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Religious Conflict among Pentecostal Churches in Uganda: A Struggle for Power and Supremacy

Alexander Paul Isiko

Kyambogo University, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Department of Religious Studies & Philosophy. Uganda
alexisiko@yahoo.com

Abstract. Extensive research has been done on Pentecostal churches over the past years. Several studies have focused on their history and robust growth, some on their economic and developmental ethos, while others have focused on their theological stances, and growing political influence in society. Amidst these kinds of studies, is the need to address the overt challenge posed by religious conflict among Pentecostal churches. Whereas there is growing scholarly interest in religious conflict among Christian churches, this has been narrowed to intra-church conflict. However, studies on inter-church conflict, between separate Pentecostal churches, that are independent of each other, are rare. Yet inter-church feuds and conflicts among Pentecostal churches in Uganda occupy a significant part of public space and discourses. Through analysis of both print and electronic media reports and engagement with twenty key informant interviewees, this article sought to establish and analyse the nature, manifestations and root causes of inter-church conflict between Pentecostal churches in Uganda. The study established that Pentecostal pastors are not only the major protagonists of inter-church conflicts but also act as collective agents for the churches in conflict. The study further established that religious conflicts among Pentecostal churches are caused by different ideological inclinations, theological differences notwithstanding, but mainly by the desire to dominate the religious market and by power struggle dynamics within the religious leadership. This tension has a particular impact on society given pastors' visibility, access to media and their public action in the Ugandan context.

Keywords. Pentecostalism, Born Again church, Religious conflict, Inter-church, Power, Spiral, Uganda

1. Introduction

Several studies have been undertaken on religious conflict over the years (Gathuki, 2015; Mayer, 2013; Obayashi, 1976; Woolf & Hulsizer, 2002). Most of these studies focused on religion either as a protagonist or an arbiter in civil conflicts (Roy 2006; Salawu, 2010; Cunningham, 1996). In some other studies like Uttuh (2013) and International Crisis Group (2015), engagement has been on conflict between competing religious traditions, either as inter-religious conflicts or intra-religious conflicts respectively, often leading to emergence of religious factions within the same religious tradition. Further scholarly interest in intra-church conflict, occasioning splits is evident (Baroin, 1996). Much more attention has been devoted on intra-church conflicts than inter-church conflicts among Pentecostal churches (Kweku, 2013; Roy 2006; Gathuki, 2015; Chang, 2007; Thang, 2015). Numerous studies on intra-church

conflict is explained by its historical existence in the church since early Christian times, usually permeating church politics through the centuries and contributing to the sprouting of churches (Wall & Callister, 1995; Oro & Seman, 2000). Intra-church conflicts have been more frequent than inter-church conflicts because members and leaders of one church have more common interests and are therefore more prone to conflicts than members and leaders of different churches in spite of belonging to one Christian denomination. Similarly, members and leaders of the same church interact more closely and frequently, with more chances of colliding than those of different churches though of same denomination, who rarely interact and if interactions happen are usually more distant than those among members of one church (Odhiambo, 2014). However, presumptions about more frequency of intra-church conflicts than inter-church conflicts do not resonate with incidences of conflict amongst Pentecostal churches in Uganda. Inter-church conflicts are a major feature that defines contemporary Pentecostal churches, commonly referred to as Born Again churches in Uganda. Therefore, whereas past studies have been preoccupied with inter-religious, inter-denominational as well as intra-church conflicts leading to division, this article focuses on inter-church conflict, where independent and separate Born Again churches engage in conflict with each other. In particular, this work will address the questions: what is the nature and manifestation of inter-church conflict among Born Again churches in Uganda? What are the contested domains between these churches? To earnestly answer these questions, this article is presented into the following sections; a contextual analysis of Born Again churches and religious conflict, theoretical and methodological frameworks, historical perspective of religious conflict, nature and manifestation of conflict between Born Again churches, contested domains between Born Again churches and conclusion.

2. Born Again Churches and Religious Conflict: Contextual Analysis

In religious studies, Pentecostals, Evangelicals and Charismatic Christians are described to belong to what is called the 'Born Again tradition'. There however, appears to be an overlap and a blurred relationship between them (Sperber & Hern, 2018). Evangelical Christians are Born Again protestants who emphasise personal relationship with Jesus and the Holy spirit but believe that gifts of the holy spirit were only experienced in biblical times. Evangelicals frown upon speaking in tongues, open miracle performance and prophecy; as impossibilities in this era and that those who claim to experience them are charlatans. Examples of evangelical Born Again churches are Lutheran church, Methodist church, and Baptist church. On the other hand, Charismatic Christians are members of mainstream Roman Catholic and Protestant Anglican churches, who embrace beliefs and practices associated with Pentecostalism, but do so from within these older churches (Sperber & Hern, 2018; Mashau, 2013). Charismatic Christians form sub groups within these mainstream churches, but continue to be bound by their rules and institutional norms (Robbins, 2004). Examples of Charismatic Born Again Christians in Uganda include the Re-awakened ones (*Bazukufu*) and Uganda Catholic Charismatic Renewal (UCCR), in Anglican church of Uganda and Roman Catholic church respectively. Charismatic groups also include the numerous 'fellowship groups' in the Anglican church of Uganda, that meet on the sidelines of mainstream church services.

Whereas, Pentecostal Christians endorse and promote personal relationship with God, they claim to actively receive gifts of the holy spirit, including prophecy, faith healing and speaking in tongues (Bremner, 2013). Pentecostal churches are described to be either classical or neo in nature. In Uganda, classical Pentecostal churches refer to the older type of Pentecostal churches, emerging from the United States and are transnational in character. These were imported in Uganda before 1980. Examples of classical Pentecostal churches in Uganda include; Deliverance church, Elim church, Assemblies of God, Redeemed church, and Full

Gospel Church (Isiko, 2019a). On the other hand, neo-Pentecostal churches are the new type of Pentecostal churches, established since the 1980s, and were locally initiated by Africans themselves. These do not have an institutional framework as it is with classical Pentecostal churches. Neo-Pentecostal churches survive on charismatic leaders, who are their initiators, and usually take on various titles, including the generic one of 'Pastor'. Generally, neo-Pentecostal churches can be described as contemporary Pentecostal churches in Africa. Their discourse focuses on material prosperity and miracles, and they borrow, theologically and culturally from American Pentecostalism (International Crisis Group, 2015). The moment of spiritual experience with Jesus and the Holy spirit at conversion is often central to the construction of identity of believers; which is a radical change of identity, hence the reference of 'Born Again' Christian (Bremner, 2013).

In Uganda's context, it is difficult to demarcate with precision the boundary characteristics of what is named Born Again churches. The denominational terms used in global scholarship do not necessarily hold the same definitions in the understanding of Ugandans (Bremner, 2013). Yet there is little standardization in social scientific usages of these terms due to their broadness (Robbins, 2004). To an ordinary Ugandan Christian and non-Christian alike, there is no distinction between Pentecostals, Evangelicals and Charismatics; all are referred to as 'Born Again' Christians, with a popular local word-*Balokole*, but literally translated as 'saved ones'. This has been influenced by Uganda's initial encounter with this brand of Christianity in the early 1940s, when the local word *Balokole* was used in reference to Anglican Christians who had witnessed the experience of the holy spirit and sought revitalisation of the Anglican church (Bompani, 2018; Isiko, 2019a). Since then, whoever professed a leaning towards the belief in the outpouring of the holy spirit, demonstrated with gifts of the holy spirit, especially speaking in tongues, miracle performance; and believed in energised forms of worship became categorised as a 'Born Again' Christian. This is confirmed by ethnographic studies done by Bompani (2018) and Bremner (2013) which concluded that although having a definite description of 'Born Again Christians' in Uganda's context may be futile, Christians belonging to neo-Pentecostal churches are the ones more frequently called 'Born Again' or *Balokole*. The original *Balokole* rarely identify themselves as such, preferring to maintain their loyalty and identity with the Anglican church of Uganda. Neither do they self identify with notions of pentecostal and charismatic. On the other hand, it is almost a taboo for catholic charismatics of Uganda to self identify as Born Again or *Balokole*; leaving the terminology for express use by neo-pentecostals. Roman Catholic church as well as other traditional Christian denominations reject charismatic experiences of neo-pentecostals as simply sensual, devilish and deluded (Nel, 2018). Therefore, Neo-pentecostals remain isolated and distinct from both mainstream churches, classical pentecostals as well as charismatic Christian groups (ibid). This article is therefore, limited to discussion of neo-Pentecostal churches, also known as contemporary Born Again churches in Uganda. This is premised on the relative stability among classical Pentecostal churches on one hand and Born Again Charismatic Christians' subservience to their mother churches, on the other hand. Yet still, protestant evangelical churches as well as classical Pentecostal churches are negligible in numerical representation, with countable church branches, making conflict management and decision making easy amongst themselves.

