

Making money or spreading the gospel? An analysis of the mission of gospel musicians in contemporary Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Statistics show that at present there are more gospel musicians in Zimbabwe than secular musicians. Consequently this paradigm shift has not gone unquestioned. People have asked what the mission of these gospel musicians is. Are they true ministers of the Word, or lovers of money clothed in ministerial garments? This article attempts to analyse the mission of gospel musicians. Since the gospel musicians we are discussing and those who criticise them are mainly Christians whose views are shaped by their understanding of the Bible, my analysis will be from a biblical (i.e. Christian) perspective. Data from informal interviews with some Zimbabwean gospel musicians and fans, as well as songs from CDs and video cassettes were used in the analysis. The article is divided into four sections: The first defines and gives a brief history of gospel music in Zimbabwe. It is followed by a presentation of the criticisms brought against gospel musicians. The third section is a critical review of the mission of the musicians: Are they making money or spreading the gospel, or they are making money and spreading the gospel? The fourth section attempts a theology of gospel music before a conclusion wraps up the article.

Introduction

Music has generally been used as a form of entertainment, as a way of comforting the sorrowful and of encouraging those undertaking particular tasks. In fact, in the traditional African context there was music for all occasions, be it hunting, harvesting, war or celebration. Actually, as G. Ewens says, 'To say that music is part of life in Africa is an understatement. In many African cultures it has a greater significance than human life'.¹ In traditional African societies, music was not played for commercial purposes. There were, however, a few who made a living out of music, especially those who played at the kings' courts as C. Dube argues, but generally music was played freely for entertainment and to serve other specific social needs.² The rise of urbanisation and the cash economy, however, saw the commercialisation of music via emerging 'professional' musicians, those C. Dube refers to as 'cultural workers'.³ These musicians played at bus stations and in townships where those who came to watch them gave them money as a sign of appreciation for their talent. In time musicians soon realised that they could make a

living from their music and so they started selling recorded music and charging those who came to hear them play.

This development also needs to be understood in the light of the incorporation of Africans into the world capitalist system. This is particularly so when one observes that those who ran the recording studios came from the Western world and were the ones who made more profit recording and selling music than the artists themselves. For secular music the idea of selling music did not raise eyebrows and it has therefore long been accepted. In the church, music has remained part of worship. Christian songs were used to convey the gospel and express devotion to the Lord. Post-independence Zimbabwe has, however, seen a paradigm shift in the history and place of gospel music in society. Not only has gospel music been limited to the church, it has been recorded, sold and played at public shows. Although the first years after independence were dominated by protest and political songs of self-congratulation there has, since then, been a marked rise in the number of gospel musicians since the attainment of independence.⁴

Gospel music in Zimbabwe: A brief history

Discussing the history of gospel music in Zimbabwe first gets entangled in the murky waters of definitions. What is gospel music? This is a very difficult question to answer, as is true of all attempts to give definitions. Is it the use of biblical verses in song? Is it defined by the tune/beat of the music or the message/lyrics? E. Chitando defines it as 'music that resonates with Christian themes, symbols and messages'.⁵ A good definition it is, but my problem with it in this article is that it would include all Christian music, going back to the beginning of Christian hymns like those identified in Christian literature (see Philippians 2: 5–10). But surely this is not what is popularly regarded as gospel music? Music sung and played in church, although it resonates with Christian themes, symbols and messages, has not been labeled 'gospel music'. For example, O.E. Axelsson, who discusses the history of music in the church in southern Africa, uses the phrase 'church music', not 'gospel music'.⁶

