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‘The Ngabwe Covenant’ and the Search for an African Theology of Eco-Pneumato-Relational Way of Being in Zambia

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Received: 27 April 2020; Accepted: 30 May 2020; Published: 3 June 2020



Abstract: This study explores the ways in which the born-again traditional leaders in Zambia are redefining neo-Pentecostal interaction with nonhuman creation. It demonstrates their attempts to rapture new religious imaginations in interstitial spaces between neo-Pentecostalism and Africa’s old spiritual systems. Since eco-spirituality is foundational to most African traditional institutions, some born again traditional leaders are forced to search for contextualized forms of neo-Pentecostalism to form new collective expressions of the spirituality of healing and reconciliation of all things. Grounded in the third space translation approach, this study analyzes ‘The Ngabwe Covenant’ which was made by the late neo-Pentecostal clergy and later traditional leader Ngabwe upon his inauguration as the traditional leader of Lamba-Lenje-and-Lima people of Central Province in Zambia. The study argues that Chief Ngabwe attempted to translate neo-Pentecostal spirituality through a traditional spiritual system of eco-relationality. In so doing, neo-Pentecostal spirituality and traditional religio-cultural heritages found new meaning and home within the hybridized (new) religious space. The study underlines that the resultant religious view which could be described as an African theology of eco-pneumato-relational way of being was envisioned as a new spiritual foundation for the Ngabwe kingdom. The article concludes that Rev. TL. Ngabwe’s theology of Spirit’s indwelling of the natural world is a critical contribution to neo-Pentecostal search for life-giving interactions between human and nonhuman creation.

Keywords: Ngabwe covenant; neo-Pentecostalism; third space translation; African theology of eco-pneumato-relational way of being; Zambia

1. Introduction

It has been increasingly argued that the drastic missionary expansion of neo-Pentecostalism is deeply entrenched in African religio-cultural impulse (Gifford 1998; Anderson 2004; Maxwell 2006; Kaunda 2018b). Many scholars who make this claim also maintain that these movements have managed to translate Christian faith into local spiritual sensibilities and thoughts. African neo-Pentecostalism are movements within African Christianities that share a common commitment to expressed Christian faith through African-shaped pneumatological sensibilities. These sensibilities are deeply entrenched in their Christological Trinitarian imaginations, their interpretations of reality and interactions in and with the world. In these Christian spiritualities, African religio-culturally entrenched pneumatological thought systems function as both a philosophy of life and foundational organizing principle for making sense of any experience or explaining any existential crisis in the world, framing their actions, socio-political engagements, economic quest, relational imaginations and any issue related to the existence and the nature of the universe (Kaunda 2018b). African religio-culturally entrenched pneumatology is therefore the root of the African neo-Pentecostal way of being and it is the determining principle of African neo-Pentecostal life. It is no exaggeration, therefore, to say that for an authentic African

neo-Pentecostal, pneumatology is life, and life, pneumatology. African neo-Pentecostals are sensitive to the leadings and workings of the Holy Spirit “in whatever they do, . . . [the Holy Spirit] gives meaning and significance to their lives, both in this world and the next” (Opoku 1978, p. 1). Hence, some African Christian scholars such as Ogbu Kalu (2008, p. 4) think that “contemporary Pentecostalism, rooted in older religious revivals, is another phase of the quest for power and identity in Africa.” Other scholars classify African Christianity as a new “coherent African religion” (Maluleke 2005, p. 124) or Africanized spiritualities from below (Meyer 1992, 1995). In short, the neo-Pentecostal movements have produced cultures of resistance to a discontinuity of continuities by mining primal imaginations, replicating identifiable and describable characters, “and regaining a pneumatic and charismatic religiosity that existed in traditional society” (Kalu 2008, p. 186). This idea of spiritual and cultural subversion to the discontinuity of continuities remains foundational in many neo-Pentecostal religious beliefs and practices in Africa.