In general, religious conflict has four defining elements. These are: two or more collective agents involved in the conflict, deriving from separate religions; separate factions within the same religion, from within the same faction in the same religion, and/or secular authority; contestation over a domain by the collective agents; enabling conditions for the contestation to occur; and aspect of religions involvement in the contest (Wendy, 2013). It is

contended here that conflict between Born Again churches in Uganda meet the four criteria above to be classified as religious in nature. In the first instance, Born Again church pastors are identified as the collective agents, representing their followers as collective individuals, belonging to different churches. In the second instance, Born Again church pastors, as collective agents are in contestation over several domains, including ideology, morality, power and leadership, personality, and space/place. In this case, conflict between Born Again church pastors is a complex phenomenon that engages a combination of such contested domains, identified as the root causes of conflict. In the third instance, enabling conditions have been a combination of political, social, economic, cultural and psychological circumstances (Oro & Seman, 2000). In the fourth instance, the religiousness involved in Born Again churches' conflict surround contestation over religious beliefs and doctrines, church organisation and morality as well as rituals and religious experiences. Religious conflict has existed since time immemorial, making it a constant feature in all religious traditions. In the next section, a historical exploration of conflict in the world's great religious traditions is made, as a demonstration of non immunity to conflict. The uniqueness of this article though lies in the fact that it covers a previously neglected dimension of religious conflict called inter-church conflict.

3. Conflict in World's Religions from a Historical Perspective

All world religions have had a share of conflict among its leaders, occasioning division or reformation of existing religions into new forms of religious expression (Sprunger Meredith, n.d). For example, Hinduism, the oldest of the world religions, has experienced many reform movements. Mahavira, the son of a Hindu rajah, protested against the domineering Brahman priesthood and bloody animal sacrifices. His efforts resulted in little change in Hinduism, but started another religion, Jainism. Gautama Buddha, another Hindu prince, rejected the hereditary caste system and the excessive ceremonialism of Hinduism. The older religion did not change much, but Gautama's efforts founded another religion, Buddhism. Nanak, a second-caste Hindu, preached tolerance between Hindus and Muslims, declaring that both worshiped the same God. His efforts did not bring much tolerance between the two religions but did start a new religion, Sikhism. There was conflict within Judaism, when Jesus Christ's attempt to reform it was resisted, occasioning Christianity as a new religious offshoot (Wood, 1971). The above historical incidences portray newer religious forms of expression as an effect of intra-religious conflicts. Sustained disagreements between the old and new religious creation breeds an inter-religious conflict, as the case was between Judaism and Christianity as well as Hinduism and the three religious renewals. Religious conflict can also begin outrightly as inter-religious in nature. For example, the outstanding conflict between Christianity and Islam since the middle ages demonstrates this scenario.

The historical analysis of conflict in world religions verifies the significance of collective agents in defining religious conflict (Wendy, 2013). In spite of the postulation of conflict in 'religions' and 'churches', behind them are individual religious figures, who operate as collective agents. For example, the conflict within Hinduism, which created Jainism and Buddhism, could not stand without Mahavira and Gautama Buddha respectively, just as Prophet Muhammed and the Caliphs were Islam's collective agents in its early contest with Christianity. In this article therefore, whereas attempt is to look at conflict among Born Again churches, more often reference is made to individual pastors, who act as collective agents. The Christian religion has experienced countless episodes of conflict since its formation. During the early church period, there were theological conflicts within the church, each with a collective agent, who doubled as its initiator, but later winning alliances of Christians to their side. For example, Priest Arius disagreed with the mainstream church over the nature of Christ in a conflict which

was to take ages (Lienhard, 1987). Other theological conflicts, included Nestorianism (Nestorius), and Apollinarianism (Apollinaris) (Harris, 2014). Conflicts in the early church were intra-religious in nature, with defining church's core beliefs and theology as the contested domains.

During the middle ages, Christianity experienced some of the worst intra-religious conflicts ever, which were political as well as religious in character (Whalen, 2015). These were facilitated by ideological and cultural rupture in the medieval church (Walsham, 2014). For example, the inter-church conflict between the churches of Rome and Constantinople, also called the Great Schism, was a struggle for power and dominance between the two most important churches in Christendom, leading to a split of the once united church into two Christian halves; the Roman Catholic church in west and the Greek orthodox church in the east (Howard, 2012). The Bishop of Rome also called the Pope, on one hand and the Patriarch of Constantinople, on the other hand were the collective agents in this Great Schism. Sooner than later, the church in the west experienced an intra-church conflict, over succession to the papacy. This led to the creation of an alternative religious power center at Avignon in France (Whalen, 2015). The Roman catholic church then faced another intra-church conflict, the protestant reformation. Protestant reformers presented their movement not as a novel departure, but as a revival of apostolic Christianity which had been suffocated and corrupted by the medieval papacy and ecclesiastical hierarchy. They claimed that the Church of Rome had buried and perverted the truth of the Gospel (Walsham, 2014). This led to evolution of diverse protestant churches; some of which were 'national' in character while others were 'evangelical' in ideology. Later, some Christians within the newly formed protestant churches felt the need for spiritual rejuvenation, and this led to the first wave of Pentecostal movement in the United states (Robbins, 2004), producing independent classical Pentecostal churches, some of which were exported to African countries, Uganda inclusive.

However, signs of conflict were evident at the inception of Pentecostalism in the United States (Gathuki, 2015). There were internal divisions and fractures, reflecting the many disagreements on practice, doctrine, church politics, election of leaders and personalities. Racism became another contested domain within the Pentecostal realm at its infancy (Nel, 2018). There was an intra-church conflict in the 'Church of God in Christ' located in California, just two years after the historical birthdate of Pentecostalism in 1906. The church experienced a leadership rift between co-pastors, Charles Price Jones and Charles Harrison Mason. Although Jones was the overall leader of the church at California, his colleague, Mason was popular and dominant. Mason left the church and a conflict ensued over ownership of the church name, until this was decided by a secular court (Gathuki, 2015). Intra-church conflicts have since been a common feature of Pentecostalism. For example, in the United States, alone, Born Again Christians file 4 to 8 million lawsuits every year, often against other Christians (Blair, 2013). In every five years, 75 percent of United States' religious congregations report some level of conflict, occasioned by disagreements in every aspect of church life: from theological beliefs to the way money was raised and spent, from worship practices to mission priorities, from lay decision-making to pastoral leadership styles (Dudley, 2011). There is a rising prevalence of religious conflicts in the world, especially among Born Again churches. This is attributed to the rapidly rising number of Christian revivalist groups, which has led to a change in the religious landscape, ultimately paving way for divisionism and competition for religious leadership (International Crisis Group, 2015).

Religious conflict has been rife in Uganda over the years. Conflict between Catholics, Protestants and Moslem missions in Uganda, during the 1880s was an imported inter-religious conflict, for these religions had been in conflict with each other before their entry into Africa

(Niringiye, 2016). Catholics and Anglicans had not only been bitterly opposed to one another in Uganda, but each of them suffered from ethnic factionalism (Niringiye, 2016; Pirouet, 1980). This brought about the popular political-religious wars in Buganda. The three foreign religions contested for converts and political influence in the then powerful kingdom of Buganda. There appeared an inter-denominational conflict between Catholics and Anglicans, involving use of guns in what was decisively settled at the popular 'Mengo war' of 1892 (Twaddle, 1988). British missionaries and colonial officials on one hand and Roman catholic missionaries on the other hand, were the collective agents for the political-religious wars in Buganda. This inter-denominational conflict was about political influence, for religious affiliation was a strong determinant of political direction and policy preferences in Uganda (ibid). Later, Uganda witnessed an intra-church conflict within the Anglican church, with splits of an indigenous nature. Between 1910 and 1960, there were growing tensions within the Anglican church, leading to emergence of schismatic and renewal movements, dissenting from the established order of the church (Niringiye, 2016). The contested domains were power and leadership, which was exclusively in the hands of white missionaries, disregarding the capabilities of educated native Anglicans. This birthed indigenous led churches, along with the *Balokole* movement discussed earlier. A struggle for power at the helm of the Anglican church in Uganda was evident at the beginning of the 1970s, when Baganda Anglicans opted to secede from the rest of the Anglican church, over the selection of a non-Muganda Archbishop (Niringiye, 2016; Pirouet, 1980). The Born Again church movement, just like other religious reformations which stand in opposition to the status quo, are never without their internal tensions and contradictions, and inevitably incorporate many elements of the social order which they seek to overcome (Marshall, 1991). Some of the causes of acrimony between Born Again churches stem from accusations of each other, going back to the theology of mainstream churches that they sought to reform. This then breeds a vicious cycle of conflict and division, inherently in all religious reformations and renewals.

4. Theoretical and Methodological frameworks

This article is based on Baden Eunson's theory of conflict spiral (Baden, 2013). The theory explains sequential development of conflict in organisations and among individuals. It postulates two main zones of conflict; the covert and overt. The covert zone is where conflict has not yet erupted into public view. The overt zone is where conflict does become public and direct. Developing from Baden's classical theory, it is customised to this study as 'conflict spiral theory' for Born Again churches. The covert manifestation of conflict among Born Again churches is usually not a threat to religious unity, since it involves mild disagreements between individual pastors. The covert type of conflict manifests in the trading of rumours, and gossip among pastors about each other. It may also involve boycotting meetings organised by 'enemy' pastor(s). Covert conflict is not privy to ordinary members of either churches involved in the conflict. Covert conflict phenomenon is more pronounced in intra-church conflicts than in inter-church conflicts.