One would think that perhaps the use of musical instruments defines music as 'gospel', but again this is problematic because not all gospel musicians use instruments. There are many *a cappella* groups whose music has been well received as gospel music. Furthermore, some early mission churches made use of instruments like the harmonium in church music, and indeed many churches today use modern musical instruments in worship, but their music is not considered to be 'gospel music'.⁷ In defining the term in this article, I therefore want to consider the popular use of the term 'gospel music'. Thus I take any music with a gospel message, which is recorded or played mainly for commercial purposes, to be gospel music. I take 'gospel' from its Christian use as the good news about Jesus Christ. So any recorded music (especially meant for sale) with 'good news' about God/Jesus Christ is here treated as gospel music. It is the act of recording and commercialisation which I use to differentiate gospel music from any Christian (church) music. I would therefore agree with M. Palmberg who defines

gospel music as ‘the message of Christ, having left the space of the church and entered the arena of popular culture’.⁸ The beat accompanying the ‘good news’ can vary from rock, country, R&B, folk, classical, jazz or any other kind of music. This is because of Don Cusic’s correct observation that Christianity always seeks to be contemporary, thus adapting its structure to the music of the day to carry its message.⁹

On the basis of the above definition the history of gospel music in Zimbabwe can therefore be traced back to the time when musicians like Jordan Chataika and Mechanic Manyeruke began recording their songs in the early 1980s, taking church music out of the church into the arena of popular culture. They can be considered the founding fathers of gospel music in Zimbabwe, and were followed by Jonathan and Shuvai Wutawunashe of the Family Singers. It is the Family Singers who were amongst the earliest gospel musicians to ever record music videos.¹⁰ If we describe Jordan Chataika and Mechanic Manyeruke as the founding fathers of gospel music in Zimbabwe, we can only do justice by describing Shuvai Wutawunashe as the ‘founding mother’ of gospel music in Zimbabwe. These founders opened the door for gospel music. More and more men and women joined the gospel music bandwagon and from the 1990s the number of gospel musicians mushroomed – today the number can be estimated at around 300. Chitando attributes this to the rise in hardships, an increase in the number of deaths as a result of HIV and AIDS, and to general suffering caused by the economic decline in the country.¹¹ In fact, the rise in hardships has always been accompanied by a general rise in spirituality. J. Collins notes how disappointment in the material promises of independence and the economic collapse of Ghana in the 1970s also resulted in a general trend towards spirituality.¹² But how did people receive gospel music and gospel musicians in Zimbabwe?

Criticisms aimed at gospel musicians

The rise of gospel music was accompanied by its commercialisation. From the time the music began to be well received, artists recorded and sold it at a profit. Although generally this development was well received, some were quick to criticise it. They asked why musicians were selling the Word of God. After all, many of these early musicians just recorded popular church hymns. Critics also pointed to the fact that some among the gospel musicians were not themselves Christians. They could therefore not be regarded as serving God through song, but were in fact using the Word of God to make money. Critics used this to paint all gospel musicians as ‘lovers of money’, not ministers of the ‘kingdom’. They also questioned the fact that gospel music was being sold at the same price as secular music, and criticised gospel musicians for charging the same fee as secular musicians at their live shows.

Other sources of criticism of gospel musicians pertain to their lifestyles. As gospel musicians have come to be celebrities, their dress, their cars and the way they relate to the public have all come under scrutiny. As a result, whenever they have been involved in questionable contacts they have received their fair share of criticism. For example,

several rumours and criticisms of gospel musicians spread around the country when a leading female gospel musician bore a child out of wedlock in 2002. Many people questioned how musicians can be champions of morality when they themselves are immoral. In 2003 a number of Christians criticised Fungisai Zvakavapano's attire on the video *Makomborero* (Blessings). They accused her of being indecently dressed as a Christian and role model for the Christian youth. The issue of Christian women's dress code is a controversial one in Zimbabwe. There are several debates among Christians of many denominations as to whether Christian women can wear mini skirts, trousers and other tight-fitting clothes.¹³

Sometimes musicians – particularly female artists – have been criticised for showcasing their fashionable clothes, cars and other material possessions instead of preaching the Word of God. Susan Makore gives a good example of how Ivy Kombo has been accused of showcasing her fashionable wardrobe when she changed into many different outfits on the video of her song *Wawana Jesu* (You have found Jesus).¹⁴

