

Clements Kadalie, the trade unionist, and prophet Shepherd Bushiri: A case study of their personality and influence in Southern Africa

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Abstract

The gold rush in South Africa required many workers, both skilled and unskilled, to work on the surface and underground in the recently discovered gold deposits on the Witwatersrand. Mining companies ventured to lure such labour across South (ern) Africa. As such, in the past century, trade union leadership and religious leadership in South Africa shared similar objectives. Clements Kadalie is one of those workers who reached South Africa to offer cheap labour and ended as a union leader. The post 1994 South African democratic dispensation attracted many people to pursue better economic opportunities. Shepherd Bushiri is one of them. This article engages in some theological reflections on these two leaders and their influence among the poor and destitute in South Africa, and by employing case study analysis.

Keywords

Garveyism; Ethiopianism; New Prophetic Movement; poor; praxis

Introduction

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries four leaders from different Christian traditions (Clements Kadalie, George Wellington Kampara, John Phillips and Albert Ankhoma) who emerged from Malawi (formerly Nyasaland) played significant roles in socio-economic-religious issues of South Africa (Dee 2018:384). The first two adhered to Ethiopianism whilst the last two adhered to Zionism and Classical Pentecostalism. Recently, another leader from Malawi emerged, Shepherd Bushiri. All these leaders managed to win the hearts and minds of African workers and Ethiopian,

Pentecostal, and Charismatic Christians. The focus of this article is on Clements Kadalie and Shepherd Bushiri. The two share the following similar backgrounds: both are from Malawi, were raised in Christian contexts, and migrated to South Africa for greener pastures. Secondly, Kadalie settled in Johannesburg (Dee 2018:392) while Bushiri settled at Tshwane and Brits. Thirdly, both share a dream of being continental leaders; Kadalie being the Marcus Garvey of Africa (cf. Dee 2018:391) whilst Bushiri being the most influential pastor/prophet in Africa (cf. Magezi and Banda 2017; Ramatshwana 2019). Their differences are noticed in their role in socio-economic-religious matters affecting the poor and marginalised in South Africa, both in the nineteenth century and the twenty-first century. Clements Kadalie's role was as a unionist among poor and marginalised African workers, whilst Shepherd Bushiri's role is being a pastor/prophet of a church consisting of mainly African township Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians. A second difference is that Kadalie was an adherent of Ethiopianism, whilst Bushiri is an adherent of the New Prophetic Movement, an offshoot of Neo-Pentecostalism.

Research methodology

This article employs case study method described as an intensive, systematic investigation of a single individual, group, community, or some other unit in which the researcher examines in-depth data relating to several variables (Woods 1980: cf Dooley 2002:337). The investigation is on Clements Kadalie and Shepherd Bushiri by using data from literature, and electronic media. The research question asks: how does a comparison of personality and influence Clements Kadalie and Shepherd Bushiri play out in the old South African and the post-1994 South Africa? An associated objective is to determine if their theological praxis benefited the poor and marginalised or exploited them.

Clements Kadalie

Clements Kadalie and Shepherd Bushiri originate from Malawi and were born in 1896 and 1983 respectively. Kadalie received his education at a mission school, where he was trained as a teacher and preacher (Dee 2018:392). He left Malawi for better employment elsewhere (van der Walt

2007:241) and finally reached South Africa (Kadalie 1970:34–7). He was one of a number of mission-educated Malawians who worked as mining clerks in Southern Africa (van der Walt 2007:241). After working in Mozambique and Southern Rhodesia (van der Walt 2007: 241), he settled in Johannesburg after first living in Cape Town (Dee 2018:392).

Kadalie, a Presbyterian Christian (Dee 2018:387), also associated with Garveyism and Ethiopianism that emerged elsewhere and had reached South Africa (Dee 2018:393–394). Garveyism is a political-religious movement that influenced Africans in the United States of America, the Caribbean and later Africans from the African continent, that follow Marcus Garvey's views on the emancipation of Africans from slavery. He was regarded as the modern-day Moses, (Dee 2018:385–386; Shepperson n.d. 347–348).