However, a critical incident leads to overt manifestation of conflict, publicly pitying one Born Again church against another. This may be a public disapproval of the theology, teaching or moral conduct of another pastor, at a media conference, or at times during one of the well-attended sermons in church or at an evangelism crusade. Sequentially, the public gets to know about the conflict through public media. The relationship between different Pentecostal churches is defined by paradoxical dialectics of opposition and entanglement, but gets amplified in the present era, in which religious manifestation is increasingly mass mediated. The mass mediation of religion sharpens religious antagonism and generates religious aesthetic and

discursive forms that are shared across religious boundaries (Witte, 2018). This leads to development of 'selective perception', where each 'enemy' Born Again church finds fault about the other, unequivocally disregarding the virtues about another. Selective perceptions pose a further danger of distorting reality so that competitors' arguments are polarised with evil, yet ignoring their own shortcomings (Pruitt & Kim, 2004). Coalitions and alliances emerge, enlisting wider support. These are given media hype, making the conflict fully public.

This study dwells only on overt conflicts manifested through public media. Overt religious conflict is significant because it is most visual, newsworthy and a disruptive aspect of society (Mayer, 2013). This accounts for the extensive reliance on media reports. Religious groups' increased use of mass media has strengthened tendencies of both mutual opposition and entanglement, thus amplifying the paradoxical dynamics between Pentecostalism churches. On the one hand, with the adoption of mass media, religious groups establish an ever-stronger public presence. They become more assertive and selfconscious while religious differences and antagonisms become ever more marked. Religion increasingly becomes a site of public clash and occasional violence, especially so between Pentecostals (Witte, 2018). Media reports have however, been triangulated by key informant interviews to ensure reliability and validity of information. The twenty key informants included Born Again church pastors, who were purposively identified, as major contributors to these public debates and conflicts. The limited number of interviewees was determined by the qualitative nature of the study; whose interest was in a select group of informed respondents. Therefore, information contained in this article is analysis of Born Again pastors' own perspectives of conflict between themselves on one hand, and public perceptions of the religious conflict manifested in the public domain of media on the other.

5. Nature and manifestation of conflicts between Born Again Churches in Uganda

A critical analysis of the numerous incidents of conflict between Born Again churches help to discern the form, nature and manifestation of such conflicts. The incidents of conflict validate a striking pattern of linkage with the major tenets of Baden's conflict spiral theory (2013). Conflict between Born Again churches in Uganda take many shapes, some with political overtones while others are ethical and financial in nature. Ostensibly, conflicting pastors turn to the bible to justify their claims, arguments, witch hunt and accusations; referencing biblical texts, thereby making the conflict appear theological.

Prior to the 1980s, Pentecostal churches in Uganda were classical in nature, with streamlined institutional governance structures, in which the senior pastor if any did not espouse power supremacy as is common among contemporary Born Again churches. Pastors were typically servants of the church, holding lower socio-economic statuses, with their major role to preach the word and pastor the afflicted. The institutional councils of elders which provided leadership did not allow unlimited and pompous authority of the senior pastor. Literally, the pastors did not own the churches and its property as it is with contemporary Born Again churches (Tucker, 2011). There was neither intra-church nor inter-church conflicts between these churches. For, all these churches had the same goal, that is, a struggle to survive in a threatening political environment; which demanded for their total ban (Pirouet, 1980; Nsereko, 1986). However, beginning in 1986, with Yoweri Museveni, as President of Uganda, there was resurgence of the Pentecostal movement, leading to proliferation of contemporary Born Again churches (Bompani & Brown, 2015; Bompani, 2016). Freedom of religious expression enabled whoever willed to begin a church and it became a profitable business. Under the new political environment, contemporary Born Again church pastors did not need the other to survive but

rather to outcompete each other. Contemporary Born Again churches then created new social spaces, not governed by norms of religious piety (Benyah, 2018). The new state of affairs provided Born Again churches with protection, safety and opportunities to express and entrench themselves in the public space, gaining for themselves power and money-making possibilities, making churches to become centers of economic accumulation while having more public visibility as centers of power (Bompani, 2018). The new churches were owned and governed by individuals, who struggled to remain afloat in a competitive religious industry. Large numbers of followers gained the individual pastor political clout, making them king makers in their communities. Currently, Born Again Christians are 11% of Uganda's total population, making them such a viable political constituency, whose leadership becomes some sort of power brokers for positions of political power (UBOS, 2016). The need for power, authority, property and fame brought competition amongst this category of pastors (Rukundo, 2009).

Religious conflict between contemporary Born Again churches emerged in 1987, as an intra-church conflict in the then leading contemporary Born Again church called Redeemed church-Katwe. This was a conflict of succession between co-pastors, after the death of Ghanaian pastor John Obiri Yeboah, who had influenced many of the Born Again pastors in the country in the early 1980s. The intra-church conflict led to a split, with three new churches emerging, ultimately breeding an inter-church conflict. Religious News Blog (2007) documented this event from its interaction with Pastor Solomon Male. The death of John Obiri Yeboah in 1987, plunged the Ugandan Born Again church pastors, who had been close to Obiri Yeboah, in a war of succession. The conflict was between Pastor Simeon Kayiwa, Pastor David Makumbi, Pastor Deo Balabyekubo and Pastor Samuel Kakande. Whereas Pastor Simeon Kayiwa founded the United Redeemed Council, an umbrella group he claimed covered all the churches that could trace their origins to the late Ghanaian, John Obiri Yeboah; Pastor David Makumbi of the World Evangelical church, formed a rival umbrella body, the United Reformed Redeemed Council. On the other hand, Pastor Deo Balabyekubo and Pastor Samuel Kakande, claimed to have inherited the Ghanaian pastors' powers and hence claiming succession. The principal subject of rivalry was the inheritance of Yeboah's miracle working powers. As a sign of inheritance, whereas Makumbi claimed to have been given shoes, robes and underwear by Yeboah, Kayiwa claimed to have been anointed and appointed by the same prophet. Although the late Deo Balabyekubo also claimed to have been given Yeboah's bible and name of John as a sign of inheritance of Yeboah's powers and ministry. Pastor Samuel Kakande with his wife Loyce also claimed to have been specially anointed by Yeboah as prophet and prophetess. The two rival umbrella bodies fought over ownership and control of the Redeemed church-Katwe, that had been the main church for Yeboah's ministry (Religious News Blog, 2007). Local pastors have kept shifting allegiances between rival bodies, that constantly evolve into newer forms of association and pentecostal expression appropriated by a blossoming media.

Media and mediatization of religious conflict are very critical aspects to the sequential development of conflict between Born Again pastors in Uganda. By May 2020, Uganda had a total of 51 television stations and 309 radio stations. More than 50% of the television stations are religious based, distributed between pentecostal churches with 24 television stations, one for Moslems and only two for Catholics (Uganda Communications Commission, 2020; Nabakooba, 2020). Most of the 309 radio stations are either owned by pentecostal churches or aired special programmes for pentecostal Christians. Ten years ago, seven of the 40 radio stations in Uganda exclusively broadcasted evangelical and pentecostal messages (Gibb & Santos, 2009), opening a commanding lead of pentecostal churches in the broadcasting industry. Some of the powerful media houses in the country are owned by pentecostal pastors, namely; Salt Media (Salt FM and Salt TV) is owned by Pastor Aloysious Bugingo; Impact FM

and several of its affiliated frequencies spread all over the country and as well as Dream TV are owned by Pastor Joseph Serwadda of the Victory Church Ndeeba; Kingdom FM and Kingdom Television are owned by Pastor David Kiganda of the Christianity Focus centre-Kisenyi; ABS TV is owned by Pastor Yiga Augustine of the Revival Christian center-Kawaala; Top TV and Radio are owned by Pastor Jackson Ssenyonga of the Christian Life church; Glorious Times TV is owned by Prophet Samuel Kakande; Miracle TV, also known as Channel 44 is owned by Pastor Robert Kayanja of the Miracle center church, while ARK TV is owned by Brother Ronnie Makabai of Evangelical Truth Ministries (ETM) among others. Pastors who own media houses and those with regular weekly programmes on radio and TV are more conflict prone than those who don't own any.

Domineering attitude is reflected in media ownership and public clout of pastors. Ownership of a radio and television network through which a church propagates its gospel is now a measure of how powerful a pastor is in the country. Pentecostal control of a majority of TV and radio media outlets in Uganda is premised on the individual benefits that gaining control of the media has for independent churches. Pentecostal churches and their individual pastors stand to benefit independently of one another by attracting congregants and donations (Gibb & Santos, 2009). In several other African countries, a powerful evangelist is now determined by the level of electronic medium and a good dose of charisma used to attract a much larger following, beyond a single church's establishment. Younger people in particular are attracted to evangelists who have developed modern media images of themselves and their churches. Popular discourse on these religious media figures might be stimulating or pre-empting the mobility of worshippers, as well as creating expectations in terms of performance and results (Hackett, 1998). Studies done in Ghana and Nigeria revealed the media as the new discursive site for the representation of Self and Other, for the mediation of difference. Representations of the Other in less controlled environments provide evidence of an aesthetics of violence. In fact, many of the religious groups tend to define themselves over and against other groups in this evolving public space (ibid). To emphasise the significance of personal power created through media ownership, one interviewee said:

I used to struggle for airspace on Radio Uganda to preach. I had one small radio set in my house, but now I own a radio station. I have power to switch off any pastor who might be speaking nonsense on my radio station (Born Again pastor, Personal interview, April 26, 2020; Kampala).

