter, positioning theory is used to examine how prophetic ministries place and contextualise themselves within the religious landscape of Botswana and explores how such positioning strategies shape the interaction and positioning processes of these prophetic ministries through their prophetic activism. Within the same framework, scholars suggest that the appropriation of media technologies has marked the success of neo-Pentecostal churches (Hackett, 1998; Togarasei, 2012; Faimau, 2017). Appropriation of new media technologies includes the mediatisation or extension of the credibility and authority of a prophetic ministry. This means that mediatisation signifies a new socio-religious condition where the media, in general, plays a role in the development of the self-positioning of an institution (Hjarvard, 2012). With the emergence of the new media revolution, the mediatisation process allows for what Rosa calls "social acceleration" (Rosa, 2003: 25). Taking the notion of "social acceleration" into account, one could argue that within the socio-cultural process, the mediatisation experience is the experience of social acceleration. How the global revolution of new media has provided an avenue for extending prophetic imagination and prophetic activism among prophetic ministries is of particular interest.

To begin, the centrality of the prophet within Botswana's prophetic ministries will be explored. This will provide the context for the examination of the operational features of prophecy and approaches to prophetic activism. The last section of this chapter will focus on the intersection between new media and prophetic activism among Botswana's prophetic ministries.

Prophetic ministries and the centrality of a prophet

The presence of a prophet is one of the defining characteristics of prophetic ministries. A prophet plays a crucial role and is the driving force in the life of a prophetic ministry. Results from a survey conducted in 2016 involving eight prophetic ministries in Botswana indicate that 95.99 per cent of participants (N=661) believe that their prophet, prophetess or apostle is a man or woman of God; 63.06 per cent of participants believe that "the prophet" is the main reason why they joined and participate in their current prophetic ministry; and 60.32 per cent consult their prophet or prophetess on a regular basis.

The centrality of a prophet in a prophetic ministry enterprise cannot be separated from the perception of a prophet's authority. Among prophetic ministries, the authority of a prophet is understood in two ways: divinely given authority and relational authority. In the first instance, it is popularly perceived that the authority of a prophet comes from God. For members of prophetic ministries, a prophet has charismatic power because his authority is divinely given. Many popular phrases, therefore, are used to describe the divine authority of a prophet, such as "man of God", "servant of God", "God's faithful servant", "the vessel of God", "prophet of God" and "the chosen one". Since the authority of a prophet is divinely given, a prophet signifies the transcendental moral perfection of the Divine. Therefore, a prophet has the power of prophecy, healing and deliverance.

The authority of a prophet is also understood in a more relational way. In this perception, members of prophetic ministries identify themselves through the identity of their prophets. In other words, since the authority of a prophet is relational in nature, a prophet's authority provides a template through which members of prophetic ministries view and perceive themselves. Within this context, a prophet is called "Father" and a prophetess "Mother". In many prophetic ministries, the relational authority is translated in a more intimate way where a prophet or prophetess is called "Daddy" or "Mummy", "Dad" or "Mom", and "Papa" or "Mama". How is this relational authority translated in the context of a belief system? In one church service attended in July 2016, Healing Faith Ministries in Ramotswa village[3] introduced a new poster emphasising the role of Apostle Daniel Ebenezer as the father of all with the following caption: "I am not an orphan, I have a father". Although he is officially known as Apostle Ebenezer, among members of Healing Faith Ministries he is also addressed as "Prophet". During the announcement, one of the pastors emphasised the significance of having the new poster and how the image of the prophet on the poster contributed strongly to "providing amazing miracles and changing many lives". After the introduction of this new poster, a sticker depicting the image of Apostle Ebenezer was released. The sticker was posted on the official Facebook page of this prophetic ministry in November 2016. Next to the image of Apostle Ebenezer, a big question was clearly written: "Who is your father?" Rather than providing an answer to this question, the sticker included a statement written in a Pentecostal rhetorical style. This statement directs the religious imagination of the prophetic ministry members to the powerful presence of

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[3] Ramotswa village is located in South-East District of Botswana or 40 kilometers from Gaborone, the capital city of Botswana.

their prophet as their father. The statement read: "You need a Feather from a Father to Fly Further". Responding to the posted sticker, one of the Facebook users posted this comment: "I am not an orphan, I have a father, just have a look at him, he has all the qualities of a father".