Mangena Mokone embraced Ethiopianism in 1896 through his association with the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) in the USA. It is based on Psalm 69:32 “Ethiopia will stretch out her hands unto God”; and its adherents advocated for the African clergy to secede from mission churches and establish independent churches (Dee 2018:385–386).

Kadalie established the first major trade union, the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU), in 1919 and was its first secretary (Dee 2018:391, Ngubane n.d.:73, Shepperson n.d.:352) before its split over allegations of financial mismanagement (Beinart and Bundy n.d.:71). He was most influential in Johannesburg, where he settled and was reported as addressing thousands of Africans at the “Market Square” later labelled “ICU square” (Dee 2018: 292). The union had an estimated Southern African membership of 200 000 in 1927/8, in Northern and Southern Rhodesia, (current Zambia and Zimbabwe), Southwest Africa (current Namibia) and South Africa (Beinart and Bundy n.d.:69; Dee 2018:391; van der Walt 2007:238). The union consisted of “a highly heterogeneous and poorly-paid population of permanent industrial workers, casual labourers, domestic servants, and the urban unemployed” (Beinart and Bundy n.d.:70). He made history in 1930 when he organised a general workers' strike (Beinart and Bundy n.d.: 72; Dee 2018:391) to demand a living wage (cf. Brain 1990:2; Jack n.d.:81). In addition, through his union, the ICU, he collaborated with the African National Congress (ANC) in a joint effort

to organise the workers for both political and industrial actions (Kadalie 1925, n.p.) through his association and collaboration with Selby Msimang, an influential workers' issues lawyer associated with the South African National Native Congress (SANNC), later called the African National Congress (ANC) (Mkhize 2015:62–67). Over time, Kadalie's views on Garveyism and Ethiopianism instilled fear in the hearts of leaders of the former South African government (Shepperson n.d.:352). Kadalie's views promoted the belief that Africa is for Africans and that African clergy should break way from mission churches to establish independent churches as a sign of emancipation.

Shepherd Bushiri

Shepherd Bushiri received his primary education in Malawi and his graduate education at Therapon University (Karen n.d.). Bushiri is associated with the New Prophet Movement or New-Prophetic Churches (NPC) in Africa (Kgatle 2020:2; Ramatshwana 2019) and in South Africa (Kgatle 2019:2). He is called a prophet and is popularly known as “Major 1” or “Papa”. He first entered South Africa in 2009 (SABC 2020) and settled in Tshwane and Brits, albeit under controversial circumstances. The South African Department of Home Affairs later declared his permanent residency illegal (SABC 2020; SAFLI 2020) and suspended some Home Affairs officials for having granted Bushiri and his wife permanent residency (*The Citizen* 2020). Bushiri had conducted several business ventures in 2014, 2015 and 2016 whilst he was provided with a visitor's visa only, hence Home Affairs has declared these activities illegal (SABC 2020). His illegal business operations, registered as SB Investments (Pty) Ltd, involve mining, real estate, oil and transport in RSA, UK, USA and Dubai (Karen.n.d.) and were accompanied by the establishing of a church, Enlightened Christian Gathering (ECG), whilst illegal in the country. The church mainly attracts township African Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians, and its estimated membership is 70 000, with the Tshwane Sunday service attended by 35 000; beyond South Africa the church has branches in Malawi, Ghana, South Sudan, and other parts of the world (Karen n.d.). The church official website mentions that the church has millions of followers (ECG n.d.). The church is considered to be the fastest growing church on the continent and in the world (Karen n.d.). According to what Dube calls “prophetpreneurship” (Dube 2020),

in 2019 his net worth was estimated to be \$150 million and he is ranked the second most wealthy pastor in Africa, after pastor David Odeyepo in Nigeria (YEN 2020). Hence, his opulent lifestyle.

