

The Evolution and Doctrinal Transformations of New Religious Movements Deriving from Catholicism in Zimbabwe

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Abstract:

This article delves into the emergence and doctrinal evolution of New Religious Movements (NRMs) in Zimbabwe, particularly those with roots in the Catholic tradition, exemplified by Prophetic Healing and Deliverance (PHD) Ministries, Grace Oasis Ministries (GOM), and Emmaus Encounter (EE). These movements, founded by individuals with Catholic backgrounds, illustrate a significant doctrinal shift from traditional Catholic teachings to a distinct emphasis on prosperity, miraculous healings, and personalised prophecy. The study explores how the concept of confirmation, initially a rite of spiritual maturation in Catholicism, is reinterpreted in these NRMs as a divine endorsement for leadership roles. The article critically examines these movements' departure from Catholic doctrines of suffering and prophecy towards a theology centred on immediate prosperity and direct divine communication, highlighting the broader implications for religious identity and practice in the Zimbabwean context.

Keywords: Confirmation; New Religious Movements; Pentecostalism; Prophecy; Prosperity Gospel; Suffering,

Introduction

This article embarks on a scholarly expedition to explore the history and doctrinal shifts of New Religious Movements (NRMs) in Zimbabwe, emerging from the Catholic Church's doctrinal roots. It delves into how NRMs such as Prophetic Healing and Deliverance (PHD) Ministries, Grace Oasis Ministries (GOM), and Emmaus Encounter (EE) have transitioned from traditional Catholic doctrines to develop unique theological perspectives, especially concerning confirmation, suffering, and prophecy. These movements, founded by individuals with deep connections to Catholicism, exhibit a

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notable transformation in religious ideology, moving towards a theology that accentuates prosperity, miraculous occurrences, and individual prophecy. The introduction aims to set the stage for a comprehensive analysis of these NRMs, examining their inception within the socio-religious landscape of Zimbabwe and how they have reinterpreted Catholic sacramental and doctrinal elements to align with their evolving religious narratives. By tracing the roots of these movements back to their Catholic origins and observing their doctrinal evolution, the article critically examines the broader implications of these shifts for understanding religious identity, practice, and community dynamics in contemporary Zimbabwean society.

History of Christianity in Zimbabwe

Understanding Pentecostalism and NRMs in Zimbabwe is linked to the history of Christianity in Zimbabwe, which began with the origins of the two dominant tribes, namely the Shona people, who occupy the northern part of the country and the Ndebele in the south. Regarding the origins of the Shona and Ndebele people, Beach (1994) proposed two theories, one of which involves the migration of the Bantu speakers of South Africa and the diffusion from the hunter-gatherer community. Both schools agree that these Bantu people migrated from North-East Africa to Southern Africa, then moved up to Limpopo, settling in present-day Zimbabwe. The Ndebele tribe originates in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. It was initially led by Mzilikazi of the Khumalo clan, who rebelled against King Shaka Zulu, then moved from KwaZulu-Natal, passed through Limpopo and entered, then settled, in the south-west of present-day Zimbabwe (Isichei 1995; Sibanda and Dube 2018, 44). Many clans and dialects in Zimbabwe have existed since the 9th century, but the Shona and Ndebele remain dominant in Zimbabwe. These two tribes have played a pivotal role in the history of Christianity in Zimbabwe (Beach 1994). Several missionary attempts were made to convert local people.

Several empires for both Shona and Ndebele existed before 900 CE, where in 1559, Portuguese Society of Jesus (Jesuits) missionaries led by Reverend Father Gonzalo da Silveira were received by the Munhumutapa kingdom. Their efforts to convert the empire to Catholicism were unsuccessful and disastrous, followed by the Dominican Friars (Hastings 1994, 73; Chirengje 1973, 36-48; Denis 1998; Vambe 1972). During the same 16th century, Mzilikazi moved to Bulawayo in the southwest of present-day Zimbabwe, conquering the Rozvi Empire and other Shona groups, reducing them to vassaldom (Sibanda and Dube 2018, 44). Sundkler and Steed (2000, 445) argue that the 'missionary road' was initiated by three Scottish missionaries, Robert Moffat, David Livingstone and John Mackenzie, under the London Missionary Society (LMS). Their attempts to convert the local Ndebele people from 1850 to 1880, together with Fr Peter Prestige under the Jesuits, did not work. A third successful and final attempt was made to Christianise. Then it colonised Rhodesia – present-day Zimbabwe – in 1889 with the

Pioneer Column¹ recruited by Cecil John Rhodes and comprised a team of Jesuits and Dominican missionaries dedicated to serving the Shona people whom the Ndebele had conquered under Mzilikazi (Linden 1980, 8). The history of Christianity in Zimbabwe demonstrates three phases of church planting: mission churches, Pentecostal churches, and New Religious Movements.