This study demonstrates that ‘The Ngabwe Covenant’ sought to engage fundamental questions of African existence in such a way that a unified worldview of African spiritual reality appears to be achieved. This could be perceived from the late neo-Pentecostal Reverend and Traditional Leader Ignatius Mawala Kashoka’s (royal name, Chief Ngabwe the 6th (hereafter, Rev. TL Ngabwe)), search to resolve the dilemma of colonial legacies of uncertain identity, trapped between the influence of West and the pull of indigenous traditions (Bediako 1995, p. 50). ‘The Ngabwe Covenant’, deeply entrenched in creation sensibilities based on the African ways of being (religious experience),¹ was a royal declaration made by the Rev. TL Ngabwe, upon his inauguration on 8 April 2014, as the traditional leader of the Lamba-Lenje-and-Lima people of Central Province in Zambia. The study further demonstrates that Rev. TL Ngabwe who was ordained as neo-Pentecostal clergy before ascending the traditional throne, attempted, in his ways, to translate the neo-Pentecostal notion of pneumatology (the Holy Spirit) into the traditional spiritual idiom of *Umuweo*, (that which animates reality, the Being that makes all things beings). *Umuweo* is the pervasive Life-Spirit in all things and also the foundation of relational singularity called eco-relationality (Kaunda 2020). The pervasive Life-Spirit is the ‘vital bond’ described by Harvey Sindima (1991) as the vital glue of ‘bondedness and interconnectedness of all things’ that consistently interweaves and unifies all being (Mulago, gwa Cikala Musharhamina formally, Vincent; Kaunda 2020). Rev. TL Ngabwe sought to expand the meaning and find authentic home for his neo-Pentecostal notion of Spirit’s presence in the world which in Western informed classic Pentecostalism is limited to the Spirit’s indwelling to humans and not all creation. It appears that for him the solution to problem of anthropocentric pneumatology was to be found within in Lamba-Lenje-and-Lima’s idiom of eco-relationality. A critical dialogue between neo-Pentecostal pneumatology and Lamba-Lenje-and-Lima eco-relationality results in a hybrid construction of ‘the third pace’ which could be described as eco-pneumato-relational way of being, formed a new spiritual foundation, providing Ngabwe kingdom with the same, only more powerful spiritual resources and more accurate answers to existential questions than both Western informed classical Pentecostalism and indigenous religions have provided. In this way, it is argued that such missiological appropriative translations have the potential to expand and enrich both neo-Pentecostal pneumatological experiences and African religious heritages as they remain resilient through self-reproduction in modern Africa.

The data for this article emerges from a pilot study which intended to understand how Rev. TL Ngabwe embodied God’s mission and sought to translate his neo-Pentecostal pneumatological experience into the local context as a traditional leader. The personal interview that was conducted in 2016 and 2017 at the late Rev. TL Ngabwe’s residence in Lusaka, Zambia. A multidirectional approach was utilized which included a face-to-face interview, collection of written and essential documentary concerning Rev. TL Ngabwe’s lived neo-Pentecostal pneumatology. This study, therefore, engages

¹ Creation based religious experience does not mean that African people worship natural phenomena, but creation offers a locus for divine revelation and entrenched with parables for the mystery of existence. African people also perceive human existence as continuous with the cosmology order (Smith 1950; Mbiti 1969; Idowu 1962, 1969, 1973).

the life and thought of the late Rev. TL. Ngabwe to demonstrate how he envisioned to translate his neo-Pentecostal pneumatological experience into Lamba-Lenje-and-Lima eco-relationality. This means that engaging with his methods and how the community understood, received and expressed Rev. TL. Ngabwe's ideas would have enriched the study, however, such a complex exercise remains beyond the scope of a single study and awaits sustained treatment elsewhere. The imperativeness of interrogating Rev. TL. Ngabwe alone lies in the Lamba-Lenje-and-Lima's conception of the traditional leader as an embodiment of the ancestors, whose material being is symbolized by the reigning traditional leader. The traditional leader and the kingdom's spirituality are pervasively intertwined (Kaunda 2018a). They are united in a mysterious way; such that the source of spiritual power for the community is mystically linked to the body and personality of the traditional leader, which the traditional leader passes on to the people, their herds and fields, and the whole territory (Wilson 1971; Oberg 1940)

This study employed a third space translation as an adequate approach to interrogate the Ngabwe Covenant. It argues that the phenomenon of the declaration is empirical by nature because it is embedded within religious communities' ongoing participation in the divine activities in the world within a particular socio-cultural context (Kaunda 2017, 2018c). The covenant here refers to Rev. TL. Ngabwe's official declaration of royal intentions for the kingdom and the expectations of kingdom prosperity as a result of accountability to the content of that declaration and a sound relationship with God. Rev. TL. Ngabwe utilized a covenant motif as concrete way of framing and reorienting the community's way of knowing, interacting and acting in the world. Since such declarative covenants are aspects of lived pneumatologies (Kaunda 2018b), the empirical methodological approach was employed. Jan Jongeneel (1995, p. 182) stresses that empirical research is a methodological foundation for all lived spiritualities. In this approach, the study focuses on an individual narrative of Rev. TL. Ngabwe rather than the whole community (Osmer 2008). A qualitative content analysis was utilized as a technique to examine what 'the Ngabwe Covenant' is about and to identify and interpret key themes in the data from a third space translation theory. This interpretive technique was desirable because of its focus on preserving the deeper meaning of the collected data in relation to its cultural context. It is also significant as it interrogates data as a representation of human experiences and contextual ways of meaning-making (Hsieh and Shannon 2005; Krippendorff 2003; Neuendorf 2002). In this way, the article demonstrates that Rev. TL. Ngabwe's theology is not only grounded in pneumatology but also begins from and draws from African interactions with nature as always already indwelled by the Spirit. This view is described as an African theology of an eco-pneumato-relational way of being theology.