Gospel musicians have also been criticised for just enriching themselves through the Word of God, because some of the musicians associate themselves with political parties, particularly the ruling party. Some gospel musicians have even held their shows at the ZANU PF headquarters in Harare. Their shows have been attended by the ruling party heavyweights – something which has led people to question the political independence of participating gospel musicians. Some gospel musicians performed at functions hosted by the ruling party, ostensibly for money. Recently, *The Financial Gazette* reported that the first lady, Grace Mugabe, had influenced the Harare City Council to allocate residential stands to two gospel musicians, Fungisai Zvakavapano-Mashavave and Mercy Mutsvene. Although the story was later dismissed by the chairperson of the commission running the City of Harare, Ms Sekesai Makwavarara, it is such stories which have led people to criticise gospel musicians and regard them as simply being lovers of money, not ministers of the Word.¹⁵ Following these criticisms, it has become imperative to discuss the question: Are gospel musicians there to make money or to spread the gospel?

Making money or spreading the gospel?

Gospel musicians' answer to the above question is: 'Making money *and* spreading the gospel.' Most gospel musicians claim they feel they have been called to serve God through music. Some even claim that they supernaturally compose songs, either in dreams or through some kind of visions. They then consider themselves to be in the gospel music industry not by choice, but through divine calling. Many, however, regard themselves to be just like pastors who see the ills happening in society and then compose songs in order to address them. They do not accept that they are there for the money, and not to serve God. They counter that many of them put more money into recording their songs, than they get out.

That gospel musicians are primarily there to spread the gospel is also argued for on the basis that most gospel musicians in Zimbabwe belong to churches, and it is those churches which they used as springboards to start their musical careers. Mechanic Manyeruke is a member of the Salvation Army, the Family Singers started as a church choir in the Family of God Church, Charles and Olivia Charamba belong to the Apostolic Faith Mission. The following table shows the church affiliation of leading gospel musicians in Zimbabwe:

NAME OF ARTIST/GROUP	CHURCH AFFILIATION
Glen View SDA	Seventh Day Adventist
Spiwe Chimuti	Apostolic Faith Mission
Carol Chivengwa-Mujokoro	Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa
Ivy Kombo	Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa
Ruth Mapfumo	Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa
Fungisa Zvakavapano-Mashavave	Glad Tidings
Shingisai Suluma	Glad Tidings
Elias Musakwa	Glad Tidings
Pastor Gwanzura	Hear the Word Ministries
Bonnie Deuschle	Hear the Word Ministries
Kudzai Sevenzo	Hear the Word Ministries

A number of gospel music groups also started as singers in evangelistic teams of specific churches. Ivy Kombo, Carol Chivengwa-Mujokoro and Pastor Haisa were singers in the Egea Gospel Train, a group that accompanied Zimbabwe Assemblies of God evangelists like Paul Saungweme on preaching tours and provided the music ministry. The same is also true of Mechanic Manyeruke, who used to sing in the Salvation Army Church before he started recording for commercial purposes. Wabvuvi groups and the Glen View Seventh Day Adventists have remained wholly church groups.

The view that Zimbabwean gospel musicians are there simply to line their pockets is also rejected because a number of those musicians are professionals in their own right. Examples are Shingisai Suluma, who is a teacher, and Carol Chivengwa, who works for a commercial bank.¹⁶ Elias Musakwa is an engineer who runs his recording studios, Ngaavongwe Records. Charles Charamba is a full-time minister in the Apostolic Faith Mission Church. Most of the singers in the various Wabvuvi groups and the Glen View Seventh Day Adventist Church are professionals. In fact, most of the musicians we interviewed stated that they have other sources of income which they often use to fund the recording of their music.