Although the authority of a prophet is viewed as divinely given and in a relational way, the gathered data suggests that recently a prophet is also perceived to have pragmatic and professional authority. This is based on the belief that he/she has the ability to provide immediate solutions to various practical problems encountered by the faithful. Therefore, for many, a prophet is not only "a man of God" or "a daddy"; a prophet is also a "financial advisor", "business coach", and "counsellor". With this perception, the authority of a prophet is extended from the spiritual arena to the practical secular arena. The websites of some prophetic ministries, therefore, also introduce their prophets as business owners, business coaches, financial advisors and entrepreneurs.

The perceptions of a prophet, as highlighted above, influence two central aspects of prophetic ministries: institutional positioning and religious identity construction. Self-positioning is about finding a creative way of representing the uniqueness of a prophetic ministry in a religious market. Here, prophets become the brands and faces of their prophetic ministries and the focal point for marketing communication. Within the lens of this positioning strategy, it could be argued that the vision, charisma, leadership, and face of a prophet are used to enact and maintain the institutional identity of a prophetic ministry (Yip & Ainsworth, 2013). As already indicated, the central role and authoritative presence of a prophet provides a 'template' for the construction and negotiation of identities among believers, particularly those who are associated with a prophetic ministry (Faimau & Behrens, 2016; also see chapter 6 in this book). The prophet is central to the extent that he/she "occupies an important place in the lives of the faithful, who almost always place his or her word on a par with Scripture itself" (Quayesi-Amakye, 2015: 164). Through personal identification with the life as well as the power of a prophet, believers regard the prophet as a mirror through which believers view their own religious identity. For followers, the prophet is omnipresent. They pray to the God of their prophet. Therefore, at the climax of every religious testimony given in a church service, the narrative centres on the divine intervention of a prophet which affirms his authority and his prophetic ministry.

The emergence of prophetic ministries and the presence of a prophet have clearly shifted the traditional perception of authority to a new perception, at least in the context of Botswana. The United Congregational

Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) in Botswana celebrated its golden jubilee in 2017. In his sermon during the celebration, Rev. Gabriel Tsuaneng called for the role of the church to be redefined. He insisted that the church must be worried about a society that lacks role models, claiming that parents and politicians are no longer appropriate role models. While further study is needed to explore the claim of a lack of role models in more detail, Katangole (Obadare, 2017) points out that, within the context of Africa, authority has always been accorded to "teacher, doctor and priest". This is the traditional perception and understanding of who has societal authority. In his view, the rise of neo-Pentecostal pastors, such as prophets of prophetic ministries, may have succeeded in rolling "these three functions into one and subsume them in his (her) charismatic persona"[4]. In this sense, one could argue that the emergence of prophets might have filled the 'role model' gap as they depict themselves as spiritual directors, counsellors, business coaches and financial advisors. A prophet, therefore, is perceived to be someone who has all the qualities necessary to respond to both the spiritual and material needs of the society.

Operational features of prophecy

The place of a prophet is linked to the centrality of prophetic words or prophecy. Among prophetic ministries, prophecy is first and foremost perceived as a process of diagnosing a problem. To understand this feature, an account of religious testimony relating to prophecy (Faimau, 2017) will be quoted at length.

> Mrs. Naledi Wilson (not real name) stood, with her husband, before more than 3,000 church attendees to share her testimony during a Sunday Service at the Gospel of God's Grace Ministries, also known as 3G Ministries, in Botswana. To the church attendees that Sunday, she described how problematic their marriage had been. She indicated that before getting married, they lived together for nine years. Although there were many issues in their relationship, they decided to get married in 2015. Their relationship, however, worsened thereafter. Facing these problems, she stated that she consulted spiritualists and diviners to help save their marriage but she was told that her husband was not, in fact, the right man for her. This fuelled her hatred towards him. In the midst of this

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[4] The view of Emmanuel Katongole was expressed in the form of comments on Ebenezer Obadare's field notes article entitled "The Pastor as Sexual Object" published on the University of Notre Dame's Contending Modernities website. See https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/field-notes/pastor-sexual-object/; accessed on 31 August 2017.