2. Traditional Leadership and Covenants in Africa

Covenant making is one of the key religious elements that form the foundations of African religious heritages. Declarations are also a critical dimension of neo-Pentecostal spiritualities (Burgess 2012; Marshall 2010, 2016; Kaunda 2018a, 2018b). In the traditional contexts, covenants are expressed typically in symbolic actions, prayers, declarations, dances and rituals (Mbiti 1975). Covenantal declarations are perceived as mystical means for accessing spiritual powers, communion with ancestors, divinities and God and for mending breaches in the eco-relationality (Magesa 1997). In many traditional societies, traditional leaders make royal declarative covenants concerning their kingdom's wellbeing. The traditional leaders are conceived as the embodiment of eco-relational wholeness of the kingdom and their words are often regarded as words of God mediated through ancestors. Hence, traditional leaders speak and are spoken to through the triangulations of high-ranking royal attendants. Because their physical health is mystically connected to that of the kingdom, it is believed that what they declare is not only earthly binding, but rather spiritually binding as well (Olupona 2014, p. 38).

Jacob Olupona (2014, p. 38) observes, "Kings are said to possess mystical, life-sustaining powers, with their own well-being intimately entwined with the well-being of their people, lands, and institutions." Olupona (2014, p. 38) adds, "For this reason, African kings are often the subject of extremely strict taboos that address how their person can be treated, predicated on the indexical

relationship between the body of the king and the body of the kingdom.” The welfare and prosperity of the body of the kingdom are intricately locked to the life-giving functioning of the body of the traditional leader. The traditional leader is not only a direct connection to the spiritual source of life and welfare—God and ancestors, but also the material embodiment of the kingdom’s spiritual life and any calamity and natural disasters are mostly linked to their failure to maintain the equilibrium of forces within their being as leaders (Alubafi and Kaunda 2019). The traditional leader’s body is the point of singularity of all vital forces in the community (God, ancestors, humans, yet-to-be-born and nonhuman creation). The traditional leader is microcosmic of cosmic spiritual reality. The cosmic spiritual reality subsists in the traditional leader. The people believe that the authority and the power of God and ancestors are embodied in the traditional leaders, who act as the unionization of spiritual and material reality and the wellbeing spring of the kingdom (Kaunda 2018b). In other words, the traditional leaders are not merely human beings; by their very person and being, are the *loci* of unionization of the living and dead and all non-human creation in a mystical sense. Thus, the state of the *traditional leader’s* health and that of the cosmos are interconnected. As the eminent African Christian scholar John Mbiti argues, the traditional leaders:

... are not simply political heads: they are the mystical and religious heads, the divine symbol of their people’s health and welfare. The individual as such may not have outstanding talents or abilities, but their office is the link between human rule and spiritual government. They are therefore divine or sacral rulers, the shadow or reflection of God’s rule in the universe. People regard them as God’s earthly viceroys. (Mbiti 1969, p. 178)

This implies that in the traditional spiritual system of Ngabwe societies, royal declarations or covenant-making play a crucial role in inaugurating and sustaining the kingdom (Awolalu 1976). Upon their inauguration, traditional leaders usually make a covenant in the form of an oath, talking either in front of ancestral or spiritual emblems. The covenant encapsulates the vision and direction that the entire kingdom would take during the reign of such a ruler (Idowu 1962, p. 149). The traditional leader’s relations with their ancestors (including God) and citizens are embedded within such a covenantal declaration. David Shenk delineates:

[A] covenant is a very serious and profound matter ... It affects the entire community and is witnessed and endorsed by the community, the living-dead, and often by God as well. The covenant is everlasting. To break a covenant is to invite a curse ... [T]he covenant attempts to affirm and recreate the [kingdom’s] original ontological unity with God and [non-human creation]. It is a quest for and a sign of the primal harmony of life and community. (Shenk 1983, pp. 72–74)

Before analyzing the data, it is important to describe the theoretical tools used to make sense of the data.