Zimbabwean gospel musicians also deny that they are primarily in the profession to make money. Many argue that they were singers in church before starting to record music for sale. They regard recording as a way of evangelising. As one budding gospel

musician said: 'Through song I can preach to thousands if not millions of people at the same time. Even Paul would have used this method to avoid all the long journeys he travelled, if he had lived during the time of electronic recording of songs.'¹⁷ The musicians also point out the cost of recording as evidence that they are primarily there to serve the Lord. Recording costs a fortune and for those beginning their musical careers, the returns are usually far below the cost of production. One musician confessed that with her first recording she did not have any sales, but was happy that her songs were being played on radio and so her objective of spreading the Word of God was achieved. That gospel musicians consider themselves, first and foremost, to be missionaries can also be seen in the names they assume. As E. Chitando writes: 'When it is remembered that names across cultures are not mundane labels, the theological value of the nomenclature in gospel music is recognized. The names of the supporting groups clearly indicate a deliberate attempt to preach and convey Christian themes.'¹⁸ Chitando gives examples of names like 'Fishers of Men', 'Gospel Trumpet', 'Messengers of Truth', 'Gospel Train' and 'The Puritans'. Other examples are *Vabati vaJehovah* (Jehovah's Workers), *Vabati veVhangeri* (Preachers of the Gospel), 'The Comforters' and many more evangelist names.

Theologising on making money and spreading the gospel

Is making money while spreading the gospel theologically wrong? Critics of gospel musicians tend to think that it is wrong to use the Word of God to make money. This appears to be a wrong theology. Let us examine the following passage by Paul, as we theologise on making money while spreading the gospel:

Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? Do I say this on human authority? Does not the law say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the ploughman should plough in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of a share in the crop. If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits? Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share the sacrificial offerings? In the same way the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel (1 Corinthians 9: 7–12, 13–15).

In the above passage Paul is responding to the problem of eating meat offered to idols. Thanks to the problem, through Paul's response to it we have received an elaborate account of his understanding of the material rights of those who labour in the field of God. As was common with him, through a series of rhetorical questions Paul used examples from various fields to demonstrate that one must earn a living from one's

occupation and service. A soldier on service has to be maintained, a vinedresser (a farmer) is to be nourished by the field on which he works and a shepherd is supported by the sheep he/she cares for. Paul also drew an example from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy (25: 4): 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out grain.' In those days, grain would be broken away from the husk by repeatedly having oxen walk across it. It was only natural that as the oxen worked on this task they would take the opportunity to satisfy their hunger by taking mouthfuls of the material they were working on.¹⁹ Paul also used the teachings of Jesus (possibly those in Luke 10: 7) to justify payment for preaching the gospel. Thus Paul's overall argument in the passage is that there is nothing wrong for the spiritual work of those who minister to be repaid with the material support of those they minister to. Therefore, if gospel musicians are ministering to the spiritual needs of the people, according to Paul they have a right to material support from those being ministered to.

Getting material benefit from spiritual work is not given theological support by Paul only. In the Old Testament priests and Levites also earned their living from the spiritual work they did in the temple. Even Jesus and his disciples survived on the gifts of those they ministered to. They were welcomed in homes (Matthew 8: 14; Luke 10: 38ff; Mark 14: 3ff) and were given material support (Luke 8: 2ff).²⁰ Thus the custom of deriving material benefit from spiritual work is reasonable, grounded in both scripture and common sense, that says 'all workmen have a right to some reward'.²¹ Probably the question then is whether or not Zimbabwean gospel musicians are ministering to the spiritual needs of the people.

That Zimbabwean gospel musicians are providing a spiritual service to the people, cannot be overemphasised. The popularity of gospel music throughout the country is proof of the role the music plays in society. Musical charts from different record labels are topped by gospel music and it dominates music request shows on radio and television – and indeed even institutions like the National Arts Merit Awards (NAMA) and Zimbabwe Music Awards (ZIMA), which have created categories for gospel music. Gospel musicians like Charles Charamba, Shingisai Suluma and Fungisai Zvakavapano have won a number of such awards at national competitions. This proves that gospel music has carved a deep niche in the Zimbabwean music industry.

