

Chapter 41

The “Gospel” of Pentecostalism and Entrepreneurship: A Market Configuration

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ABSTRACT

Sieving through the avalanche of dissertations on the Pentecostal movements this chapter attempts to analyze the African Pentecostalism’s structural arrangement to generate a deeper understanding of its operations and how the movement is re-inventing itself in contemporary epoch. This was done by appraising in-depth knowledge in concrete terms rather than in abstraction through the combination of notions of the market, entrepreneurship, diaspora, and development. Thus, the chapter develops a new sociological understanding of the differences and similarities between religion and the market in ethnic/diaspora entrepreneurship market space. It argues that the success of African Pentecostalism, both in Africa and the diaspora, is predicated on its ability to smoothly connect the past with the present. Whilst synthesis of African culture in the movement’s liturgy is a proficient engagement with the past, inculcating the efficiency ethos of the market economy in its operations signifies a commitment to the present.

INTRODUCTION

Despite its recent resurgence in the literature, the bond and the struggle between religion and the market has a long history. For example, the biblical episode of Jesus driving buyers and sellers out of the Temple, not only illustrates the connection between religion and the market but also the tension between them. The tension is clearly delineated through the secular/sacred split. Hence, the interplay of religion and entrepreneurship/marketing expressed in the extant discourse in mainstream socio-cultural literature is not novel. However, the globalization phenomenon is enabling new interpretations such that new sites of meaning are constantly invented/reinvented. For instance, a range of spiritual geographies, with new site of ‘pilgrimage’ (André, 2002) reinterpret the relationship of the diaspora to the origin through the

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globalization event. Moreover, the growth of religion has produced a fusion of market and religion sphere in which the secular converts to the sacred and the sacred becomes the secular (Einstein, 2008).

Nevertheless, the merits of both domains (religion and the market) are subjected to fluctuating toleration according to what is valued in economic and cultural terms within various periods of time. For example, in modern time, Marxists rejected religion as a tool of class oppression and Freudians considered it a collective neurosis (Gay, 1998; McKinnon, 2005; *The Economists*, 2006). Yet, the market system of allocation, once the panacea for poverty alleviation, has been criticized for its oppressiveness (e.g. Stiglitz, 1993), and the moral/ethical content of the market is strongly advocated in concepts such as Social entrepreneurship and not-for-profit organizations.

Against this background, this chapter seeks to offer a deeper understanding of the cross-net between the two domains by exploring contiguous literature in both fields to derive an enhanced insight into the rapidly mutating sphere of ethnic religion (from the Christian perspective) and the market economy. Religious marketing/entrepreneurship is assumed to bring together separate spheres of influence in spiritual and secular realms (Nwankwo et al., 2012; Ojo, 2015). The optic lens of African Pentecostalism (AP) - a fastest growing Pentecostal movement (e.g. Nwankwo et al., 2012) is employed as the basis for contextual analysis. The Pentecostal Christian movement (belonging to the Protestant Christianity body) has undeniably become a major religious force in many parts of the world, particularly in the developing world (Martin, 2013). Pentecostalism's accent on individual conversion and its afterlife ontology has the tendency to conceal the multiple and even contradictory ways the movement has engaged in the practice of economic development. The global migration of the Pentecostal movement and the accompanied economic development effects should not be treated as abstract concepts, but are historically connected at particular moments and need to be understood as proximate phenomena.

Given that AP has been described from a variety of angles (e.g. Anderson, 2011), one major challenge of analyzing religion and entrepreneurship among Africans in the diaspora is to describe the spiritual aspects of socio-economic activities. Rejuvenated outlooks are required to investigate how the AP's gospel of prosperity (e.g. Adogame, 2011) does align with ethnic/diaspora entrepreneurship in advanced societies. The topic is not new, as for instance, the complementary role of churches as enterprise incubation centers in the African communities in the UK (e.g. Nwankwo et al., 2012; Nwankwo and Gbadamosi, 2013) and in other climes (e.g. Elo and Volovelsky, 2016) has been established in many studies. Nevertheless, this chapter offers a new insight into the social and economic implications of the religion/market/entrepreneurship encounter in AP. This insight becomes useful from the perspective that the combination of commerce and religion by religious people or organizations has often been derided by purists who rely on scriptural justification in the instance of Jesus chasing buyers and sellers out of the Temple. Saying to them, “It is written in the Scriptures that God said, ‘My Temple will be called a house of prayer.’ But you are making it a hideout for thieves!” (Matthew, 21:12-13). Yet, literature from various fields, including entrepreneurship discipline, is replete with connections between entrepreneurship/commerce and spiritual/religion (e.g. Archer, 2004; Nwankwo and Gbadamosi, 2013; Nwankwo et al., 2012).

In providing an overview of this literature, the chapter will begin to foster the understanding of the prevalence and character of religion entrepreneurship in present-day developed societies. The spotlight will then be on the AP's business model (viz. their expansion strategies), success ingredients and potential lessons for globalization (e.g. Nwankwo et al., 2012; Ojo, 2015). In essence, this exercise will interrogate one key question: How far has the ubiquitous, yet often erroneous dichotomy of the spiritualism and the enterprising capitalist been internalized and reproduced by AP's actors in the diaspora? In interrogating this question, three other sub-questions are visited:

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