None the less competition for listenership and viewership amongst Christian based media outlets has made conflict inevitable and worse, as pastors struggle to outcompete each other for advertising business and preaching the word. A more serious negative implication of neo pentecostal appropriating media is the commodification and consequent trivialisation of Christianity. Media use has changed religion from an individual, personal experience to a public good. Christianity, like Coca Cola, is advertised in public, breeding unnecessary competition between born again churches for followers cum consumers. This is 'trivialising religion through market-oriented and advertising praxis' (Witte, 2018; Gibb & Santos, 2009). Indeed, Pentecostal churches are by distinction media enthusiasts, whose existence thrives by the very grace of mass media (Witte, 2018). Earlier studies done in Uganda's capital, Kampala, established that vigorous Pentecostal involvement in radio and television preaching was about competition for more 'souls' between churches (Namutebi, 2017). In an attempt to use electronic media to mediate and dispel power, pastors manipulate their followers into thinking that they can receive healing and spiritual power through physical contact with their television

and radio sets, transmitting the pastor's message. (Hackett, 1998). They promise blessings to those who are able to view and listen to their radio and television programmes. There is noticeable censorship of press by pastors, directing their followers not to listen or view media programmes of competing pastors. Yet, viewing or listening to non acceptable media, of competing pastors is thought to transmit evil spirits.

In Uganda, mediatization of gospel determines alliances during conflict between pastors. Pastors without own radio or television station are likely to side with those who provide them media space on their privately owned media establishments. Hence, pastors aligned to BAF of Pastor Joseph Serwadda are likely to use Impact FM and Dream TV to propagate their message; and it is almost impossible for such pastors to have any media accessibility to Salt radio and TV owned by Pastor Aloysious Bugingo. On the other hand, newer Christian media houses, like ABS TV of Pastor Yiga Augustine, are seen as invading media spaces and therefore threatening older media houses broadcasting Christian messages. Their appropriation and growing domination of the media, and the obvious links in terms of technology and programming aggravates this resentment (Hackett, 1998).

Christian media amplify the notion of selective perception, as it is used to launch attacks against other pastors. Since media has an influence on public opinion; attitudes change dramatically as a result of what is seen or heard. There are indications of selective perception of what is viewed, namely that audiences tend to identify with that which reinforces their existing beliefs. On the whole, mass media appears to have the potential to create false impressions (Namutebi, 2017). In another separate interview, one pastor said that he was tired of listening to born again pastors' radio stations, for they are preoccupied with abusing each other. That these radio stations were turned into centers for sending offensive words to fellow pastors and discrediting each other's ministry (Pastor, Kampala, June 10, 2020). In Uganda's context, special programmes are arranged on church owned televisions and radio stations to perpetuate conflicts, under the disguise that they are 'teaching' their flock something current. For example, an Impact Radio and television talk show programme, dubbed '*ebifa munzikiriza*', literary meaning 'what happens in faith', is preoccupied with glorifying the goodness of the proposed Religious and Faith Based organisations' (RFBOs) policy, while castigating those who were against it. Another media programme called '*Nasirika Obwedda*', literary meaning 'I had all this long kept silent', was Pastor Joseph Serwadda's response to his critics and nemesis, Pastor Bugingo, who had for a long time preoccupied himself with preaching ill about his ex-spiritual mentor from which church he separated in 2010. Also, whereas, Salt Media's prime programme called, '*Emisingi*', literary meaning 'the foundations', is meant to teach the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, much more time is devoted to responding to critics of Pastor Aloysious Bugingo. Sermons are carefully programmed with befitting titles to send a message to the 'enemy' pastor and his church. For example, the teaching about 'false prophets' by both Pastor Jackson Ssenyonga on Top radio and Television on one hand and Pastor Joseph Serwadda on Impact radio and Dream TV were targeting fellow pastors, Yiga Augustine and Samuel Kakande, who were accused of charlatanism. Such offensive media programming made over fifty pastors to petition Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), accusing Bugingo of using his media platforms to attack fellow church leaders using abusive and vulgar language as well as inciting terror (Kasujja, 2015).

Conflict agents' visibility in public media portrays gender relations prevalent in conflict between Born Again churches. Conflicts are rare between female headed Born Again churches, but common between male headed Born Again churches. Women pastors, who in most cases act as number two in the hierarchy of church administration provide a supportive role in defending their husbands' ministries. The dismal role of female pastors in conflict situations

can also be attributed to their small number in the country. Most Born Again churches are headed by male pastors, and a likelihood of engaging in a feud with another male pastor is high. One interviewee stated that with the exception of Pastor Manjeri of Bethel Healing center and Pastor Imelda Namutebi Kula of Liberty Worship center-Lugala, the rest of the female pastors thought to be influential are 'just wives' to powerful male pastors (Pastor, April 29, 2020). Unlike in other Sub-Saharan African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana and Zimbabwe (Mhando, 2018), female headed Born Again churches in Uganda have not attained a certain level of progression and achievement in terms of congregant numbers and financial muscle; to be a threat to the already big churches owned by male pastors. Female headed churches do not hold much power, fame and resources to attract contestation from the already powerful male pastors. It could be true that female pastors are involved in religious conflicts with male pastors but of a covert nature, eluding the media limelight. On the contrary, husbands to female Born Again pastors have limited voices when such conflicts emerge. The husbands' silenced voices are a copying strategy to fit in a space where they ought to be taking the lead and not their wives. One interview stated thus:

Look at Mr Kula, husband to Pastor Imelda Namutebi of Liberty Worship center-Lugala and Mr Niiwo, former husband to Pastor Judith Babirye, a celebrated gospel musician. They have never been reported anywhere participating in any conflict despite their wives (pastors) being regularly reported feuding with other religious persons (Born Again pastor, Personal interview, April 24, 2020; Kampala).

The power and influence of their wives, as pastors, make the husbands experience an inferiority complex, which makes them to take a back stage to escape societal criticism, for deprived masculinity. Deprived masculinity makes men less assertive than they ought to be (Warren, & Campbell, 2020). Female congregants are known to provide undying support to male pastors in times of conflict. They have unrelenting loyalty and fight to have their pastor(s) victorious. For example, in February 2019, hundreds of Pastor Yiga Augustine's followers, mainly women, stormed Kawempe police station in Kampala, demanding for his release. The pastor in question had been arrested on allegations of rape and fraud. The female followers vowed not to leave the police premises until their pastor was released, arguing that the accusations were a mere fabrication by his nemesis, Pastor Jackson Ssenyonga (The Independent, 2019; The Monitor, 2019). Born Again Christian women's attitude to stand firm by their male pastor in times of crisis is rooted in an essentially patriarchal Ugandan society which demand women subordination to male authority. Moreover, there are religious traditions and scripture readings which require women to take subordinate positions in society (Mhando, etal. 2018; Isiko, 2018). At times, women employ such agency with purposeful conduct in anticipation of extra-religious ends (Avishai, 2008). But also, this demonstrates the influential power that women hold to determine direction of conflict (Davis, 2019).

Due to the patriarchal nature of Ugandan society, instances when female pastors have invaded space(s) considered masculine, contesting male supremacy, they have received widespread condemnation; with derogatory characterisations. Religious conflict turns into gender characterisations when collective agents are of either gender. For example, Pastor Imelda Namutebi was constructed as a witch when she erected a mega cathedral, in addition to driving an expensive vehicle with personalised registration number. High end vehicles as well as mega church construction are 'things' associated with masculinity. Yet also, the development of the 'mega-church' in some African countries in recent years is in part a struggle for accommodation of a rising number of converts to Born Again churches (Hackett, 1998). The

above gender relations are compounded by generational differences between Born Again church pastors in Uganda. Born Again Churches headed by relatively young pastors are likely to conflict with churches headed by older pastors. Young but progressive pastors are likely to be under attack from dismally performing elderly pastors. Senior pastors like Pastor Joseph Serwadda feel that the Born Again church has been spiritually diluted by young pastors of this generation, who therefore need to be regulated to safeguard the sanctity of born again Christianity in the country. This has caused resentment from young church ministries that think that senior colleagues want to restrain them from sharing in the preaching of the word of God. In an attempt to discredit Pastor Joseph Serwadda's view point, it was written thus;

What Serwadda is advocating for has resulted in an obvious division in the body of Christ, not just with older ministers with whom he parted ways with in the National Born Again fellowship but also and perhaps, especially with these "self-appointed ministers" he is critical of. What he forgets is that when he founded his ministry decades ago, he was just like them. Serwadda has quickly forgotten the lessons of the history he attempts to teach the younger generation. I struggle to see the difference between the hostility he faced as the "new entity" that was encroaching on the space of the traditional churches of the time and the vociferous attacks he levies on the younger ministries of today. How sad it is that he is now kicking away the very ladder he ought to put in place (Kirunda, 2017).