Not only gospel charts and their general popularity show the great role which gospel musicians play in society. Rather, the message of their songs proves this too. In fact, a brief analysis of selected themes addressed by gospel musicians shows that they provide a spiritual service to society, apart from them making money from gospel music. Although the incorporation of danceable beats like *soukous* and *museve* into gospel music has also attracted many to the music, it is mainly the lyrics of the songs that tend to attract the majority of gospel music fans.²² Gospel musicians' mission involves preaching, advocacy, counselling, giving hope and consoling. They also address many other themes but due to space limitations I am only going to discuss preaching, advocacy, counselling and giving hope.

Preaching

Most gospel musicians preach through their songs. In churches that do not ordain women, female gospel musicians have found an alternative pulpit in gospel music.²³ This explains why gospel music is dominated by women, not only in Zimbabwe but also in Ghana and other African countries.²⁴ Gospel musicians indeed see themselves as preachers. Most of them go round the country spreading the good news of Jesus through song and dance. Recently Charles and Olivia Charamba, together with their backing group the Fishers of Men, went on a countrywide tour preaching to the people through song. Many gospel musicians have even taken their gospel music to other countries. One example is that of Prince Mafukidze, who has set up base in South Africa. Thus the musicians are indeed missionaries in their own right. As Don Cusic says:

This missionary (musician missionary) is a musician who travels around the world spreading the gospel through music via concerts and performances. It is a new twist to the old concept of missions and one whose birth in the late 1970s was especially apropos to the Christian tradition of missions and the 1980s concept of global interdependence. It is a belief rooted in the idea that the power of the gospel combined with the power of music can transcend culture, language, politics, economics and numerous other barriers and obstacles to deliver the Christian message to the rest of the world.²⁵

That Zimbabwean gospel musicians are preachers is demonstrated by the message in their songs. The song 'Inzwa inzwi raShe' (Hear the voice of the Lord) by IPCC Voice of Mbare is a good example of a preaching song. The song goes:

<i>Inzwawo inzwi raShe</i>	Hear the voice of the Lord
<i>Rinodana kwauri</i>	Is calling you
<i>Kuti uyawo kwandiri</i>	Saying come to me
<i>Kuti iwe ugoponeswa</i>	For you to be saved

The song, based on Matthew 11: 28, calls sinners to repentance. The singers go on to inform the listeners that Jesus is ready to receive them, no matter how sinful they are. This is surely the message of preachers and in the song it comes out clearly that one of the functions of gospel music is to preach the good news of the salvation brought by Jesus, and to call on listeners to repent. In the manner of television and radio preachers, some gospel musicians even call on their listeners to repeat a prayer of repentance after them, and then encourage them to start attending their nearest church. This is found, for example, in the song 'Chechi Yangu' (My church) by Mrs Makawa. Another preaching song is 'Mufudzi Wakanaka' (The Good Shepherd) by Charles Charamba and the Fishers of Men. The song goes:

<i>Mwari arikukudaidza</i>	God is calling you
<i>Kupfurikidza nenhepfenyuro</i>	Through the media
<i>Mapepanhau aunoverenga</i>	The newspapers you read
<i>Mwari ari kutaura newe</i>	God is talking to you
<i>Nenziyo dzaunoterera</i>	Through the songs you listen to
<i>Ndapota usamuramba</i>	Please do not reject him
<i>Jesu ari kukudana</i>	Jesus is calling you

In this song, Charles Charamba reminds followers of gospel music that God is calling them even through the media, be it print or electronic. Gospel music is therefore a medium through which listeners can hear God's voice. For Charamba, the message of God in the songs is a call for repentance, a call to accept the salvation which is in Jesus. He therefore pleads with listeners, just in the manner of preachers, not to reject God but to accept him and be saved.