3. The Third Space Translation

Scholars have argued that translation is at the heart of authentic comprehension of Christian faith within a host culture. It aids both Christian faith and local culture to mutually permeate, revitalize, and transform each other (Bediako 1995). In his masterpiece, *Christianity in Africa*, Kwame Bediako (1995, p. 122) maintains that it is the translation which produces indigeneity, and an authentic indigenous mission of God is always translating, “reaching continually to the heart of the culture of its context and incarnating the translating Word.” He believes that sustained by the *Missio Dei*, the indigenous and translating church becomes a catalyst for fresher appropriations and further manifestations and incarnations of the faith (Bediako 1995, p. 122). In his eminent book, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?* Lamin Sanneh (2003, p. 22) had earlier on demonstrated that translation is an intrinsic process of world Christianity “as it takes form and shape in societies that previously were not Christian, societies that had no bureaucratic tradition with which to domesticate the gospel. In these societies,

Christianity was received and expressed through the customs, culture and traditions of the people affected.” Sanneh (1995, p. 715) stresses that through translation “Christianity has become a genuinely multicultural world religion, thriving profusely in the idioms of [many] languages and cultures, marked by a lively cross-cultural and interreligious sensibility.”

This process of translation facilitates both appropriation and transformation of religious ideas into new indigenously owned religious imaginations as part of local history. In other words, when foreign religious ideas and messages are translated into indigenous religious logic, they become appropriated and transformed into indigenous religious content, and direction, along with religious imaginations. In this way, translation is a site where elements derived from disparate religious origins corrode and intersect (Dai 2016), transforming them into what Homi Bhabha (1994, p. 7) classifies in *Locating Culture* as ‘the third space’ or “in-between space” to “locate the question of culture in the realm of the beyond.” Bhabha defines ‘the beyond’ as an intervening space—the ‘in-between’ that becomes a safe space of intervention. Bhabha explains:

These ‘in-between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. It is in the emergence of the interstices—the overlap and displacement of domains of difference—that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. (Bhabha 1994, pp. 1–2)

This interstitial passage, see Figure 1 below, between fixed identifications, opens up the possibility of religious hybridity that entertains difference, and “the production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space” (Bhabha 1994, p. 36). The third space is realized by hybridization—this is a process by which disparaging religious ideas are synthesized in the translation process as shown in Figure 1 below (Robinson 1997, p. 118). There has been criticism that denies any conceptual value in hybridity without empirical evidence.² This study argues that hybridity space is that perpetually contested space which emerges as a result of translation and appropriation. It is a critical dialogical space for constructive discussion of shifting identities and the postcolonial struggle for emerging religious imaginations.

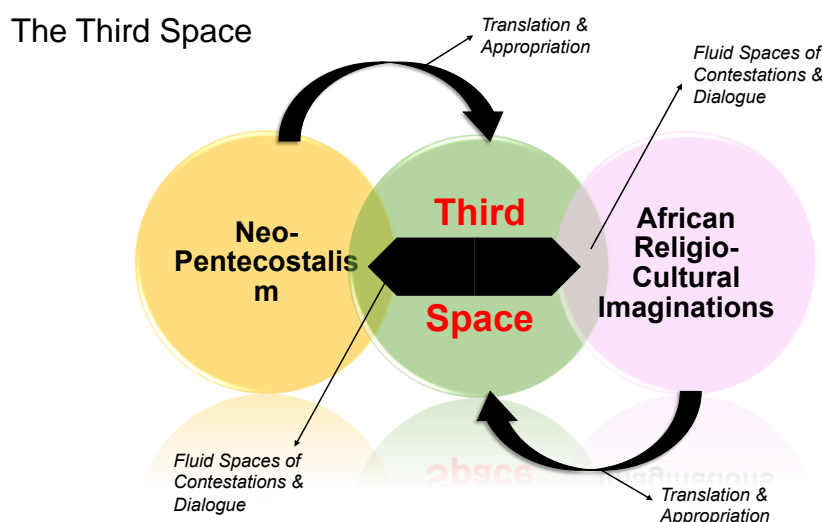


Figure 1. The figure shows the third space translation process.

² It is not the aim of this study to go into a detailed discussion of criticisms of hybridity theory. For a detailed discussion see, Amar Acheraïou (2011).

As the Figure 1 above shows, the third space is formed through translation and appropriation as a new religious imagination emerges through crossing between two separate religious ideas. This has nothing to do with diversity but hybridity—the hybrid religion is located in-between and not in the intersection of neo-Pentecostalism and African religio-cultural heritages. The arrows in Figure 1 show how the process brings together seemingly clashing and conflicting pieces of knowledge, practices, and beliefs through translation, appropriation and reading anew to be actively reimagined to speak afresh to the concerns of the present—remixing religious imaginations (Bhabha 1990; Soja 1996; Gutiérrez et al. 1997). This is in line with Sanneh's (Sanneh 2009/1989) assertion in his seminal text, *Translating the Message*, that African Christians (via translation) have appropriated Christian faith through their cultural idioms in their languages, and have tended to question, and subvert both Western and traditional assumptions of religious beliefs and practices. This is a mission by translation in which the recipient culture becomes the true and final locus of the proclamation so that the foreign religious ideas embrace in critical dialogue without the presumption of cultural rejection. Andrew Walls considers:

Translation leads the Church to appreciate diversity and to abandon the proselyte model that stresses conformity and uniformity. The translation model, on the other hand, builds cultural diversity into Christianity from the beginning and into perpetuity ... Conversion is a turning or a redirecting of what already exists in a culture, a context, or a person in a new direction toward Christ. This turning comes from the inside ... Translation results in an expanded process of understanding the Christian faith. Translation, by exploring the faith in new terms and new leads to an ever-expanding apprehension of 'the full stature of Christ'. (Walls 1996, pp. 3–75)

However, there is much more to translation in African neo-Pentecostalism. As demonstrated in Figure 1 above and discussed in the data below, Rev. TL. Ngabwe utilized translation through "paleonomic gesture" in the sense that he concurrently sought to subvert and preserve (Wariboko 2018, p. 13) the essence of both indigenous religio-cultural heritages and neo-Pentecostal faith as practiced in Western societies. Paleonomy, according to Jacques Derrida (1982, p. 71), is the "maintenance of an old name in order to launch a new concept." Nimi Wariboko (2018, p. 13) perceives this as a strategy for conquering a system from within. This third space translation approach "requires us to stand inside and outside a tradition at the same time, perpetuating the tradition while breaking with it, and breaking with the tradition while perpetuating it" (Richter 2007, p. 1). The sense of 'in and out', 'of preserving and subverting' dominant ideas in which the third space emerges, functions as volatile, fluid and dynamic spaces of critical solidarity and dialogical contestations and runs through all aspects of how Rev. TL. Ngabwe sought to translate neo-Pentecostal lived pneumatology into eco-relational imaginations of Lamba-Lenje-and-Lima people. The underlying argument remains, the process of translation allows both Christian faith and the host religio-cultural heritages to find a new voice, new meaning, new identity and new forms of perpetuation within the third space. In other words, this approach is fundamentally consistent with neo-Pentecostal and indigenous religio-cultural natality.³ In this context, the concept of natality is understood not only in the sense of Hannah Arendt's use as 'the capacity to start things anew' (Wariboko 2011) but also in the inherent ability to give birth to new religious imaginations and expressions. This process of translation results in "the rapture of paradigm" (Marshall 2009) of the third space religious imagination. There is a radical pluralism implied in the translation process "wherein all languages and cultures are, in principle, equal in expressing the word of God" (Sanneh 2009/1989, p. 208). However, the translation process has its problems and risks, as Sanneh highlights, the resultant diversity often threatens the unity of the worldwide Christian community, and it makes Christianity vulnerable to secular influences and the threat of

³ Natality is Hannah Arendt's (1958) most important contribution to contemporary philosophy. She perceived human action as the realization of freedom as grounded in *natality*.

polytheism (Sanneh 2009/1989, p. 95). The translation is also inevitably shaped by power dynamics and interests—politics of contestation over culture, meaning and historical memory (Zimmermann 2017, p. 51). The traditional leaders such as Rev. TL. Ngabwe, enjoy special advantages and power to impose their neo-Pentecostal ideas of life over the masses that might not be interested in such ideas. Thus, even in the context of a locally owned process of translation, the agency of the masses cannot be claimed to automatically translate in fairer and more accountable politics of translation.⁴ Notwithstanding, translation is an intrinsic attribute of Christianity. What follows is the content analysis of ‘the Ngabwe Covenant’ through third space translation theory.

4. An Eco-Relational Covenant: Data Presentation

Ignatius Mawala Kashoka (Rev. TL. Ngabwe) was born in 1948 and died in 2018. He initially trained to become a Roman Catholic priest at Ubushi seminary but decided to study at the University of Zambia for a Bachelor of Arts (BA). He also studied Postgraduate diploma in Industrial Education and Training and a Master of Science (MSc) in Management Science, both from Manchester University. He worked as a Manager for Administration in Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines and also worked as Senior Director in charge of administration and personnel at Bank of Zambia. In 1997, Rev. TL. Ngabwe was identified and recognized in *The International Who’s Who of Intellectuals* (International Biographical Centre 1997). In 2003 he was appointed as the Permanent Secretary of transport and communication and later became Permanent Secretary in charge of public service management in Zambia. He became a Pentecostal pastor before he was called back to become the traditional leader of Lima-Lamba-Lenje people of Central Province. At the time of the interview, Rev. TL. Ngabwe was a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) candidate with the University of Toronto.