The History of Mission Churches in Zimbabwe

The first phase was the missionary evangelism of the 19th century, which included mainline denominations such as Catholic, Anglican, and Methodist churches. The Catholic Church in Zimbabwe became known for its missionary involvement in humanitarian work, education and health. The Catholic Church established institutions or missions such as Chishawasha, Empandeni, Gokomere, Silveira mission, Driefontein, Hwange Training Centre, Silveira House, Triashill and many more (Weller and Linden 1984). Catholics also played a critical role in evangelisation and addressing poverty and unemployment during the colonial era (Rogers 2012, 171). Catholic Charismatic Renewal exists within the Catholic Church, a spiritual movement incorporating aspects of both Catholic and Charismatic movement practice. Some teachings of Protestantism and Pentecostalism tend to influence this movement, emphasising having a personal relationship with Jesus and expressing the gift of the Holy Spirit (Csordas 2007, 295-314). It is to this group that Walter Magaya belonged before the founding of the PHD Ministries. During the colonial era, the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe operated in Manicaland in St Augustine- Penhalonga, where five evangelists, including Bernard Muzeki and Frank Ziqubu, started working at Mangwende and Makoni. Bishop Gaul's coming to Mashonaland brought more teachers and established more schools, including St Augustine and St Faith Boys High and St Monica Girls High in Manicaland (Zvobgo 1973, 76). The Anglican church provided humanitarian assistance, children/youth counselling, education/training on environment, gender, HIV and AIDS, health support, microfinance, poverty alleviation, rural development and vocational training. Methodism came in two forms: the British Wesleyan Church centred in Harare (Epworth) in 1891 and the American United Methodist in Old Mutare in 1898 (Baur 2009, 289). The Weslyans opened a hospital at Kwenda Mission in 1913 and a teacher training department at Nenguwo (Waddilove) Mission, while the Methodist Episcopal Church paid attention to the demand for

1 The Pioneer Column was a force comprising missionaries and colonists gathered by Cecil Rhodes and his British South Africa Company in 1890 to seize the territory of Mashonaland, reached Salisbury now (Harare) on 17 September 1891. raised the British flag, and occupied Mashonaland. It was accompanied by the Jesuits led by Fr Andrew Hartmann, Canon Balfour from the Anglican Diocese of Bloemfontein, Dominican sisters under Mother Patrick Cosgrave, missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa, the Wesleyan Methodist Church with Owen Watkins and Isaac Shimmin, the Salvation Army under Captain John Pascoe, and RH Scott and the American Board of Commissioners consisting of eight Americans (Zvobgo 1996,5).

education (schools) and health (hospitals) as a tool for evangelisation. Schools and a hospital were addressing the needs of the people.

The history of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe

The second wave began with the 1906 Azusa Street movement that gave birth to Pentecostalism. Some scholars classify African Independent/Initiated Churches (AICs) under Pentecostal churches, while others separate them. AICs include the Ethiopians, Zionists, and Charismatics. The AICs are African initiatives that have flourished with their focus on communality and the amalgamation of facets of Christianity with the culture of the local people (Hastings 1994, 118; Sundkler and Steed 2000, 816). Ethiopians², Zionists³ and Charismatics⁴ were the African-initiated or independent churches that evolved within the second wave of classical Pentecostalism, even though an overlap was witnessed. It is believed that William Joseph Seymour started the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) on 312 Azusa Street in 1906. Pentecostal missionaries were sent out worldwide, reaching over 25 nations in two years (Gooren 2004, 43).

Togarasei (2006, 1) pointed out that the Pentecostal movement reached South Africa two years after the Azusa revival and then moved to Zimbabwe. Due to mining activities in South Africa, many migrants from Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Zambia were hosted and were believed to have embraced Pentecostalism in South Africa. Upon returning home, it was believed that the migrants preached the same gospel in Zimbabwe. In 1915, in Gwanda, Zacharias Manamela laid the foundation of AFM (Maxwell 2006, 38; Togarasei 2010, 21). Other missionaries, such as Reverend G.J. Booyesen and Mr. Kgobe, who succeeded Mr. Manamela, tried to gain official recognition but failed (Togarasei 2010, 21). Emphasis was on glossolalia and faith healing. In Harare, the church was denied official status because of an uneasiness caused by roaming all over the districts without respecting the missionary boundaries put in place by the colonial government, the preaching and activities around glossolalia, healing, and speaking in tongues, which was different from the mainline formalised worship (Togarasei 2016, 4). The official recognition of the AFM in 1943 led to the proper coordination and administration of the church, activities, establishment of order, and discipline, leading some members to leave the church voluntarily or by expulsion (Togarasei 2016, 5). Many schisms developed, forming more Pentecostal churches, though not all

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- 2 Even if the Ethiopian movement can be classified under second wave of classical Pentecostalism, it is pertinent to note that Ethiopians appeared long before Pentecostalism emerged as a structured church movement. Hence Ethiopianists belong to the late 19th century.
 - 3 Daneel (1970) Zionism and Faith Healing in Rhodesia, Aspects of African Independent Churches, writes about this other phenomenon, focusing much on Zion Christian Churches and apostolic sects, arguing that these churches in particular Zionists focus on the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Zionists belong to the early 20th century.
 - 4 These Charismatics are a combination of African initiatives in Christianity that flourished on communality and the local people's culture. They include the Apostolic sects such as Joane Marange and Joane Masowe and they are different from the Charismatics influenced by the American Pentecostalism.

Pentecostal churches emerged directly from the AFM. A considerable amount of literature published on Pentecostalism and AFM shows that the churches from the AFM had their reasons for the breakaway. What is common is their emphasis on the gospel of prosperity.