crisis, she visited 3G Ministries. On [during] one of the Sunday services in this ministry, Prophet Cedric Kobedi identified her among the church attendees and gave her a word of prophecy. Mrs. Wilson acknowledged that…during this prophecy session, Prophet Cedric identified the real cause of her problem when he revealed that she belonged to [the] Atlantic Ocean because she normally dreamt of herself in the water. She confirmed the prophet's prophetic diagnosis of her dreams. The prophet extended an invitation to her and her husband to see him following this prophetic diagnosis. Mrs. Wilson and her husband honored the invitation of the prophet to see him. She stated that after the prophet prayed for them and their relationship in their meeting with him, changes immediately began to occur in their relationship. She highlighted that, for example, they began to experience tremendous affection towards each other. In her view, their marriage was restored through the prophecy and deliverance they received. She said, "There is so much peace now in our marriage, I love my husband and the affection is too much."

The above account highlights the first feature of prophecy among prophetic ministries in Botswana. Here, prophecy is perceived as a process of diagnosing an embedded problem encountered by an individual. Through prophecy, a prophet diagnoses "the source of the patient's suffering" in order to reveal "its causes and its remedies" (Werbner, 2011: 22). The diagnostic process occurs through dialogue where a prophet engages in an interactive dialogue with "the patient" to reveal the unseen cause of the problem. A prophet is believed to have the power of giving prophecy and having an eye beyond an ordinary eye; thus he has the ability to diagnose the hidden and the unseen. Within this understanding of prophecy, it is perceived that "the intentionality of the prophet becomes concordant with divine intentionality as an act of 'forthtelling' in the way a surfer catches a wave" (Csordas, 1997: 329). While being viewed as a method of diagnosing a problem, prophecy is also seen as a process of redirecting a believer towards God. This narrative of prophecy is particularly emphasised in the Facebook posts of various prophetic ministries. The following quotes, posted on a number of official Facebook pages, illustrate this narrative of prophecy:

"It is prophecy time! The man of God by the inspiration and influence of the Holy Spirit is giving prophetic words to the people so as to reveal the root cause of their misfortune, disappointment and sickness. Such a time proves that in the midst of your situation God is still saying something and surely solution is on its way to your life."

"Prophecy stands to reveal and redeem the lives of all believers. Connect from wherever you are and receive your redemption in Jesus' mighty name."

"Prophecy is like light in a dark place, it is solution to all the fundamental issues of life. Wherever you are; connect by faith and begin to receive your portion of God's Grace as prophecy for one is prophecy for all."

Following the Pentecostal tradition, prophetic ministries place an emphasis on prophecy, healing and deliverance as their core message (Chitando, Gunda & Kugler, 2013). Since prophecy is viewed as a process of diagnosing a problem, it cannot be separated from healing and deliverance. In the practice of prophecy among prophetic ministries, prophecy is normally followed by healing and deliverance. Prophecy is about interrogating the past and present experiences and challenges to lay the foundation for a better future through healing and deliverance. The phrase "*Modimo o teng*" (God is present) is commonly used in Botswana as a response to individual and societal problems. While the phrase signifies a strong belief in the presence of God, its use often leads to the perception that there are no real solutions. Prophecy, healing and deliverance events are, therefore, viewed as a cultivated actualisation of the belief in God's omnipresence. "God is present here in this place" becomes a common refrain when an event of prophecy, healing and deliverance is performed.

Prophecy is also featured as a process of predicting the future. While it relates to the future, this feature of prophecy maintains the perception that a prophet has the ability and power to disclose the hidden and the unseen. On 21 August 2016, one month before Botswana celebrated its 50th independence anniversary, Prophet Cedric Kobedi of the Gospel of God's Grace Ministries, popularly known as 3G Ministries, delivered a "Prophecy for the Nation of Botswana". Among others, the prophecy stated the following:

"I see the rate of road accidents going up, accidents that were not supposed to be fatal claiming lives. Satan has now shifted to road accidents in order to kill and take more lives. The Lord is saying that the solution to this is obedience. Obey road traffic signs and regulations because this will save your lives."

The prophecy was immediately circulated through various news media, online media and social media. On the official Facebook page of 3G Ministries, the post of this prophecy received over 700 comments and over 2 000 reactions within two days of its publication. As already indicated, within prophetic Christianity, the emphasis is always on the prophetic