The above uncovers conflict as not just between the seniors and the young ministers but also between pastors of the older generation. Conflict between senior pastors is a struggle to outdo each other for influence among majority young ministers. This is premised on the fact that the bigger the number of pastors who rally behind a senior pastor, the more powerful he is perceived to be. On one hand, senior pastors accuse the young pastors of creating competition in a religious space where they are looked at as novices. On the other hand, the energy and commitment to impose themselves in the newly found space, make the new entrants to fight for acceptability. One senior pastor at the center of conflict said,

When you see some of these pastors insulting me, I pity them because they do not know where and how we saved the born again church from the hands of past dictatorial regimes of Uganda. Some of these pastors had not yet been born, I think I have done something great for the born again church and I need to be respected. It is even shaming that several of them have either been mentored at my church here or at Pastor Simeon Kayiwa's church (Born Again pastor, Personal interview, May 03, 2020; Kampala).

The pastor's sentiments raised above indicate contestation between the more radical and contemporary patterns of the younger pastors with those of the older generation. Born again pastors are jousting for hierarchal reign among the generations. Some of the pastors shared that members of the older generation have difficulty listening to the thoughts, feelings and opinions of those in the younger generations, while members of the younger generations have become uninterested in traditional ways of doing church (Bland, 2019).

Amidst generational differences, is an educational divide between senior elite Born Again pastors and those who have joined church ministry, as a viable option in a liberal economy. The former got exposed to theological education from their earlier contact with American evangelists. On the contrary, the latter either have attained exclusively secular

academic degrees or are school drop outs, who take church ministry as a source of livelihood. The latter demeans the relevance of theological education, insisting on 'spiritual calling' as the legitimate requirement for a church minister. Findings show conflict between well-educated born again pastors and those who are not. Pastors who have attained formal secular education and or theological education feel that they have legitimate authority over their less educated contemporaries, a view openly contested by the latter. Study established rarity of feuds between less education pastors. This is because they share a similar challenge of domination by the educated ones. Feuding between less educated pastors happens only when each of the parties are operating under different born again alliances. None the less, available studies show that theological education and training provide evangelical pastors with exposure to leadership knowledge and best practices of managing and resolving conflict (Asea, 2012). Uneducated pastors have limited capacity to handle challenges as they arise (Gathuki, 2015). Education and schooling help in personal identity development and grooming. It helps in self-actualisation which transcends disagreements over small issues. Theological education has aspects of inter-religious dialogue, making pastors more liberal and tolerant with persons holding divergent religious opinions (Isiko, 2019a; Orwenyo, 2014). Uganda's education system also promotes religious tolerance, which may not be privy to pastors who never had chance to attend school. This becomes essential and more manifested at higher levels of education. Another interviewed pastor had this to say;

Pastors with lower educational levels lack negotiation skills in situations of disagreement. They use rudimentary methods of solving conflict. They insult one another in the media. They seem to suffer an inferiority complex in the presence of the highly educated colleagues in church ministry. Their inability to analyse issues contextually make them more suspicious than ever before about those who sound rational. (Born Again pastor, Personal interview, June 23, 2020; Kampala).

Conflict emerge as educated pastors cannot stand to let an impoverished gospel that lacks perspective being preached by the uneducated ones, whose teachings are based on invalid arguments, not anchored from proven biblical scholarship but rather from literal interpretation of the bible amenable to inaccurate conclusions and lessons (Gathuki, 2015). Such biblical interpretations irk educated pastors, who cannot stand to let untrue interpretation take precedence in church.

Patterns of religious conflict exist between urban and rural Born Again churches in Uganda. Religious conflicts are more common between urban Born Again than rural based pastors. Born Again pastors in the rural areas are more cooperative and supportive of each other. They are closely related by clan, belonging to a wider society with a network of elders, who will bring them to order should disagreements emerge. It is uncommon to experience conflicts between an urban based pastor and a rural one. This is because rural Born Again churches are extensions of urban churches or have some form of affiliation with them. The power difference between the two makes it easy for the rural based pastor and his church to subdue unconditionally. Conflicts between rural based pastors are rare in the public domain because they rarely receive media amplification due to their inaccessibility, being far from the center. One Born Again Christian interviewee stated;

Our pastors in the village are not any different from us, the Christians they shepherd. They are conservative, poor but seemingly contented with serving society. They don't demand a lot from their followers because they know they are as poor as themselves. They are ordinary persons. No body writes about them in the newspapers, not even talking about them on radio or television. They are serving society and their God with humility (Born Again pastor, Personal interview, May 22, 2020, Kampala).

The above comments indicate that rural based Born Again pastors do not carry the pomp and popularity to make them newsworthy, compared to urban based pastors who live lives of celebrities akin to those in the entertainment industry. This view correlates with that of Jones (2005) who stated that in urban areas, born again Christians are drawn from Africa's elite or those who aspire to join the elite, and a number of these churches promote the doctrine of unfettered accumulation of wealth, which has legitimised the growing gap between Africa's elite and the rest of the population. This is against the theological orientation of rural born again churches that focus on spiritual gifts and acts of sociality rather than a sense of imminent wealth or endless material possibilities.

Therefore, there is more at stake in a conflict between urban based pastors than rural based pastors. The higher the stake the more significant the conflict becomes. The cut throat competition for followers in the urban areas make it a do or die for pastors to defend their churches against disintegration. Attempts to frustrate each other's ministry are common in the towns (Kazooba, 2019a). Urban Born Again churches are so close to each other that they struggle to take a bigger percentage of the population in the area. For Uganda's capital, Kampala, a multitude of Born Again churches are found in every neighbourhood, producing competition in an already crowded religious marketplace (Bremner, 2013). This is different from the rural areas, where one Born Again church is established on each isolated village. This breeds feelings of jealousy against pastors who are able to attract a relatively larger membership than the rest. Loss of members to another church means loss of revenue and prestige. Increasingly, these confrontations may be played out in the media, which often serves to heighten the disagreements (Hackett, 2001).

Coalitions and alliances are evident features of conflict between Born Again churches in Uganda. These conflicts portray patterns of misunderstanding between allied and non-allied pastors. Allied pastors are those whose churches are registered members of a Born Again church association(s) or belong to a church ministry with a network of churches established in several parts of the country. The most popular Born Again churches' associations include the National Fellowship of Born Again and Pentecostal Churches (NFBPC) and Born Again Faith (BAF). There are networks of churches belonging to the same church ministry like Miracle Center churches, Victory churches etc. A network of churches under the same ministry ensures a pastor's countrywide influence, in those areas where church branches have been planted. Non allied pastors do not belong to any network organisation or association of Born Again church(es). These have no branches and exist as 'single church' in one defined locality. It is difficult to ascertain the actual number of non-allied born again churches in Uganda, since the country does not have a national church tally center but also these spring up on a daily basis in different parts of the country. However, they are a minority in comparison to the allied churches. Establishing a non allied Born Again church creates competition with networked churches already existing in a given locality. It is also a threat to 'group identity' of Born Again churches operating under the same name, brand, ideology, teaching, organisation and leadership. The relationship between allied and non-allied churches gets complicated when non allied churches offer better religious goods than those of the networked churches. It is a common feature for networked pastors to gang against those who are not part of the network (Ochwo, 2017; Ssegawa, 2017). Pastors who receive wide condemnation are not members of these network organisations. Pastors belonging to NFBPC and BAF make their churches platforms to attack non members over engagement in 'unchristian' activities (Ssegawa, 2017). Some of the pastors who have faced the wrath of these network members include, Pastor Samuel Kakande, Brother Ronnie Makabai, Pastor Augustine Yiga and Pastor Aloysious Bugingo. Born Again church alliances and networks are used to systematically suffocate non-members. They present

themselves as having the legitimacy to police all Born Again churches in the country, including those who do not subscribe to them. Allied churches hold a lot of power that they agree to control, frustrate and openly fight serious rivals, who are not their members (Tacca, 2019).

The disharmony between allied Born Again churches and the non-allied stems from the latter coming up with innovative ways of competing with the former to become masters of the Born Again church industry. Non allied Born Again pastors espouse an entrepreneurial orientation to their churches, with high capacity for innovation, proactivity and competitive aggressiveness, while willing to take risks (Correa, et.al, 2017). They have found new market techniques of utilising the mass media, especially the radio, television and print media to advertise their services and create a niche for themselves to the agitation of allied churches (Benyah, 2018). All these enable non allied pastors to attract more believers to their churches than the allied ones. Such innovativeness, proactiveness and aggressive competitiveness is dreaded by the allied pastors, calling it unchristian as well as being inconsistent with Pentecostal tradition. Such creative methodologies challenge the status quo of overarching religious institutions like BAF and NFBPC.

Finally, coalitions as well as selective perception inhibit useful engagement to dissolve conflict. Instead of dialogue, denunciation of each other's position in the ministry of Christ characterises conflict management between Born Again churches. Public denouncing is used as a tool by the powerful allied churches against the non allied, as a way of denying them space to operate and undermining their legitimacy in Christian ministry. There is little interest in inter-church dialogue, yet without a neutral body to mediate. This polarizes Born Again churches and generates conflict as each church seeks to claim its own space and protect its own opinions, rather than recognize the need to negotiate contested issues and terrain (Hackett, 2001).