The mass exodus of people from the AFM saw others form apostolic churches, which became the AICs, developing their theologies differently from the AFM teaching. Of interest was the AFM's birth to the ZAOGA, a church that Maxwell (2006, 60) saw as a church for young zealots focused on prosperity. These young Pentecostal zealots included Joseph Choto, Raphael Kupara, Lazurus Mamvura, James Muhwati, Priscilla Ngoma, Caleb Ngorima and Abel Sande, who formed a prayer band and choir around the charismatic evangelist Ezekiel Guti, who is well known as the founder of ZAOGA Forward in Faith. ZAOGA Forward in Faith operated in urban areas and moved into the rural areas, paying attention to making the best of rapid social change and guarding Pentecostals against falling into poverty and destitution (Togarasei 2016, 6). The church has extended social services to running schools, orphanages, hospitals, television stations, and a university in Bindura (Musoni (2013, 80). Other Pentecostal churches that became popular in Zimbabwe include the Family of God (FOG), founded by Andrew Wutawunashe in 1980. FOG has attracted those seeking success and prosperity, with most followers coming from high-density suburbs. The FOG targeted schools, colleges, and urban centres with its outreach programme based on where members reside, and crusades were then done in those areas (Togarasei 2016, 6). It emphasised breaking away from the appeasement of ancestral spirits, the unveiling of tombstones and other traditional practices (Togarasei 2010, 356). The church, however, attracts youth aged 22-35 years, calling them to be successful in business and aiming to become millionaires. The gospel of prosperity remains central to the FOG as believers are called to be delivered from the spirit of poverty and healing from witchcraft and evil spirits, issues that the mainline churches ignored.

The history of the 'Third Wave' Pentecostal Movement

The history of Pentecostalism shows that the first (missionary evangelism) and second (classical Pentecostalism) wave of Christianity overlapped with the African Independent/Initiated Churches. The third wave gave birth to another form of Charismatic Christianity influenced by American Pentecostalism, a revival movement (Meyer 2007; Anderson 2001, 18). The third wave is well known for its emphasis on 'the gospel of prosperity' within the context of the New Religious Right Movement- a term used by politicians who were Christians and wanted to separate themselves from other politicians with their passion for God and an extremely conservative attitude in USA (Gifford 1988, 1). Its origins have also been linked to the healing revivals of the 1950s in the USA with evangelists such as Essek William Kenyon, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, A.A. Allen (1950s), T.L. Osborn and W. Branham (1960s), Kenneth Hagin (1970s) Oral Roberts, John Avanzini, Morris Cerullo, Fred Price and many more as champions of a prosperity gospel (Cornelio and Medina 2020, 66). Within America, this

movement had a political agenda that was maintained through its spread to Latin America. A paradigm shift was made in its socio-political ideology to the 'gospel of prosperity' when it spread to Africa.

American televangelists like Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart in the 1980s further propagated the prosperity gospel, significantly impacting the Zimbabwean religious landscape (Shumba 2015, 154). Sundkler and Steed (2000, 812) noted that Zimbabwean independence ushered in the mushrooming of NRMs. Some of the NRMs during that time included Campus Crusade, which came to Zimbabwe in 1979 as Life Ministries, providing chaplaincy at the University of Zimbabwe and focusing on those students who had no pastors, distributing food, providing seminars, and giving retreats to businesspeople (Gifford 1988, 50). The Rhema Bible Church held its first service in Zimbabwe in April 1982. It ran various programmes focusing on prosperity. The church prioritised youth, prisons, hospitals, and audio and videotaped ministries. Around 1996, Tom Deuschle changed the name Rhema Bible Church to Hear the Word Church (Deuschle 2003). At present, the church is well known as 'Celebration Ministries'. Deuschle (2003) pointed out that the church focuses mainly on transforming people's lives through different sectors within Celebration Ministries. Another church focusing on transformation is New Life Ministries, founded by Tundo Bismark and his wife, ChiChi. It was formerly Jabula – New Life Ministries International in 1989, an extension of New Life Covenant Church in Harare. The vision of New Life Ministries is to establish God's kingdom by transforming people and nations with a philosophy of empowerment.

The History of NRMs in Zimbabwe Post-2008

A clear typology of NRMs in Zimbabwe has proved to be a challenge. Chitando (2013, 97) argues that three critical dimensions are relevant to understanding Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe, suggesting that the first forms part of a significant global phenomenon that has remained one of the fastest-growing religious phenomena in the contemporary period. It all started and expanded in the USA, emphasising the Holy Spirit's role, speaking in tongues and miracles (Cornelio and Medina 2020, 65). Within this first critical dimension suggested by Chitando (2013), it has commonly been assumed Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) gave birth to various churches including Assemblies of God (AOG), Family of God (FOG), and Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) (Matikiti 2017, 138-142; Gifford 1988, 2; Maxwell 1998, 355; Togarasei 2005, 350; Mumford 2012, 372; Bishau 2015, 5). Chitando (2013) argues that the AICs contribute to the second critical dimension of African Pentecostalism, which interacts with global phenomena but gives an African flavour of its African view of the universe and its beliefs in myriad spirits and powers.