Advocacy

Gospel musicians in Zimbabwe play a very important advocacy role. They plead for the weak and marginalised in society and like Old Testament Israelite prophets, they are the voice of the voiceless. They even educate through song: Recently, three gospel musicians (Victor Kunonga, Pastor G and Fungisai Zvakavapano-Mashavave) were appointed Goodwill Ambassadors in the Zimbabwean chapter of the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP).²⁶ As the songs below show, gospel musicians advocate for women, the girl child, children in general, the ill (particularly those affected by HIV and AIDS) and many other marginalised groups. They use Christian ethics in their advocacy and usually draw their lyrics from specific biblical passages. In the song 'Mwanasikana munhu' (A girl child is a person), Fungisai Zvakavapano-Mashavave advocates for the girl child. Some of the lyrics of the song are as follows:

<i>Mandishora, manditarisira pasi</i>	You have despised, looked down upon me
<i>Mukati mwanasikana haagone</i>	Saying a girl cannot do it
<i>Mwanasikana munhu</i>	A girl child is a person
<i>Nzira ikauya, urwere hukauya</i>	In hunger, in sickness
<i>Tinochemera amai</i>	We look up to the mother
<i>Ipai vanasikana mikana</i>	Give the girl children a chance
<i>Nyika ibudirire</i>	For the world to develop

In the song, Fungisai attacks the patriarchal system prevalent in most societies in Africa and the rest of the world. She criticises the idea of sending only the boy child to school, while the girl child has to stay home in preparation for marriage. She therefore calls upon the world to empower the girl child for the betterment of society at large. To give the song its gospel character she then refers to the significant roles played by biblical matriarchs like Mary and Martha in the New Testament, and Miriam and Deborah in the Old Testament. Society, she says, should therefore give girl children room to unleash their potential.

In the song 'Burukai Mwari Baba' (Come down, Father God), Pastor Haisa advocates for the orphans, those infected by HIV and AIDS, and the blind. He sings:

<i>Idzo nherera dzichautura kumaniko?</i>	To whom shall the orphans present their problems?
<i>Zvisingarapike vachazvitura kumaniko?</i>	To whom shall the incurable be presented?
<i>Iwo mapofu achautaura kumaniko?</i>	To whom shall the blind present their problems?
<i>Iwo mutoro, mutoro unorema</i>	This heavy burden ...

Haisa seems to be challenging society to create an environment that allows orphans, those affected by HIV and AIDS, the ill, the blind and indeed all the marginalised to be catered for. He is telling society that they have not created this environment and in the song he therefore calls on God to come and help those on the fringes of society. Thus apart from praying for the marginalised the musician challenges society to accommodate and not to stigmatise them.

Counselling and consolation

As pointed out above, even though the beat accompanying gospel music is important, many gospel music fans are interested in the message of the songs. Thus from its inception, gospel music has always been associated with counselling and consolation, as it was originally listened to by those in mourning. Modern gospel musicians are indeed counsellors in their own right, as they comfort and encourage the broken-hearted, the HIV positive and the bereaved. The following songs are examples of such counselling and consoling songs. Let us first look at the lyrics of the song 'Rangariro' (Rememberance) by Noel Zembe:

<i>Hama zvayanyarara</i>	Our beloved is dead
<i>Hazvinei atungamira</i>	He has gone before us
<i>Kana arara ari munaKristu</i>	If he has died in Christ
<i>Omirira zvake rumuko</i>	He waits for the resurrection
<i>Zvemufi zvapfuura</i>	It is all over for the dead
<i>Matambudziko epasi apfuura</i>	All tribulations of this world are over
<i>Zvepasi zvasarira isu</i>	They are left for us
<i>Saka ngatichemei netariro</i>	So let us mourn with hope

The song is meant to counsel and console the bereaved. With people experiencing death in their families every day because of HIV/AIDS, the musician reminds people that the departed have gone before us. In fact, they are not dead but are only asleep, awaiting the resurrection. The singer draws the lyrics from Paul's doctrine of the resurrection

in 1 Thessalonians 4: 13ff. He tells the listeners that instead of mourning the dead, the occasion of death should be taken as an opportunity for introspection. It is time for one to realise that this world is full of tribulations, and if one were to compare oneself with the dead, the dead are in a better state for they have left behind the tribulations of this world. Such surely is a message that consoles the bereaved.