6. Contested Domains between Born Again churches

Contested domains are defined as the root causes of conflict (Wendy, 2013). These revolve around the various ways in which church teaching has been understood and put into practice, including its apprehension to ethics and social politics. They are seen to be ideological clashes between pastors regarding theology, church organisation and morality appropriated by a mediatized religious environment. The need for power and influence are at the center of these ideological clashes between pastors.

Ideology of the Born Again church movement is at the center of the differing opinions amongst pastors. Ideology is a set of beliefs, infused with passion and seeking to transform the whole of a way of life (Obayashi, 1976). Church ideology relates to a set of beliefs about the structured communal Christian existence (Brodd, 2006). In this case, ideological differences involve differing opinions on governance principles of the church and the way the Born Again church should conduct itself with secular society. Ideological considerations of Born Again churches are based on the view that religious conflict represents much more than differences between sacred beliefs but different ways of perceiving society (Schenck, 2012). Four areas of the domain of ideology were established to strike differences of opinion among Born Again pastors. These are; Pentecostal ideology of materialism and capital accumulation; Christian fundamentalism, evolving from literal interpretation of sacred texts (Roy, 2006); church organisation, governance and regulation; and political ideology. Ideological considerations differ from theological factors in a way that the latter dwells on those differences based on doctrine, beliefs and practices of Christians. Theological differences also relate to biblical interpretation and theological application in contemporary society, on issues such as the role of women, divorce, worship patterns, ministry of the Holy spirit and legalism (Jacobsen, 1983). A theological person believes in another world and the ideological person believes only in this

world. Ideology then becomes secular whereas theology is divine. Ideology is based on rational thinking of humanity, with evidence which can evolve and change as well. On the other hand, theology assumes existence of truth already given by God, and that this truth which is used as evidence does not change (Longenecker, 2014). Ideological concerns therefore ought to include secular beliefs and considerations which may have no relation to biblical dictates. However, theology may become ideological when religion is used to push society's political concerns, in order to make this world a better place. Therefore, the difference between what is ideological and theological become blurred when religion is used to influence the political realm (Obayashi, 1976).

Ideological differences are aided by power struggles between pastors (Matshobane & Masango, 2018). Power is reflected in the number of congregants that one has in his church; the size and level of magnificence of church building(s); amount of land and church property, which relates to material wealth that each pastor possesses. All the above point to church's ideology of materialism and capital accumulation as signs of God's blessings. Requiring a material basis, churches become business organisations, purchasing property and land, employing labour, establishing universities, a process which inevitably breeds competition amongst themselves to ensure survival (Roy, 2006). They compete for followers, especially the rich ones who can raise higher amounts in offertory. The competitive attitude between pastors to erect church buildings that accommodate multitudes has caused uneasiness in the Born Again church industry.

In *Marketing religion in a commercial age*, Mara Einstein (2008) has articulated how an unregulated market where the benefits for suppliers are high and barriers to entry are low, there will be considerable competition for religious consumers. This creates an unending cycle of competition because in markets where there is more than one player, competition increases consumption simply because more people will be able to find a product they like. The competition takes various forms including having several worship sessions in a week and holding endless crusades to keep converts from moving to other churches. In September 2016, when Pastor Robert Kayanja began the Seventy-Seven Days of Glory (77-DOGS) at his Miracle Center cathedral in Rubaga, with daily performance of miracles, thousands of Born Again Christians began fellowshipping at this church, which brought a feeling among some other local pastors that they may lose out on followers to Pastor Robert Kayanja. They therefore copied and began holding daily overnight prayers. The first one to enter the fray was Pastor Jackson Ssenyonga of the Christian life church-Bwaise. In January 2017, he started sessions of prayer, described as the 5 P's. These five P's represented; Praise, Prayer, Power, Prosperity and Permanent Miracles. Such religious merchandising is responsible for the moral transgression among Born Again pastors (Kamukama, 2013). This has bred charlatan pastors on one hand, yet with a gullible and desperate body of Christians on the other hand. Without a national professional body to whip pastors, neither a recognised national structure with legitimacy to hold charlatan pastors accountable, yet in an already saturated religious industry, pastors have taken to accusations and counter accusations of charlatanism.

Through organisation of crusades, pastors demonstrate their power and influence over the rest in the industry. The number of crusade attendees and converts are a measure of a successful crusade. Rival pastors organise counter crusades to demonstrate their prowess. A vivid example is reflected in the annual end of year worship festivities that were initiated by Pastor Joseph Serwadda of the Victory Christian Church-Ndeeba, in 2002. Whereas for some years, all renowned city Born Again pastors used to grace the annual Namboole Passover festival, with time, several abandoned with claims that they were helping to grow Pastor Joseph Serwadda's ministry as theirs shrunk. Yet others argued that Pastor Joseph Serwadda's

popularity was fast rising ahead of them, which would disadvantage their ministries. Sooner than later, many began to organise rival end of year worship festivities, either at their church premises or procured bigger open spaces in the city for this purpose. For example, in 2007, Pastor Jackson Ssenyonga of the Christian Life church-Bwaise, began assembling at Kololo Independence grounds (Wanambwa, 2007); Pastor Kiganda of the Christianity Focus center-Kisenyi, assembled at Old Kampala secondary school play grounds, Pastor Robert Kayanja held his at Miracle Center cathedral in Rubaga among others. However, beyond the ecstatic and jovial mood of the followers at these crusades, were signs of a divided Born Again faith with several senior pastors preferring to attend one crusade against another (The Observer, January 3, 2010). The originator of the annual Passover festivities in Uganda was disappointed, with insinuations of other pastors 'stealing' his idea for purposes of making money (Tacca, 2019). This shows the annual end of year worship activities, also called Passover festival, as a religious idea, which became a religious product, for which one pastor felt that he had rights of ownership. The religious product was hijacked by shrewd religious entrepreneurs because of its perceived financial benefits, in terms of offertories and 'seeds' from the attendees. The struggle to have monopoly over this product on one hand and the entry of new religious providers for the same product on the other hand, created unhealthy competition and conflict between city pastors, over hosting crusades, with calculated attempts to frustrate each other from hosting successful crusades. 'Enemy' pastors enter celebration mood over a failed crusade. For example, rivals of Pastor Jackson Ssenyonga, celebrated over the dismal attendance at his crusade held at Namboole Stadium on the 27th of September 2019. In the Watchdog online news outlet, it was written as follows;

Several pastors celebrated the humiliation and record set by Ssenyonga, as having the least number of people at a crusade at Namboole stadium. Some wondered why he didn't look for a football field around Makerere, Mulago or Bwaise to host his crusade to avoid the embarrassment. The pastors celebrating Ssenyonga's humiliation say, their colleague was humbled before the President before whom he wanted to make a statement that he was a serious minister with lots of followers (Kazooba, 2019b).

The statement not only illustrates the infighting prevalent among Born Again pastors, but also points to the high value associated to crusades, as a religious product. Not all crusades have the same value and quality but most important determination is the number of attendees, which demonstrates a pastor's influence in the Born Again church industry. Yet also, a well-attended crusade is assumed to translate into enormous church offerings and tithes. This confirms earlier studies which postulate religious conflicts as a reflection of resource conflicts between church leaders (Odhiambo, 2014). The invitation of the President at the crusades is a revelation that crusades are no longer exclusively religious assemblies through which pastors are able to reach out to Christians and non-Christians in a large audience in such a small time, but rather, are avenues through which pastors demonstrate their unrivalled power and influence before politicians. Crusades are therefore, used as a political mobilisation base for the regime of the day, in exchange for financial support and state protection. Buying off spaces is a common strategy used by rival pastors to deny competitors opportunity to host crusades.

Moral power, determination and ethical conduct have been another domain of contestation between Born Again pastors. Moral power is the degree to which an actor, by virtue of his or her perceived moral stature, is able to persuade others to adopt a particular belief or take a particular course of action (Mehta & Winship, 2010). Exercising the power of credence and group legitimacy, prominent city pastors take authority to determine moral codes for the rest of the pastors. Group legitimacy is derived from membership to Born Again church associations, especially NFBPC and BAF that feel duty bound to set moral standards for their

members and the non-allied pastors; including the mandate to police them; a fact grossly contested by non allied pastors. On the other hand, newer Born Again churches take the high moral ground in condemning the nefarious and unbiblical practices of others (Hackett, 2001). Born Again pastors accuse each other of, adultery, homosexuality, being money hungry, power thirsty as well as conspiracy and being phony (Jenga, 2017). Some of the moral accusations have been proven right through courts of law, whereas others have been seditious in nature. Condemnation of fellow pastors' moral actions destabilises the harmonious relationships that existed before. This has for example, been responsible for the unending conflict between Pastor Aloysious Bugingo and the rest of the Born Again pastors, who accuse the former of tarnishing their reputation. This situation has been reported in public media as follows;

In his preaching, Bugingo used to attack fellow Pastors for robbing their church members, and this is where enmity and hatred for him from other pastors began, leaving him alone with only those Pastors serving in his church. Accusations' and counter-accusations erupted between Bugingo and other pastors in the city which lasted till today, as a result of his preaching that's centred on tarnishing their character which has made followers shun their churches and flock to his church (Flash Uganda Media, August 25, 2019).