The third critical dimension relevant to understanding Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe, as suggested by Chitando (2013, 97), is the emergence of young Pentecostal prophets after 2008. Gunda (2012, 335-336) and Anderson (2001) suggested that young Pentecostal

prophets must be linked to the ‘spirit type’ prophets of Apostolic, Zionist and charismatic AICs⁵ who emerged in Zimbabwe in the 1930s. Asamoah-Gyadu (2012) detects a move from ‘prophetism’ to Pentecostalism while Chitando (2013, 98) argues that the two could co-exist. However, older apostolic prophets seem to have been overtaken by young, charismatic Pentecostal prophets preaching about prosperity. After the 2008 crisis in Zimbabwe, witnessed by hyperinflation, economic and political crisis and increasing poverty, unemployment, high death rates, and hopelessness, a new type of gospel of prosperity emerged. This new gospel of prosperity is coupled with its young and famous prophets, miracles and miracle workers (Zimunya and Gwara 2013, 187). Their message of promising wealth, health, abundant life and hope appeals to a dejected society. Solace was sought in religion, and the Pentecostal prophets preached that God had grand plans for Zimbabweans, gaining popularity in severe socio-economic challenges (Chitando 2013, 98). Some founders emerged from Zimbabwe and Nigeria, with many Zimbabweans trained under prominent West African preachers who were well-known for performing miracles. Such pastors include T.B Joshua of Synagogue Church of All Nations, Pastor Victor Kusi Boateng of Ghana, and Pastor Chris Oyakhilome of Christ Embassy (Vengeyi 2013, 30).

Gukurume (2021, 30) refers to NRMs founded by youthful charismatic leaders from 2008 and onwards as the fourth wave of the Pentecostal category. He argues that the fourth wave is marked by a strong emphasis on the prophetic and miraculous accumulation of material wealth in the here and now rather than the life after death. In addition, it is largely initiated in Africa by young and charismatic prophets who deploy spectacular power in demonstrating the power of Jesus Christ in a battlefield world where Christians engage in perpetual spiritual warfare to fight against the work of evil forces (Gukurume 2021, 31). While Gukurume (2021) considers these youthful charismatic leaders as the fourth-wave Pentecostal category, I argue that these youthful prophets still form part of the third wave, emphasising the gospel of prosperity. What makes them unique is their age and emphasis on miraculous wealth and healing⁶, as well as the period (2008 onwards) in which they were bound to emerge within the Zimbabwean context. Vengeyi (2013, 31) clarified that these miracles and prosperity

5 Their founders are generally charismatic and younger men and women who are respected for their preaching and leadership abilities and relatively well educated, though not necessarily in theology. These churches tend to be more sharply opposed to several traditional practices than is the case with prophet healing churches. They often ban alcohol and tobacco, symbolic healing objects, and the wearing of uniforms. The membership consists of younger, less economically deprived, and more formally educated people. They are often seen, particularly by the older AICs, as mounting a sustained attack on traditional African values (Anderson 2001, 19)

⁶ The healing component of the Pentecostal AICs was meant to fill the gap left by mainline churches, which focused on physical healing at the expense of spiritual healing. Oduro (2006,2) classified the AICs as a ‘potpourri of African churches’ though maintained that there are conservative, charismatic, and reformed AICs.

gospel are not entirely new to Zimbabwe. Prophets in AICs, traditional healers, E.H Guti of ZAOGA, Andrew Wutawunashe of FOG, Matthias and Mildred of Matthias, and Mildred Church all claimed they performed miracles. Pentecostal churches have sprouted or mushroomed in this context, offering much-needed solace. Pentecostal churches have offered hope in desperate situations. Many Zimbabweans claimed to have witnessed miraculous signs performed by the prophets, while others kept joining these new churches, claiming to have their physical and spiritual problems supposedly solved.

The above-mentioned youthful charismatic prophets within the NRMs in Zimbabwe include the United Family International Church of Emmanuel Makandiwa, the International Denominational School of Deliverance of Oliver Chipunza, and Heartfelt International Ministries of Tavonga Vutabwashe. They also include Spirit Embassy of Uebert Angel, Life House International Church of Talent Chiweshe, and Glory Covenant Church of Cecil Muzavazi. These NRMs include Passion Java of the Kingdom Embassy, Adventure Mutepfa of Revival Centre World Ministry and Oliver Chipunza of Apostolic Flame Ministries of Zimbabwe (Vengeyi 2013, 28). This article will focus on the Prophetic Healing and Deliverance Ministries of Walter Magaya, Grace Oasis Ministries of Pastor Tinashe and the Emmaus Encounter of Reverend Makaha. All these new churches arose after 2008, often characterised as the lowest point in the Zimbabwean crisis (Chitando, Chikowero and Madongonda 2015, 2). To date (2024), Zimbabweans are battling economic crises worsened by the political crises.