Those facing the challenges of life are also counselled and encouraged to endure. The Jesus figure is often used to encourage people to face the tribulations of life. Such counselling is found in songs like 'Tsongirira' (Persevere/Soldier on) by Carol Chivengwa-Mujokoro:

<i>Hama yangu</i>	My friend
<i>Tsongirira parwendo urwu</i>	Soldier on in this journey
<i>Tsongirira uchinamata</i>	Soldier on through prayer
<i>Rwendo runorema, runeminzwa</i>	The journey is a difficult one, full of thorns
<i>Jesu wakakunda nekunamata</i>	Jesus completed it through prayer
<i>Wainyengeretera, mangwancni, masikati, nemanheru</i>	He prayed in the morning, afternoon and evening
<i>Tsongirira kusvika wakunda</i>	Soldier on to the end

The musician makes it clear that the journey of life is not an easy one; it is full of thorns and thistles. To complete it one has to persevere, following in the footsteps of Jesus.

Giving hope

For more than eight years now the Zimbabwean economy has been in free-fall. High rates of inflation, shortages of basic commodities like water, corn meal, electricity, fuel and so on have driven many out of the country. Unemployment levels are at unprecedented highs, and the few who are employed cannot make ends meet as their salaries are each day eroded by high rates of inflation. These difficulties have left many without an explanation, therefore they turn to God for hope. Indeed, if it were not for the hope that tomorrow will be better, many of us would throw in the towel and commit suicide. We face challenges every day, but always hope that tomorrow will bring something better. Gospel musicians in Zimbabwe have played a great role in giving such hope and encouraging people to look forward to tomorrow. In fact, E. Chitando is right to associate the rise in popularity of gospel music with the rise in social and economic hardships in Zimbabwe.²⁷ Gospel music gives the suffering solace, as it reminds them that this earth is not theirs and promises them a better world above. There are songs of 'healing and regeneration' as T. Mapuranga and E. Chitando argue.²⁸ The following songs show the role gospel musicians play as givers of hope. Kudzai Sevenzo's 'Qinisela' (Hold on) is one song that inculcates hope in one who is in despair. Some of the lyrics are:

When your world has run dry
No more tears left to cry
And the roads that you travel, took you down
In your dreams you can hear someone saying
Qinisela, hold on, I am coming to help you.

Although she is not clear about the problems that make one's world run dry or one to run out of tears, there is no doubt that the musician has in mind the daily shortages and troubles that people in Zimbabwe face. This is particularly so when we seriously consider that gospel musicians in Zimbabwe are very sensitive to the contextual needs and challenges of their fans. Therefore Kudzai Sevenzo in this song reminds her listeners that despite the challenges they should know there is someone there to help them. They therefore need to continue 'holding on'. Although she does not mention the person by name, there is no doubt that she is referring to Jesus/God. Fungisai Zvakavapano is, however, explicit that Jesus is coming to help people. In the song 'Jesu ouya' (Jesus is coming) she sings:

<i>Zvinhu zviipe zvinake</i>	Whether things go wrong or well
<i>Hapana anoziva ramangwana</i>	No one knows what tomorrow has in store
<i>Chandinotenda nenyasha dzake</i>	What I believe, through his grace
<i>Gore rikapera kunouya rimwe</i>	When the year ends, another one comes
<i>Rino richongopera kunouya rimwe</i>	When this year ends, another is coming
<i>Nokutenda kunouya rimwe</i>	With faith, another is coming

Fungisai's songs are explicit in expressing what challenges people face, and then giving them hope. This is true of even her earlier songs like 'Kurarama inyasha' (Living by grace) where she laments how expensive commodities like bread have become, admitting that indeed the future looks bleak except if one believes in God. In the song above she decries the fact that things are so bad that no one knows what tomorrow will bring. Indeed, with the state of the economy in Zimbabwe today, no one can predict what is in store. Each day people wake up to face rising commodity prices, to find their taps have run dry, or to find that the electricity has been switched off for load-shedding.²⁹ Fungisai then declares that there is only one thing people can be sure of, that is, through the grace of God, when the year ends another one is coming. It is only the passing of years that can give people the hope that Jesus is on his way to rescue them.