This has generated conflict about who has power and legitimacy for moral determination, and authority to enforce ethical expectations. These arise out of contest against superimposed authority of some pastors, who have been in ministry work a little longer than the rest, determining moral decisions that they demand to be accepted by relatively young ministers and or those who were once their spiritual mentees. Young ministers feel that there are excesses to this moral authority by senior pastors. For example, one pastor noted;

Our leaders want to police pastors including their private lives. They want to meddle into private lives and relationships with our wives. They summon pastors to respond to accusations made by our wives as though they are courts of law. This is beyond acceptable mentorship (Born Again pastor, personal interview, June 20, 2020, Kampala).

The contest also arises out of the fact there are different hermeneutical bases to moral determination and decision making. Ultimately moral determinism is about power and influence. A pastor's perceived failure to live up to public moral expectations impacts on his/her church enrolment. Yet again condemnation of another pastor's moral credentials is a direct attack on the survival of the church. Competition for adherents make pastors to commit acts of libel and slander against each other in attempts to win followers from each other's churches. Conflict becomes inevitable when pastors struggle to present their true self against that portrayed by competing pastors. The exercise of moral power by prominent city Born Again pastors, to determine rules and principles receive a back clash from less powerful pastors, who are inclined to make exceptions to the rules (Lammers & Stapel, 2009). Unlike Catholicism and Protestantism with clear and defined moral claims; pentecostalism presents itself with moral porosity and ambiguity, making moral power significant. This brings contestations on moral claims in determining what is right and best for the common good (Mehta & Winship, 2010). It therefore, necessitates influencing people to support one position or another, making conflicting decisions inevitable.

Three aspects define moral power, these are; moral intentions, moral capability and moral standing. Moral power is a source of contestation because of its fragility. Born Again pastors who attempt to claim this power are frequently accused of ill intentions. The struggle over moral power and determinism has indeed occasioned a contest over leadership of the Born Again church; judging leaders as to whether they are morally well intentioned, with moral

capability and stature. The contest for leadership of the Born Again church has been a center of acrimony between pastors. Succession conflicts and struggle over being the bearer of the vision of the Born Again church have divided pastors. Leadership not only grants the office bearer power, but influences and benefits from the many resources, that accompany the office (Odhiambo, 2014). The Born Again church associations and alliances like NFBPC have been a seedbed of conflict over leadership. Since its formation in 1990, NFBPC, the biggest Born Again church alliance in Uganda has had three Chairpersons, including Pastor Simeon Kayiwa (1990-2003), Apostle Alex Mitala (2003-2013) and Bishop Joshua Lwere (2013-present). The unceremonial removal of Pastor Simeon Kayiwa from the office of 'Overseer' of NFBPC arose from witchcraft accusations that were labelled against him by fellow pastors, occasioning a sharp disagreement, that was to last for about two years (Muyita, 2004). Apostle Alex Mitala faced resistance from some prominent city pastors, who refused to join the alliance and acknowledge his leadership arguing that they could not be led by others (Ssenkibirwa, 2013). Up to the present, some networks of churches are not part of the national alliance, as it is optional to subscribe to the leadership of the national associations. On the other hand, Bishop Joshua Lwere has been accused by some pastors of 'dinning' with 'religious leaders' of institutional religious traditions in an ecumenical movement, as well as manipulating pastors for political gain. His relationship with State House has raised eyebrows among several pastors. It is because of the leadership wrangles within this national alliance that led to formation of a breakaway association called Born Again Faith Federation (BAFFE) later renamed Born Again Faith (BAF), led by Pastor Joseph Serwadda (Isiko, 2019a). The formation of BAF earned Pastor Joseph Serwadda widespread attack and condemnation from pastors belonging to NFBPC as well as independent ones. Pastors belonging to either associations conflict over the vision and policy direction of the Born Again faith. The establishment of diverse and competitive organisational structures deprive Born Again churches the much needed unity with one another (Nel, 2018).

There are three outstanding policy differences that have affected the unity of Born Again church in Uganda. These are, institutionalisation and legislation, ecumenism, and political participation. Some pastors argue that Born Again faith has matured and no longer a movement, which calls for institutionalisation and legislation. Institutionalisation would require these churches to have elaborate administrative structures and formal financial accounting systems. On the other hand, legislation would demand the industry to come up with policy frameworks within which they are to function, spelling out mandatory ethical expectations, which when violated by any pastor, would be held accountable. This is against the view held by relatively young church ministers, who fear to be swallowed by powerful pastors under the guise of institutionalisation. Institutionalisation would make Born Again churches come under government scrutiny. The move to this form of church governance would require Born Again churches to come up with councils of elders, which would diminish the powers of the cult of the senior pastor. This is contrary to opinions of several pastors, who argue that they are god-sent, not liable to congregational scrutiny. The idea that some church leaders want to build a church governance structure akin to that in the Roman catholic church and Anglican church, with a hierarchical arrangement, with a powerful man at the helm, superintending over several churches is detestable by several pastors, who want to maintain the New Testament structure of the church, with church leaders as equals. The prevailing situation in Uganda was evident at the initial stages of Pentecostalism in the United States, when the movement experienced the need to structure and formalise the different communities that were characterised by leadership ambitions as well as differences in theological emphasis and practice (Nel, 2018). Contestation over ideology of church governance has arisen at a time when there is no national consensus

over leadership of the Born Again church industry, with each of the significant city pastors claiming leadership on one hand and discrediting the rest, on the other hand. The prevailing leadership structure, through associations and network of churches, have no national legitimacy, are fragile and not all embracing. The continuous failure of Born Again churches to achieve unity is because several of them since the Azusa street revival in the United States, do not take into account the fact that human communities need organisation and institution to function and that even creeds and religious traditions serve a functional purpose (Nel, 2018). Proper leadership structure contributes to unity and progress in a church organisation; however, absence of structures creates opportunities for long protracted conflicts among church leaders (Gathuki, 2015). Leadership at the helm of the Born Again church, increases one's bargaining power and influence with government, for monetary benefits. It has been established before that conflict over church leadership is a reflection of stiff competition for scarce resources within the context of a developing African nation (Odhiambo, 2014). In Uganda's case, competition between Born Again churches is perpetuated by state patronage.

The unstructured relationship between Ugandan government and some players in the Born Again faith has raised undue competition among pastors for recognition and engagement with political powers. Unlike religious faiths that belong to the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU), with a clear hierarchical leadership structure; making it easy for government to engage with leaders and members of these churches and Islamic religion, the case is different with the numerous contemporary Born Again churches, whose leadership is contestable by member pastors. Government engagement with structured Christian denominations is easy through the incontestable leadership structure of the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC). Over the years Christianity has played an inextricable role in the politics of the Ugandan state, and this has birthed religious conflicts of some sort, especially among the major Christian denominations in the country (Bompani, 2018). In the Museveni era, each Born Again church and their pastors are in contention to prove to government of their support towards achieving socio-economic and political transformation of the country. It has been a historical challenge for various religious groups in the country to discredit each other before politicians, in attempts to win political favours (Niringiye, 2016). For example, Pentecostal Christians understand themselves as the only force able to reconnect Ugandan citizens with the Ugandan state because only their strong morally informed public attitudes can 'save' the country from failure (Bompani, 2018; Sperber & Hern, 2015). This is the thinking of Pentecostals in several other African countries (International Crisis Group, 2015). The distribution of campaign money is a source of conflict among pastors (Isiko, 2019a). There are some pastors who have regularly bragged about being well known to state house. This is fuelled by the indifference attitude of President Museveni towards Born Again pastors in the country. The President meets 'enemy' pastors, causing confusion as to whom might be his favourite. For example, he has visited Robert Kayanja, generally thought to be close friends with the first family but also visited Pastor Samuel Kakande, described as a cult by NFBPC. He has attended crusades organised by Pastor Jackson Ssenyonga, yet also meeting delegations from Brother Ronnie Makabai, the former's nemesis (Isiko, 2019a). Pastors, who have relatively growing ministries are often mobilised to meet the president during political campaigns, but feel that they are 'used' by the big pastors, who are close to the President. The competition to catch the President's eye stems from the fact that a pastor's alliance with government brings protection, safety and opportunities to express oneself in public space, gain power and financial avenues to become centers of economic accumulation and navigating political networks that enable pastors to gain more public visibility and legitimacy to access several centers of power (Bompani, 2018).

On the ideology of ecumenism, two conflicting groups of pastors have arisen, one in favour and another against. Some pastors take a conservative pentecostal theology in which they envisage to displace mainstream Christian churches, seen as the anti-Christ. Joining Moslems, Roman Catholic Church and Anglican churches, in an ecumenical movement is therefore out of the question. On the other hand, there are progressive pastors, who think that the Born Again church has grown into a Christian religious tradition, capable of negotiating with earlier Christian traditions on equal terms. The thinking that NFBPC leadership and Pastor Joseph Serwadda and his BAF stance to join IRCU for monetary gains is rife among their followers; which brings moral questions about their stature and credibility.