Rev. TL. Ngabwe attempted to utilize neo-Pentecostal faith to reconceptualize the Lima-Lamba-Lenje people’s cosmologies. He argued “the Spirit of God spoke to me ... God told me I have to go back ... it is an assignment” (Chief 2016). Thus, upon his coronation on the 8 April 2014, he declared “Ngabwe the Christian Kingdom, married only to the Lord Jesus Christ and none other” (Kashoka 2014). He recalls:

I surrendered the kingdom to God and established an altar ... so there, I put the soil of the kingdom, the salt, the anointing, the water from the Kingdom and surrendered the kingdom to God, everything in the kingdom. Any riches, anything, and I asked God to bless the land and bless everyone in the land, that any person who comes to that altar and calls upon the name of God, will be blessed. Asking God to now take charge of the whole kingdom and look after me. (Chief 2016)

In the two pictures below (Figure 2) Rev.TL. Ngabwe, planting a new tree (left) as an altar and kneeling (right) to pray before dedicating the kingdom to God. The planting of a new tree was both a symbol of new beginning and restoration of primal eco-relational vitality in Ngabwe kingdom. After this initial prayer, Rev.TL. Ngabwe went around the kingdom speaking *to* and *with* the land, the forests and the water about the new direction of the kingdom. In the interview, he argued that these elements hear and speak and can also be redeemed by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the neo-Pentecostal spiritual warfare traditions, he was breaking curses and blessing the land in an eco-spiritual (soil, water and forest) ceremony and singing songs to affirm the living God as the owner of Ngabwe. He spoke, “You land I command you to release and produce riches and wealth in abundance for the people of Ngabwe and Zambia” (Chief 2016).

⁴ For more detailed interrogation of translation theory from African perspective see Tinyiko S. Maluleke (1996) and Emmanuel M. Katongole (2002).



(a) Rev. TL. Ngabwe speaking to the newly planted tree



(b) Rev. TL. Ngabwe praying on the knees after speaking to the newly planted tree

Figure 2. The two pictures show Rev. TL. Ngabwe engaging with the nonhuman creation.

Rev. TL. Ngabwe believed he did not depart from the common notion among traditional leaders to accredit their kingdoms and all creation to ancestors, rather, he is redirecting people's attention to the true owner of the land and indeed all creation in whom the ancestors only participate. He argued that in "the past people approached God through ancestors as media for dealing with spiritual matters according to their beliefs at that time. But now God has revealed himself through Jesus, and we have full access to God—the same God our ancestors tried to reveal to us" (Chief 2016). He maintained, through our ancestors, we came to know that the spiritual, physical, social, political and cultural are interconnected" (Chief 2016). The kingdom is the locus for the Life-Spirit of eco-relationality which governs the ethics of relational and material wholeness for everything within its boundaries. These eco-relationships are intertwined, meaning they flourish through mutual care, mutual love, and mutual hospitality. The land, spiritual dimensions, people and every creature are inherently one finding their full being in the Spirit's indwelling of all creation. For Rev. TL. Ngabwe, eco-relationality is a theatre of God's revelation, a site of the tabernacle with God. He was convinced, harming the land, was harming the kingdom. It was only through ignorance that people could turn against the land because "for us, the land is our identity. It is us! It is the Spirit, we're the Spirit" (Chief 2016). There is no authentic knowledge of God without other creation and there is no way a kingdom can prosper without the land and other creation. Salvation is a radical wakening of consciousness to the Spirit's inherent and uninterrupted presence in creation. Human sin cannot drive the Spirit out of creation because without the Spirit, creation cannot be. For Rev. TL. Ngabwe, human sin disenchant human's spiritual intelligence to perceive and sense the presence of the Spirit in creation. The result is anthropological idolatry thereby humanity begins to perceive itself as the special presence in creation.

Anthropocentric ideology is a way of looking at and of understanding reality and human beings as special beings in creation. Humanity has elevated itself as God's special creation, thereby institutionalizing human power and privilege over and at the expense of nonhuman creation. This subconscious exorcising of the Spirit's presence from creation is idolatry. It has resulted in humanity's self-absolutization into an 'idol' claiming divine status and legitimation. The idolization of human presence in creation giving rising to a pervasive failure to recognize the intrinsic nature of the Spirit in creation is at the very root of violence, oppression and exploitation of fellow beings—human, animals, the land and all other creation. For Rev. TL. Ngabwe, creation derives its essence, existence and being from the Life-Spirit (Umweto). Thus, to be saved, to regain Spirit sensibility, is to recognize

that creation is suspended *in*, embraced and indwelt “by the Spirit such that it is always already primed for the Spirit’s manifestations” (Smith 2010, p. 101). Thus, he prayed for the power of the Holy Spirit to reconcile the people to and with the land so that the kingdom can prosper.