Materials and Methodology

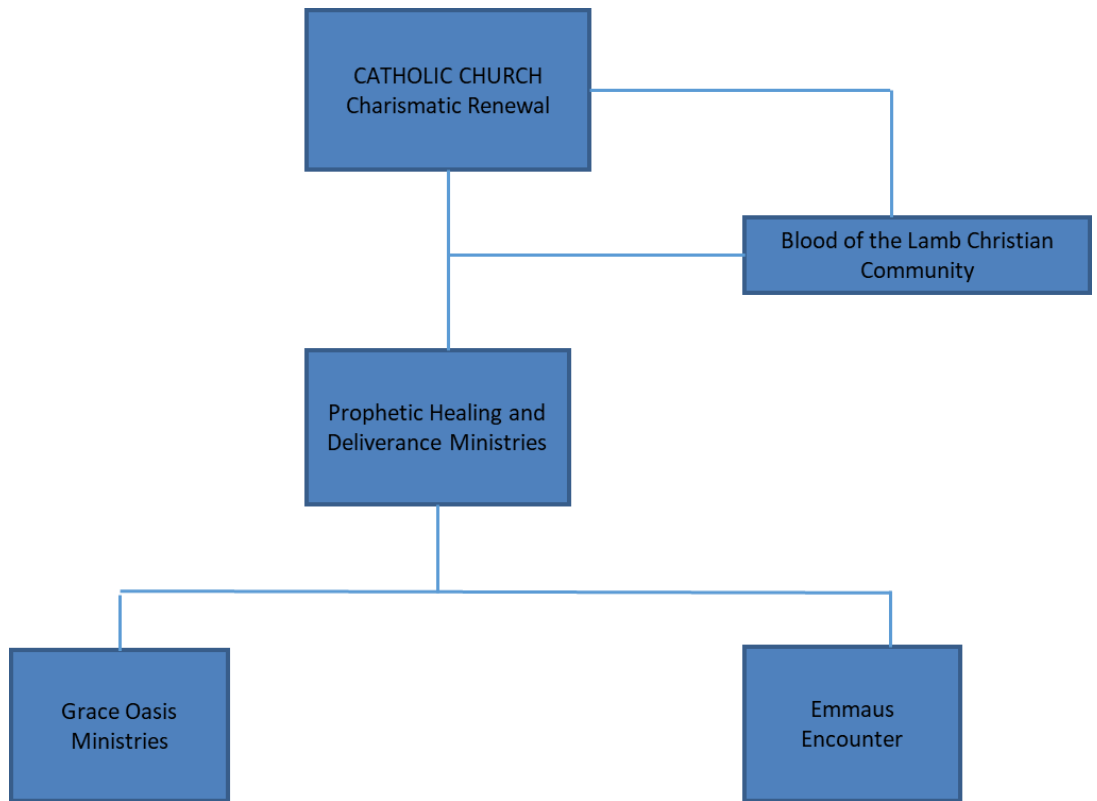
The study employed a qualitative methodology conducted in Harare, Zimbabwe, from October 2017 to December 2022. The qualitative approach involves in-depth, subjective analysis of social phenomena, emphasising understanding individuals' experiences, behaviours, and interactions within their context. It relies on interviews, focus groups, and observations to gather non-numeric data to uncover patterns, themes, and meanings in human behaviour and societal structures (Mottier 2005). The study used snowball sampling, a non-probability sampling technique in qualitative research where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. In snowball sampling, the researchers identify a small number of individuals with the characteristics they are interested in. These people are then used as informants to identify or put the researchers in touch with others who qualify for inclusion, and these, in turn, identify yet others (Cohen et al. 2013, 158). This method states that the researcher first contacts a small group of people relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others (Bryman 2008, 184). Snowball sampling facilitated data collection by engaging a leader from a selected church, who introduced the researcher to other congregants. Respondents were from the PHD Ministries, GOM and EE. The three ministries granted consent for the research, using their real names, while pseudonyms were used for participants who also consented. Social capital theory popularised by Putnam (2000,19) is defined as “the connections among individuals' social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” or “networks and

norms of civic engagement”, which creates space for people to trust one another, do business and allow democracy to flourish.” The social capital theory guided the examination of networks, associations, and collaborations within the NRMs. Primary data collection involved 18 respondents, including ministers, church elders, gatekeepers, staff, and members, for interviews and a focus group discussion over five years. Four research campaigns were conducted to gather data through interviews, a research method commonly used in qualitative studies, where the researcher asks questions to gather detailed information and insights from participants. It involves a structured, semi-structured, or unstructured conversation where the interviewer seeks to understand the interviewee's experiences, opinions, feelings, and motivations. This allows for an in-depth exploration of the subject matter under investigation. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis was employed based on the findings and the researcher's prior knowledge of the NRMs in Zimbabwe. Supplementary information was drawn from secondary literature sources, including published articles, books, and church websites.

The selected NRMs in Zimbabwe and their Catholic influence

Several NRMs emerged after the 2008 crisis in Zimbabwe, which was witnessed by hyperinflation, economic and political crises and increasing poverty, unemployment, high death rates, and hopelessness. During that period, a new type of gospel of prosperity emerged, coupled with its young and famous prophets, miracles and miracle workers who promised wealth, health, abundant life and hope to a dejected society (Zimunya and Gwara 2013,187; Chitando 2013, 98): the selected NRMs, PHD Ministries of Walter Magaya, Pastor Tinashe's GOM, and Reverend Makaha's EE emerged during that period. These churches continue to offer messages of hope and prosperity in the face of ongoing economic and political challenges in Zimbabwe. Traditionally, most NRMs emerged from Pentecostal churches, while the three selected ministries had some influence from the Catholic Church. Walter Magaya was born and raised in the Catholic Church (Chitando and Biri 2016; Chibango 2016). He belonged to the Charismatic Renewal group, and his ministries then gave birth to GOM, whose founder was Catholic, who joined PHD Ministries and later started his ministry. The founder of EE, a former Catholic Priest, worked closely with both PHD Ministries and