Controversies surrounding Bushiri do not relate only to his illegal permanent residency. They also range from his being a false prophet exploiting poor and unsuspecting Christian members (Ramatshwana 2019), faking miracles (Legit 2016; cf. Ramatshwana 2019), a stampede in December 2018 that killed three people and injured seventeen others at a church (Maromo 2019). His ministry and business ventures have led to two fraud and money laundering charges being laid against him (Dlamini 2020; Nqola 2019). He and wife, business associates, are currently out on bail for two charges laid against him. Currently, he has fled the country to Malawi, and has claimed that he fled South Africa because he is convinced that he will not be afforded a fair trial in South Africa (Hosken 2020; Lindeque 2020). Nevertheless, he has shown some trace of caring for the poor when he donated to victims of an outbreak of fire that killed people and destroyed informal structures at an informal settlement in Alexandra (Sibanyoni 2019). His investment company is listed in the CEO's Hall of Fame of Africa's influential magazine *Africa Leadership Magazine* (Karen n.d.).

Some theological reflections on Clements Kadalie's influence

Clements Kadalie and Shepherd Bushiri have influenced many people in South(ern) Africa, albeit for different reasons. Kadalie, a Presbyterian-trained teacher and preacher (Dee 2018:392) challenged the prevailing Pentecostalism and Zionism teachings that had created a dichotomy between socio-economic and religious issues affecting the poor workers in South Africa (Dee 2018:385, 393) and which had led and influenced workers amid the ideals of Ethiopianism, Zionism, and Pentecostalism (Dee 2018:387). Ethiopianism shaped his socio-religious worldview that stirred him to influence the working class towards a vision of political and religious independence. Through his association with Ethiopianism, he challenged colonialism and advocated an African Christianity that was based on promoting the place of Africa in the Bible and Christianity (Psalm 68:32; Dee 2018:393). At first, Kadalie was at home with such a religious

worldview, as it resonated with Garvey's "Africa for Africans" (Cronon 1955 [1969]; cf. Dee 2018:394); although he later discarded Garveyism (Dee 2018:391–392). Contrary to Pentecostalism's view of separating the secular and the sacred and Garveyism's emphasis of Africa for Africans, Kadalie's theological view was that the salvation of Africans would come by their own "sweat and labour" (Dee 2018:385). This soteriological view dismissed dualism between socio-economic issues and spirituality. Even though this is not compatible with Pauline soteriology, it highlights Paul's teachings that believers should work with their hands (1 Thess 4:11) as he did (Acts 18:3, 20:34), and that those who do not work should not expect to eat (2 Thess 3:10). It resonates with Paul's desire to always care for the poor as James, Peter and John asked (Gal 2:10).

Kadalie further collaborated with Selby Msimang on issues of the working class (Mkhize 2015:95–107) and organising the first general worker's strike demanding a living wage (Dee 2018:391). This bears witness to caring for the poor. Using his rhetoric and preaching ability, he encouraged workers to act by going beyond prayer and joining the ICU in its quest to champion the working class (Dee 2018: 395); this echoes some element of perseverance and hints at action flowing from faith and prayer. Kadalie's view was different from Zionism's teaching that prayer revitalises physical bodies to be heavenly bodies (Dee 2018:397) and to be content with their wages (*ibid.*, p. 398), and contradicted Zionism and Pentecostalism's view not to defy their current political leadership (*ibid.*, p. 403).

Although no longer a preacher and accused of misinterpreting the biblical texts (Dee 2018:393), Kadalie did not fit into a category of preachers that Paul said used the gospel for false motives (Phil 1:15–18), but he championed the cause of the poor working class (cf. Gal 2:10). In this way he displayed some elements of "servant leader" (cf. Greenleaf 1977). Sadly, he failed three biblical leadership tests of being a good steward (Mt 25:14–30; 2 Cor 8:16–24). He was accused of financial mismanagement (Beinart and Bundy n.d.:71); and he was trapped in a self-promotion exercise that clashed with the above principle of servant leadership because of his desire and quest to be the Marcus Garvey of Africa (Dee 2018:391). Finally, although he used biblical motifs, he did not point members of the working class to Christ by an example of his lifestyle and leadership (1 Cor 11:1).