He regarded his traditional leadership in continuity with his ancestors, which means that a new traditional leader is a collective representation of all traditional leaders who have ever sat on Ngabwe throne. He underlines you cannot become a king by yourself, you have to be accepted:

... starting from the founder king of the chieftdom, he has accepted you and are now succeeding everyone, all generations. So, it means, even in my prayers, I have to ask God to forgive me for all the sins committed by my forefathers. All covenants that they entered into, be broken, anything that they had done wrong, knowingly or unknowingly, be broken. And anything good that they did, I accept responsibility, so you take over everything. (Chief 2016)

Thus, in his covenantal declaration, Rev. TL. Ngabwe began by entreating the Lord to bless the land (Kashoka 2014). He recounted, “My forefathers told us that we are one with the land, but we ignorantly choose to be separated, we abandoned our true identity, our relationship with the land” (Kashoka 2014). He then confessed, “Almighty God, I ask for forgiveness for all the sins committed on this land, against this land, above it and beneath it, in the Name of Jesus Christ. I and my people, on our behalf and on behalf of our forefathers repent and turn away from ... transgressions and iniquities we have committed in this land and against this land and its people” (Kashoka 2014). He lamented, “forgive us for seeking to live as autonomous, forgetting our place in creation, abandoning our relationship with the land and living unjustly with one another and the land” (Kashoka 2014). He also rejected evil over the land:

I renounce you Satan and all your demons which have operated on this very land. And I command you in Jesus’s name to set my people free. Every evil power of marine and water spirits, and every other satanic power that has troubled the lives of the people of this land, that has held in bondage and troubled marriages of the people of this land, held in poverty, lack and want the children of this land, be destroyed today by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. I expel every spirit of poverty, lack, backwardness issued in the lives of the people of this land by marine and water spirits. Father, I apply the Blood of Jesus on this land today. Wash us and redeem us in Jesus’ name! (Kashoka 2014).

Rev. TL. Ngabwe also prayed for the presence of the Holy Spirit upon “the people, the land, rivers, resources and animals ... ” (Kashoka 2014). He believed the land and people entered into the covenant through the blood of Jesus Christ. He poured oil on the ground as a sign of the covenant between Ngabwe and God. He further declared that:

... no weapon formed against this land and every descendant on this soil and from this soil shall prosper. From this day forth the land shall bring forth all its hidden wealth to benefit every person in this land ... From this day forth, ... the people of this land shall prosper forever. No principality, no power has authority over this land, its soil, rivers, air, resources, people or the sun, moon and stars above this land. (Kashoka 2014)

Finally, he made a promise:

I will not multiply animals to myself nor cause the people to sin because of my greed in amassing wealth. I will not multiply wives to myself apart from the one wife you have given me. I will not multiply to myself silver and gold, or money at the expense or to the hurt of your people. (Kashoka 2014)

It is clear from the foregoing that the primal worldview and mindset continue to serve as a ready and fertile ground for the creation of the third space in African religious imaginations. Rev. TL.

Ngabwe endeavored to advance a new religious idea to function as a new frame of daily collective experiences of Ngabwe people. If there is any prosperity gospel that was to emerge from this new religious idea, its sole function was to promote the common good. This could be inferred from Rev. TL Ngabwe's prayer, which touches on issues of corruption and justice for the kingdom. He sought for indivisible prosperity attainable only through eco-relationality for the common good.

5. An African Theology of Eco-Pneumato-Relational Way of Being

The data presented shows that the third space translation theory has potential to occasion new (hybrid) religious imaginations. As demonstrated above, in Rev. TL. Ngabwe's religious view, this approach requires taking seriously African particular histories because God has always been at work in Africa even before the advent of missionary Christianity. This means that Rev. LT. Ngabwe attempted to construct an eco-pneumato-relational way of being as a new coherent African religious experience which is deeply conscious of the Spirit's immanent presence within all of creation. As Alistair E. McGrath (1994, p. 294) underlines, "the immanence of the Holy Spirit in all of the creation calls into question any human assumption of privilege within the natural world." As demonstrated from Rev. LT. Ngabwe's argument above, this theological view could potentially force human beings to reconsider their morality and relationship with other creatures.