Grace Oasis Ministries before starting his ministry. The structure of the founding of these three ministries can be explained in the diagram below:



Three Controversial Founding Narratives of PHD Ministries

The founder of the PHD ministries, Prophet Walter Magaya narrated its history. He was born in Mhondoro⁷. He grew up in Chitungwiza, a city close to Harare, Zimbabwe. He claimed to have started his preaching ministry when he was young. Later on, he graduated into full-time preaching at the PHD Ministries. He argued that he did not go to any university. When he wanted to go to college, he opened a computer science college instead. In addition, Walter Magaya did not even go to a Bible school like most pastors who started ministries. He cited that he had nothing to show off about academic studies. Walter Magaya said:

7 Mhondoro is a rural area under the Mhondoro Ngezi district in the province of Mashonaland West in Zimbabwe.

When I finished an advanced level of education, I started many projects, which were even more than 80. I had a butchery, college, buying and selling of everything, cross border trading, vendor, and several businesses (www.phdministries.org/).

The several business activities outlined above suggest that the imperative for self-economic development was influential in the pursuit of a ministry by Walter Magaya. It highlights how aspirational motivations for a better life would shape his ministry and message when he started the PHD Ministries. At this time, his spiritual father, Temitope Balogun Joshua⁸, prophesied that Walter Magaya was not a businessman but a gifted prophet. This suggests that T.B. Joshua inspired Walter Magaya to start his ministry. Chitando and Biri (2016, 77) and Chibango (2016, 62) also pointed out that Walter Magaya travelled to Nigeria to meet and consult T.B. Joshua on his 16 business projects upon which he was instructed that he was destined for the ministry. Magaya started his ministry in October 2012. The research observed that the history of PHD ministries has three accounts or narratives on its formation.

This first account suggests that T.B. Joshua influenced the founding of the PHD Ministries in October 2012. Walter Magaya has remained silent on why he visited T.B. Joshua in Nigeria. Makaha of EE noted that:

It is said that Walter Magaya then decided to go to Nigeria to visit the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN) headed by T.B. Joshua. He went with a list of business proposals for T.B. Joshua to pray for his business success. Walter Magaya was then told that his business was not just in church but a church. This was when Walter Magaya received his impartation (Makaha, Interview, 19/09/2018).

Walter Magaya said that it was from that time when he met T.B. Joshua that he started to do God's work. He claimed T.B. Joshua told him he would start a football team and carry out many projects. In addition, social networks, affirmation, and self-confidence built through such interaction gave Walter Magaya self-determination to start his ministry. Despite the networks and connections created between Prophet Walter Magaya and T.B. Joshua, his silence on the reasons for visiting T.B. Joshua led to unpacking the second and third accounts of the founding of the PHD Ministries.

The second account of the founding of the PHD Ministries expressed that Prophet Walter Magaya belonged to the Catholic Church Charismatic group under the Blood of the Lamb Christian Community (BLCC).⁹ This group broke away from the Catholic

8 Joshua Temitope Balogun Joshua, commonly referred to as T. B. Joshua, a Nigerian pastor, televangelist and, philanthropist inspired Walter Magaya, Emmanuel Makandiwa and Uebert Angel. He is the leader and founder of The Synagogue Church of All Nations, a spiritual Father to his spiritual to the pastors mentioned above and others (Mahohoma 2017, 3).

9 Observation through the study revealed that the BLCC is an independent group of dedicated Christians who seek to equip other Christians for ministry through baptism in the spirit. The group has been in existence since the late 1970s. It started within the Catholic Church though was never fully recognized or accepted as a Catholic group. The researcher noted that BLCC does not belong

Church and formed a Pentecostal ministry (Chibango 2016, 61). The group was led by the late Father Michael Lawrence Hood. Within BLCC, Walter Magaya led a small section in Chitungwiza. He claimed he was moving around healing and delivering people from all evil spirits, such as demons and witchcraft, poverty, and sickness (Chitando and Biri 2016, 78).¹⁰ Walter Magaya argued that this made him popular to the extent that he was allowed to start his ministry. He highlighted:

On 28 October 2012, Fr. Michael Hood called me to his house, where he informed me that he had seen the work I had done. He informed me that his vision and my vision were no longer the same. Fr Michael Hood then asked me to start my own ministry (www.phdministries.org/about_phd.html).

Magaya seems to suggest that the founding of the PHD Ministries was a smooth transition from the BLCC. However, Fr. Michael Lawrence Hood expressed a different view. Fr Hood argued that Walter Magaya and his group had begun to do certain activities within healing and deliverance, which were unpleasant. He pointed out that:

He started doing things without consulting me, which was a bit alarming at first. We might have worked together at first, but we could not continue. I attended some of his sessions in Tafara, Mabvuku, and Harare. In Tafara, they were making great noise about some old lady who was unable to walk, and she was now walking. When I looked with my own eyes, she was struggling along. She was being carried more than walking on her own. I was not happy about that. I could see that he was trying to do something new. The problem is he was doing it using the name of the BLCC (Hood, Interview, 19/02/2020).