Clements Kadalie lived in the nineteenth century and is less well known among Christians and features little among theological discourses. Available literature point that he was an advocate of the poor African working class and displayed a theological praxis that resonates with the Christian view of caring for the poor.

Some theological reflections on Shepherd Bushiri's influence

Shepherd Bushiri is a renowned contemporary Christian leader among African township Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians and features among theological discourses. He entered ministry in 2002 (Mabena 2020), as a follower of the New Prophetic Movement, and advocates and elevates personal prophecy among his followers. His church, Enlightened Christian Gathering (ECG), is one of the prophetic churches influenced by the prophetic churches that emerged from West Africa. Such churches have attracted many people from different socio-economic-religious backgrounds because they speak to and address issues that affect African spirituality.

Shepherd Bushiri positioned himself as a preacher and entrepreneur within the South African religious landscape. His ministry philosophy is a twisted version of Paul's praxis and advice to the Ephesian elders, namely work with one's own hand and provide one's own needs (Acts 20:34), and tent-making praxis in Acts 18:3. He thus holds that he must care for himself and his family (ECG n.d.). Unlike most African township Pentecostal-Charismatic pastors who teach and argue that believers should care for them through giving tithes and offerings, and appeal to Malachi 3:10–17, 1 Corinthians 9:3–14 and Galatians 6:6 as the basis for such teaching and appeal, Shepherd Bushiri teaches and appeals to such Scriptures, but does not end there.

His ministry philosophy of combining and simultaneously separating ministry and entrepreneurship enabled him to be one of the wealthiest pastors in Africa with an estimated net worth of \$150 million (Karen n.d.; Mabena 2020). His lavish lifestyle and prophetic ministry lure many upcoming and established African township Pentecostal-Charismatic pastors. He does not do ministry outside entrepreneurship. He charges for

doing ministry and produces tangible elements used in church services and for protecting ECG believers, covering home, business, vehicles, and body. Such elements are available in the form of vehicle stickers, holy shoes, water, anointing oil, and others, which were estimated to raise between R1.5 and R2 million a week (Chester 2020; cf. PaZimbabwe 2016). In addition, he also promotes and teaches a one-on-one prophecy session at a cost, “because you cannot see a prophet without a gift” hence they charge between R5 000 and R7 000 for such service (Kgatle 2019:4).

Unlike Paul who mentioned that he does not preach the gospel for gain (Phil 1:15–18), Bushiri does. The poor, the middle-class and the elite members of ECG are expected to buy these products, pay for one-on-one prophecy sessions, and pay to listen and to sit next to him during some ECG events and services. Bushiri’s ministry philosophy contradicts Paul who pointed that he lowered himself and preached the gospel free of charge (2 Cor 11:7). According to Bushiri nothing is for *mahala*. Remembering the poor as expressed on Mandela day (ECG n.d) is really some form of whitewashing and performing, because on the other hand, the poor who attend the church are instead taught to remember him as the man of God who speaks on behalf of God and brings them the word from God. His practice has led him to be publicly accused as one of those African Pentecostal-Charismatic pastors who have commercialised the gospel (CRL 2017; Mabena 2020).

As a preacher and prophet, Bushiri has also been accused of faking miracles, giving false teachings, and exploiting the poor and vulnerable (Dube 2020; Ramatshwana 2019). Furthermore, and unlike Paul, who pointed believers to Christ (1 Cor 11:1) and to be content (1 Tim 6:6–10), Bushiri does not shy away from pointing ECG members to himself and to learn from his ability to combine gospel with entrepreneurship, as he glories and boasts about his lavish lifestyle. This instils a desire to achieve a status of “Pentecostalism of wealth” among ECG members and those who follow his teachings. ECG members seek “Pentecostalism of wealth” by buying tangible elements and participating in financial schemes that promise wealth accumulation. The paying of tithes and bringing offerings to the church is also done with the intention of accessing the status of “Pentecostalism of wealth”.