Apart from addressing the above socioeconomic issues in their songs, a number of Zimbabwean gospel musicians are also involved in charity work. A good example is that of Charles Charamba and Fishers of Men, who have been involved in fundraising for Manhenga Children's Home for a number of years now. Each year they hold a fundraising show where the proceeds are given to this charity. Sometimes gospel musicians also hold free shows for people to come and listen to the word of God as they enjoy gospel music. The Family Singers of the Family of God Church are well known for arranging such free shows, where leading gospel musicians are invited to perform.

Therefore by considering the Pauline passage we have analysed above, and acknowledging the spiritual work that gospel musicians do in Zimbabwe, it is theologically not wrong for gospel musicians to ‘make money as they spread the gospel’. The two are not mutually exclusive or incompatible.

Conclusion

This article analysed the role of gospel musicians in contemporary Zimbabwe. The main objective was to investigate their mission in light of the criticism levelled against them, namely that gospel musicians only use the word of God to enrich themselves, without due regard for Christianity. Reasons for such criticisms have been outlined, followed by a discussion of a theology of benefiting materially from spiritual work. It was argued that there is biblical justification for this theology and considering the spiritual work that gospel musicians are providing, there is also a common-sense basis for them to benefit materially. My conclusion therefore is that gospel musicians have an important mission in contemporary Zimbabwe. Their mission is no different from that of teachers, doctors, nurses, pastors and all other professionals who make society function. There is, however, a misconception that society seems to have. Many people think that anyone involved in serving the Lord must not be paid for that service. No wonder, for long pastors have been poorly paid – if at all. The same applies to faith healers. Whereas people are prepared to pay large sums of money to medical doctors, they believe that faith healers (or ‘prophets’ as they are popularly known) must not be paid for their services. But surely these people (faith healers, pastors and indeed gospel musicians) shop from the same stores we all shop from, they like the same cars and houses we all dream of. They should therefore also receive a fair share of the time, services and resources they provide. It is my conclusion then that gospel musicians should make money as they spread the gospel.

Endnotes

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4. For a history of protest songs and the place of songs in the political history of Zimbabwe, see G.P. Kahari, The History of the protest song: A preliminary study, in *Zambezia* 9, 2 (1981):79–101 and A.J.C. Pongweni. 1982. *Songs that won the liberation war*. Harare: Coliege Press.
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6. O.E. Axelsson. 1974. Historical notes on neo-African church music. In: *Zambezia* 3: 89–102.
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- 10 *Tarira Nguva* (Watch the time) by the Family Singers is considered to be the earliest gospel music video recorded in Zimbabwe.
- 11 E. Chitando, 'Female Missionaries?'
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- 15 *The Herald*, 9 September 2006.
- 16 E. Chitando, Female Missionaries?'
- 17 M. Zanga, Interview, Harare, 31 September 2006.
- 18 E. Chitando. 2000. 'Songs of Praise: Gospel music in an African context.' In *Exchange* 29,4: 296–310.
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- 22 For gospel music with a *soukous* beat one can listen to songs like 'Jesu Idombo' (Jesus is the rock) by Pastor Chakanetsa Bandimba, and for a *museve* beat one can listen to Diva Mafunga's gospel music.
- 23 L. Togarasei. 2004. The Implications of the dominance of women in the gospel music industry for the ordination of women. In *Scriptura: International journal of Bible, religion and theology in southern Africa* 86 (2): 234–240.
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- 27 E. Chitando, Songs of Praise.
- 28 T. Mapuranga and E. Chitando. 2006. Songs of healing and regeneration: Pentecostal gospel music in Zimbabwe. In *Religion and Theology* 13 (1): 72–89.
- 29 Power cuts are a common feature in the daily troubles of people in Zimbabwe. Recently *The Herald* (Tuesday 10 October 2006) reported that ZESA (the country's power utility) had to introduce twelve-hour power rationing schemes every day as generators continue to break down and cannot be repaired because of a shortage of foreign currency to buy spare parts.