Evidence suggests that the BLCC also focuses on healing and deliverance. Fr. Michael Lawrence Hood recognised Walter Magaya's work but was not impressed with some activities, including how healing and deliverance sessions were handled. Such activities were negative for the BLCC's image and thus led to conflict between the BLCC leadership and Walter Magaya.

Makaha also points out that Magaya returned from Nigeria, where he met T.B. Joshua with holy water and anointed oil. Upon his return to Zimbabwe,

Walter Magaya started praying for people, and miracles were witnessed. This happened while Walter Magaya was within the BLCC. His praying for people and healing put him on collision with other members of the BLCC. Leadership within the BLCC was not comfortable with the way Walter Magaya was conducting his healing and deliverance services (Makaha, Interview, 19/09/2018).

to any church yet is open to all churches, promoting the kingdom of God on earth. Its members belong to various denominations and are called to integrate the BLCC into their Christian values.

10 Chitando and Biri (2016) highlighted that as a lay Catholic, Magaya was gifted with exclusive healing powers to the extent that some Catholic priests went to him for assistance on healing and deliverance.

Makaha believed that Walter Magaya could have been forced to leave the BLCC because of the way he had started carrying out the healing and deliverance sessions. However, Walter Magaya highlighted that he was asked by Fr. Michael Lawrence Hood to start his new ministry. This implied that based on the meeting held, networks and associations that had been created were broken, and Walter Magaya was permitted to start his ministry. Fr. Hood further noted that:

I recognised the good things they were doing, and we needed encouragement in that direction. However, Walter Magaya and some of his team members were now wanting to do things differently under BLCC...I thought it was best to let him go separate from the BLCC and do the things he wanted to do in his way. This was the best solution, though he was disappointed because he wanted to stay within the BLCC (Hood, Interview, 19/02/2020).

This statement suggests that Walter Magaya never intended to start a new ministry. What is evident in this narrative is how PHD Ministries was a creation of necessity because Magaya had been asked to leave BLCC. One of the respondents pointed out that: "It was the BLCC leadership which released Walter Magaya and his team, allowing them to go and start his ministries" (Kaval, Interview, 19/02/2020). What was clear, however, was that Walter Magaya wanted to start doing healing and deliverance in his way, on a larger scale, but the leadership of the BLCC did not approve.

Walter Magaya's departure from BLCC led to the formation of the PHD Ministries, initially consisting of about 45 people meeting at his house in Chitungwiza. The circumstances of his departure from BLCC are unclear, but there appeared to be a positive relationship between him and Fr. Michael Lawrence Hood and BLCC leadership. BLCC supported Magaya's early healing and deliverance efforts. After his departure, the PHD Ministries witnessed a significant increase in membership, possibly due to religious events like deliverance sessions, fostering socialisation and integration among newcomers. This suggests that social networks and shared faith played a crucial role in the ministry's growth.

The third account of the founding of the PHD Ministries pointed to the prophecy given by Prophet Uebert Angel, the founder of the Spirit Embassy. At the Prophetic Conference hosted by Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa, founder of United Family International at the Aquatic Complex in Chitungwiza, where a prophecy was made, Walter Magaya was ordained to found a ministry. Chitando and Biri (2016, 77) argue that it was believed that Prophet Uebert Angel gave Walter Magaya a prophetic word, saying that he was a man whom God had chosen for prophethood. This narrative served to authenticate Walter Magaya's call to being a prophet. What was clear is that the third account was neither confirmed by the research participants nor by Walter Magaya himself. Walter Magaya's silence on this account suggests that the account could not have been accurate. There are various explanations, including the dynamics of space competition by prophets in Zimbabwe.

Rivalries and competition for congregants have often led to tenuous relationships between the various leaders of NRMs in Zimbabwe. Like other prophets in the country, Magaya mainly associates with more famous and established prophets from other countries, such as T.B. Joshua, whom he chooses to mention. In any case, this narrative would imply that Uebert Angel is actually above Walter Magaya. Power and control dynamics could have thus been compromised if Walter Magaya had acknowledged Uebert Angel as someone who confirmed him (Soboyejo 2016, 19). The three narratives provide a contested version of the emergence of Walter Magaya. This increases the myth around his power, control, and spiritual abilities. Such spiritual capital is important in ensuring the allegiance of church members and attracting new members. The narratives also highlight the importance of personal economic aspirations that guided Magaya's journey towards starting his ministry. This message of personal prosperity remains an influential part of his theology.

Growth, Expansion of the PHD Ministries

When Walter Magaya left the BLCC, he pointed out:

I was leading the Healing and Deliverance section in the BLCC group of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. When I left the Catholic Church to found new ministries, I added 'Prophetic' and 'Ministries' to 'Healing and Deliverance'. This made my ministries known as the Prophetic Healing and Deliverance Ministries (www.phdministries.org/about_phd.html, interview accessed 20/12/2018).