Finally, his integrity has been tainted as he and wife are officially charged with fraud, theft, and money laundering (*The Citizen* 2020), being in

the country illegally and illegally obtaining South African permanent residency (SABC News 2020). Both are currently out on bail and are wanted as fugitives, as they have skipped the conditions of their bail by fleeing to their country, Malawi.

An analysis of Kadalie and Bushiri’s theological praxis

Kadalie and Bushiri demonstrate that doing theology flow from once’s convictions and conceptualisation. The two grounded their approach on two distinct convictions influenced by two distinct conceptualising processes. Kadalie, an indirect missionary in the pre-democratic South Africa, conceptualised a theological praxis that rooted in championing the course of the poor and displayed a solidarity as he addressed “fundamental issues of social justice, economic equity and the fair distribution of resources” (De Beer 2014:8). His efforts were later embodied in Methula’s (2014:113) liberation theology view that, this is a theological praxis meant “to search for an alternative economic system founded on economic reconciliation that prioritises the victims of colonialism and apartheid”. A praxis demonstrating where “God stands”; as God always stand with the poor and those who are wronged against the unjust oppressors (Kritzinger 2014:5). Kadalie’s conceptualisation finds expression as a solidarity praxis Kritzinger embraces:

Having interacted daily with people who were politically oppressed and economically exploited, I have learnt to do theology and ministry in solidarity with black fellow believers, working for justice, equality, and freedom (Kritzinger & Mande 2016:2)

On the contrary, Bushiri a direct missionary in the post-1994 South Africa, conceptualised a theological praxis of self-enrichment at the expense of the poor (Banda 2020 and Kgatle 2019); unashamedly applies questionable means to maintain his lavish lifestyle contrary to the gospel and adored being served instead of serving others. This is reflected in “how congregants were left without taxi fare to return home after donating all their money in the hope of receiving additional blessings” (Bradford 2019:13). They are victims of a transactional view of God. Furthermore, Ramatshwana (2019:6) explains that:

Furthermore, in our current culture of consumption, people tend to view religion as a commodity, and they are willing to purchase or spend towards it just as they do towards other products. Whether the quality is perceived or objective, once the customer is convinced of the service or the product, which the church, or else the prophet or pastor is offering, there is a willingness to pay or give more towards the church.

Banda (2020:3) adds that:

... those who paid more money were able to have a seat closer to the prophet. In some church services, prophets conduct special personalised prayers for those who would have given larger amounts of money. The transactional view believes that a Christian's state of blessedness is through possessing anointed objects.

Banda (2020:10) posit that this praxis undermines the soteriological role of Jesus Christ. It is further likened to the practice of African Indigenous healers who promote the use and application of tangible elements and proximity to them. These provide their customers with such elements to obtain fortification and victory over evil forces (Turaki 1999:181–198). Similarly, the prophetic praxis links demonic activities, witchcraft and evil or Satan (cf Asamoah-Gyadu 2015:23–27).

Consequently, Kadalie and Bushiri conceptualised divergent theological praxis influenced by their views on serving the poor and marginalised in South Africa. The former's view converges with another clergy, missionary and theologian, Kritzinger, while the latter reflect a praxis that resonates with the transactional view African indigenous Healers. A view that undermines the soteriological role of Jesus Christ.

Summary

This article juxtaposed Clements Kadalie and Shepherd Bushiri, two Malawian nationals who lived in South Africa for different reasons during the pre-democratic South Africa and the post-1994 South Africa. The research question is, how does a comparison of personality and influence Clements Kadalie and Shepherd Bushiri ploy in the old South African and the post-1994 South Africa? Its objective is to determine if their theological praxis benefited the poor and marginalised or exploited them.

Kadalie and Bushiri displayed two different approaches that placed them as influential figures among the poor and the marginalised African communities. Both share a common background of achieving some form of theological training, albeit contrary. Their theological training manifested itself in the religio-socio-economic sphere of the country as each conceptualised a theological praxis that either sided with the poor and marginalised or exploited them.

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