In spite of a known theological outlook that defines Born Again Christian movement, they disagree on other specific issues of a theological nature. This is a result of the porous nature of pentecostal attitude to interpretation and practice of Christian theology. Whereas other Christian denominations have defined parameters, in written codes on specific Christian doctrines and practices, this is not the case with Born Again churches. This produces divergent interpretation and modes of practice of certain aspects of Christian life among Born Again Christians. Born Again churches in Uganda disagree over five Christian doctrines, including exercise of spiritual gifts, marriage and divorce, sale of blessings referred to here as the 'seed syndrome', holy spirit and the theology of 'retaliation'. Conflicts over matters of theology are attributed mainly to pastors' literal interpretation of the bible (Adiiki, 2018). On the aspect of spiritual gifts, pastors are embroiled in a competitive mode, each attempting to showcase possession of superior gifts of the holy spirit than others. Different pastors are gifted differently. Some are miracle workers, charismatic great teachers of the word, while others are gifted with great spiritual and psycho-social counselling skills to afflicted Christians. Some pastors claim to possess great anointing, speak in tongues, prophesy upon people's future while some are known to pray for the poor so that they achieve economic and financial success. Born Again pastors have positioned their 'spiritual gifts' as bona fide 'religious products' that religious consumers can buy. This has brought competition, with each pastor claiming possession of superior spiritual gifts than others. This makes believers to move from one church to another looking for a place that may satisfy their quest for spiritual deliverance, sometimes making them confused and frustrated. Church hopping breeds accusations of 'stealing' and misleading each other's followers. There is outright and open undermining of each other's spiritual gift. The possession of different gifts could not lead to religious conflict among pastors but rather the way different ways in which they are understood and practised that divide churches (Kweku, 2013). Using a business minded strategy, to outcompete others, pastors create curiosity among believers, increasing movement across these churches due to their pronounced publicity. In most cases, many Christians quit their churches to join other Pentecostal churches a trend that creates animosity among them (Gathuki, 2015).

Theological controversy on marriage and divorce emerged in 2012, with Pastor David Kiganda of the Christianity Focus Center-Kisenyi, divorcing his wife and remarrying another (Kiganda vs. Nasejje, 2012). This raised tensions between pastors in the country. Christian marriage is supposed to be monogamous, and terminated by death alone. Pastor David Kiganda, in attempt to legitimise his remarriage, argued contrary to orthodoxy Christian teaching on marriage, saying that God allows divorce in certain circumstances, especially adultery. He justified the departure from known Christian doctrine, basing on two accounts; firstly, Mathew 19:9, where Jesus seemed to imply that divorce was not permissible for any reason except for adultery. For Pastor David Kiganda had caught his legal wife in an adulterous act. Secondly, on the Christian teaching of forgiveness and reconciliation, he differed with known teaching, asserting that the Bible draws a clear line between forgiveness and reconciliation. He cited the

examples of Adam and Eve when they fell short of God's glory, and that of King David's adulterous scandal with Uriah's wife. Whereas God forgave the sinners in the above incidents, they suffered the consequences of sin. Adam and Eve were cast out of paradise, just as David lost the child of adultery. Pastor David Kiganda therefore, argued that whereas he had forgiven his wife for adultery, the divorce was a consequence of the sin (Lutwama & Wandawa, 2013). Yet again, on 9th January 2020, Pastor Aloysious Bugingo of the House of Prayer Ministries International, in an attempt to divorce his wife and remarry another, distanced himself from a long time Christian doctrine and practice on marriage when he declared the Christian marriage vows as unbiblical and satanic. He challenged whoever could show him any verse in the bible which states that, 'till death do us apart', a vow that is mandatory for celebration of Christian marriages. He justified the necessity for dissolution of marriage contrary to Christian doctrine, saying that divorce helps to mitigate murders prevalent among jilted couples (Kasujja, 2020). He was condemned and declared a heretic by Born Again pastors and Christian leaders from the mainstream churches (Twinomijuni, 2020). The contestation of Christian teaching on marriage and divorce is hereby established to be more prevalent among pastors contrary to findings by Odhiambo (2014), who had earlier identified these to be more significant among congregational members.

Whereas Born Again Christians espouse the gospel of prosperity, there are disagreements over the 'sale of blessings', otherwise theologically and commonly referred to as 'sowing of seed'. The teaching of 'seed sowing' preoccupies sermons of contemporary Born Again pastors in Uganda, whose emphasis is on encouraging followers to pay money to the church so that they can get God's blessings and miracles in equal measure. To the Born Again Christians, "sowing a seed," is similar to planting a seed in the ground that later produces a harvest (Agiresaasi, 2016). The more seed you sow, the more blessings one expects from God! Some pastors have outrightly asked believers to come with a non-negotiable amount of 'seed' if they wanted to have a one on one interaction with the pastor. Members of the congregation are cautioned against failure to part with 10% of their monthly income, as a grave sin (Ojulu, 2020). Christians however, become disappointed and start moving from one Pentecostal church to another seeking for fulfilment. This scenario destabilises the Born Again churches because in the process of constant movement, believers talk ill of their former pastors. The theology of 'sowing seed' is a questionable doctrine that is misused by members of the Born Again church but also detested by some pastors, arousing a disagreement in the industry (Jenga, 2017; Ojulu, 2019; Agiresaasi, 2016).

Another theological controversy, concerns the biblical translation of the third person of the trinity. This was courted by Pastor Aloysious Bugingo, who argued that some biblical translations especially the King James Version were inaccurate, for they erroneously use the word 'holy ghost' rather than 'holy spirit'. Using the literal understanding of 'ghost' in African traditional religious beliefs, where 'ghost' is usually evil and comes to haunt the living with misfortunes, Pastor Bugingo thought of the King James Version translation of 'holy ghost' as being inappropriate, because to him, it is not possible for a 'ghost to be holy'. He therefore, decreed to his followers to surrender all versions of the bible in their possession which carried the name 'holy ghost' rather than 'holy spirit'. The copies of the versions of the bible were to be burnt. Pastor Bugingo received widespread condemnation from the Born Again Pastors fraternity and clergy from the mainstream churches. He was described as mad, haunted by the devil and a heretic. He was dragged to court by some Christians on accusations of burning bibles, for which he had no copyright and a disgrace to the Christian faith. Two prominent city pastors were believed to be witnesses in court against Pastor Bugingo. Finally, the theology of 'retaliation' is the exclusive trademark in the teachings of Pastor Augustine Yiga of the Revival

Christian Church, Kawaala (RCCK). The theology is anchored on the African traditional religious philosophy of dealing with witchcraft, where witchcraft is sent back to the offender, relieving the victim of agony (Isiko, 2019b; Isiko, 2018). He has gained fame as ‘*Abizaayo*’, literally meaning ‘he who sends back witchcraft’. This theology is also based on Jesus’ teaching of harvesting what one was able to sow. This theology is akin to the Pentecostal theology of exorcism, except that ‘retaliation theology’ aims to neutralise evil spirits and witchcraft by sending them back to their source, in which case the offender would then face the consequences that ordinarily would be experienced by his/her victim. The theology detests the doctrine of forgiveness, as it promotes revenge. The point of contention among pastors over this theology is neither its perceived ineffectiveness nor its contradiction with Christian doctrine and practice but its growing popularity among Christians, capable of winning its practitioner more followers, public attention and power than those who do not believe in it.

7. Conclusion

Inter-church conflict among Born Again churches remains a fascinating feature of religious relations in Uganda. It provides a departure from religio-political conflicts that defined Uganda’s history during colonial and post-independence times. On the whole, conflict is both covert and overt. This study zeroed in on the latter conflict which also has been found manifest in majorly the various pastors as collective agents. Behind these inter-religious and interchurch conflicts lies individual figures who operate as agents. Although these conflicts are presented as fundamentally doctrinal or theological, they are political, ethical and financial in nature. These conflicts continue to manifest through mediatization, coalitions and alliances, along gender marked disparities, education levels and urban-rural differences. Various causes have been attributed to the proliferation of these conflicts; lack of institutional order, the insatiable appetite for power, authority and property, unhealthy competition for congregants exacerbated by the churches’ media presence. Moreover, the attitude of competition other than complementation has made the conflict almost impossible to resolve. The business style with which contemporary Born Again churches are managed inevitably puts them on a collision course with fellow church entrepreneurs. The marketing of church products offered by supposedly church ministries demand that they are presented to potential church clients as the better alternatives. Areas of contest for the interchurch conflict among Born Again churches have been of interest. Among others, they traverse ideology versus theology, how doctrine and practice thereof are construed or misconstrued, matters of church organisation and morality vis-à-vis the church’s position on national politics. Religious conflict is a socio-cultural and historical phenomenon. Where human society is, religion is and thus religious conflict inexorable. Howbeit, it has become apparent in this study that the hub of religious conflict is fundamentally theological and ideological which is resident among individual experiences of the personified figures leading these religious communities. It is thus likely that resolving the theological and ideological needs of individuals is a tremendous step towards the amelioration of religious conflict not only between born again churches but also among other religious societies world over.

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