Thus, Rev. TL. Ngabwe's theology of eco-pneumato-relational way of being deserves to be understood on its own terms without mediation of either African indigenous religions or Western informed neo-Pentecostal Christianity. It is a new religious imagination in "all consonant with [life] affirming and pragmatic orientation of traditional religious beliefs and practices" (Hackett 1998, p. 164) and neo-Pentecostal lived pneumatology, seeking to meet holistic spiritual and material needs of Ngabwe people and creation through the power of the Holy Spirit. An eco-pneumato-relational way of being which forms in third space as demonstrated in Figure 1, is not a religion in a structured or institutionalized sense, rather, a search for a collective Spirit primed expression of human relationship with other creation or a collective cultivation of everyday pneumatological sensibility entrenched within people's worldviews, values and mindsets. It is a distinctive new African religious frame of thinking informed by conscious appreciation that creation is permanently and wholly indwelt by the Spirit who permeates all life and everything in the cosmos. This eco-pneumato-relational way of being is "new in relation to precolonial African religion[s] and new in relation to colonial Christianity" (Maluleke 2005, p. 125). This suggests that eco-pneumato-relational way of being cannot be adequately understood from either historical Christian traditions and dogmas or conventional African indigenous religions.

As already shown in Figure 1 on the third space translation above, this thinking is largely a coherent way of being that borrows and lends, shapes and is shaped, critiques and is critiqued, negotiates and is negotiated, interprets and is interpreted by other traditions, especially Western Christianity and African religio-cultural heritages (Maluleke 2005). Besides, the fact that a traditional leader attempted to utilize a new religious frame of thinking as a religio-spiritual foundation for the kingdom, suggests that this type of eco-spirituality has potential to become an authentic frame of reference for the full expression of African religious ideas of life embedded in eco-relationality. It also shows that this type of eco-spirituality can potentially begin to determine, and shape behavior and values of neo-traditional institutions and kingdoms headed by neo-Pentecostal informed traditional leaders in Zambia. In other words, eco-pneumato-relational way of being presents new ways in which African religio-cultural heritages are likely to find alternative expressions in modern Zambian societies (Kaunda 2018a).

Thus, by Rev. TL. Ngabwe utilizing a covenant approach in underpinning his theology of an eco-pneumato-relational way of being as a foundation for the kingdom, he challenges the moral legitimacy of the interpretations that regard missions as exporting the already made classical Western Christian informed notion of indwelling of the Spirit to Africa. He weaves an alternative narrative of an ecological culture informed by the Holy Spirit embedded in the framework of third space.

For Rev. TL. Ngabwe, core ideas of traditional religious heritages and neo-Pentecostal faith confirm and authenticate the Ngabwe eco-pneumato-relational way of being. Therefore, third space translation makes the new way of being the true and final locus of expressing and living out neo-Pentecostalism and African religio-cultural heritages. Rev. TL. Ngabwe demonstrates that culturally disembodied conversion negates both the converted individual and the converting religion. This means authentic conversion demands mutual conversion by both neo-Pentecostalism and Ngabwe traditional way of being. The resultant way of being and imagination is both an inseparable part and a distinctive form of Lamba-Lenje-and-Lima cultures and Western informed neo-Pentecostalism. It is encapsulated and enveloped in the third space norms and values to inform and shape people's new way of being. By declaring Ngabwe as 'Christian kingdom', Rev. TL Ngabwe sought to introduce a third space, a new religious way of life to percolate up as a new eco-pneumato-relational way of knowing, interacting and making sense of daily realities, informing and orienting people's consciousness. For Rev. TL. Ngabwe, an authentic religious life is that which inter-relates, intermingles and interpenetrates with local cultures and yet transcends them. He saw the theology of eco-pneumato-relational way of being playing a vital role in the kingdom's prosperity most especially from the area of the core values and serving as the foundation for Ngabwe's search to promote the common good. It is a means of grounding the values of neo-Pentecostal theology of prosperity in the traditional values of Ngabwe religious heritages which the people are at home with.

6. Conclusions

This study utilized a translation approach through the third space imagination to argue that Rev. TL. Ngabwe attempted to construct a new eco-pneumato-relational way of being from a critical dialogue between neo-Pentecostal pneumatology and Africa's old spiritual systems. He sought to introduce a new religious paradigm embedded in collective expressions of the spirituality of creation which promotes healing and reconciliation of all things. The result is an African theology of an eco-pneumato-relational way of being, envisioned as an alternative spiritual foundation for the kingdom. In this way, Rev. TL. Ngabwe's theology overcomes the dichotomy between the Spirit and the material world through affirming the Spirit as already and always indwelling the natural reality. This theology rejects compartmentalizations and fabricated dichotomies between God and the natural world. It promotes a neo-Pentecostal experience of the Spirit as natural and the basis for sensitive and respectful interactions with the world. The Spirit is the normal or natural characteristic of the cosmos. In other words, it is the theology of the cosmos as unsurprisingly, naturally and intrinsically indwelled by the Spirit. Thus, Rev. TL. Ngabwe's theology of Spirit's indwelling of the universe is a critical contribution to neo-Pentecostal search for the humane relationship between human and nonhuman creation.

Funding: This research was funded by Yonsei University Future-leading Research Initiative (New Faculty Grant Program), Grant Number: 2020-22-0103.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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