This is how the PHD Ministries was born in 2012. By January 2013, there were more than 500 members. In June 2013, the membership increased to 6000, and by December 2013, the membership had drastically increased to 9000 (Chitando and Biri 2016, 77). PHD Ministries then moved to the current headquarters in Waterfalls, south-west of Harare. Walter Magaya made the following statement highlighting that: "In February 2014, we were about 40 000 to 50 000; by November 2014, numbers increased to 200 000, and by December 2014, the number grew to over 1000" (www.phdministries.org/about_phd.html). The increased number of followers created more networks and associations within the PHD Ministries.

Under the leadership of Prophet Walter Magaya, the ministry blends spirituality with economic activities, encouraging members to engage in ventures like poultry farming and cross-border trade. The church also supports income-generating projects, fostering cooperation and social cohesion among members (Ohlmann et al. 2021, 5). Magaya's extensive social networks have facilitated economic activities, including stockbroking and agriculture, leading to his personal business success. The ministry promotes shared values centred on prosperity and poverty eradication. While it provides tangible assistance, critics question the authenticity of its actions, alleging fraud and self-promotion. The PHD Ministries embodies elements of Ubuntu by assisting communities and the marginalised (Mashau and Kgatle 2019, 3). These actions, however, are met with skepticism (Bano and Deneulin 2009; Thomsen 2017, 28). The ministry's impact

is multifaceted, offering social and economic empowerment to members while facing controversy and criticism, highlighting the complex nature of religion's influence.

Grace Oasis Ministries and Believers' Confirmation

Pastor Tinashe highlighted that he founded Grace Oasis Ministries (GOM) on Saturday, 14 April 2015, after a prophecy from Prophet Walter Magaya, who prophesied that he would start a ministry. Pastor Tinashe argued that his ministries were founded when he was trying to gain confidence in preaching and communicating with people. He claimed: "I did not have so much confidence when I started the ministry. I even felt that I was too young to start this ministry." Confidence was built through interaction with believers met before and after services. It was also cultivated through forging new relationships, networks and trust, and in the shared faith as 'born again' Christians. Hence, Pastor Tinashe's confidence was built through the development of social capital amongst the believers.

Pastor Tinashe argued that he grew up in the Catholic Church, attending church services at Saint Alphonsus parish in Tafara¹¹ in the Archdiocese of Harare. He went to Bindura, a small town in Mashonaland Central, where he did his secondary school education. He joined Scripture Union, an evangelical after-school group during his school days. He began to discover his gifts of preaching, praying, and healing the sick. After completing high school, he attended the Midlands State University (MSU) in Gweru¹² for his undergraduate degree. He continued preaching to other students. After five years, he went to Harare and started attending the PHD Ministries services. During one of the PHD Ministries services in April 2015, Prophet Walter Magaya located him from where he was seated and prophesied the founding of his ministries. Pastor Tinashe pointed out: "Prophet Walter Magaya gave me a prophecy saying that I was going to start a ministry. His prophecy was then fulfilled on the 14th of April 2015." This narrative provides insights into another way NRMs are created. The ordaining of a young pastor/prophet is often done by an older spiritual father, a more established prophet.¹³ This is the same process that happened when T.B. Joshua ordained Walter Magaya. Chitando and Biri (2016, 77) also show how the above narrative resembles Uebert Angel's prophesying about Walter Magaya starting his ministries. Being confirmed by a spiritual father provides spiritual capital, legitimacy and recognition to a new NRM.

Growth, Expansion and Quest for Belonging within GOM

Pastor Tinashe initiated Saturday services in April 2015, later transitioning to Sunday services in 2016. He relied on his university connections to build a following, leveraging the social capital he gained during his studies. While at MSU, he preached to fellow

11 Tafara is a high-density suburb some 18 km east of Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe. It encompasses the townships of Old Tafara and New Tafara (the latter two constituting Tafara).

12 Gweru (named Gwelo until 1982) is a city in central Zimbabwe. It is located near the geographical centre of Zimbabwe, and it is the capital of Midlands Province.

13 <https://www.peace.org.au/apostolic/the-apostolic-revelation/what-is-a-spiritual-father.html>

students, receiving positive feedback and testimonies that reinforced his sense of calling. When he started his ministry, he tapped into his MSU contacts in Harare, inviting them to services and gradually expanding the ministry. This highlights personal networks' role and influence on the growth of NRMs like GOM. Pastor Tinashe leverages past relationships from school to create a community of Christians and provide a space for new social networks. He utilises social capital accumulated in past interactions, friendships, acquaintances, and relations in Hatfield and Epworth to get members for his ministries' meetings every Saturday. This highlights how NRMs often have organic stories of formation and growth and do not always necessarily depend on some mythical story or narrative around the founder. It also highlights the varying motivations for starting a ministry. In this case, Pastor Tinashe did not show any economic or business aspirations for founding a ministry.

In 2016, more than 100 people joined GOM. Pastor Tinashe noted that “we then moved to Harare Central Business District (CBD) in 2017; some people were coming from Chitungwiza, Glen Norah, Hatfield, and Epworth.” In June 2017, GOM moved to Mabvuku¹⁴, where it became its headquarters. The bias of NRMs as a largely urban phenomenon is highlighted in Walter Magaya and Pastor Tinashe's cases. Togarasei (2005, 349) argues that modern Pentecostalism has a distinct urban bias in Zimbabwe, which may be explained by the need to target areas with high population density and higher income levels. For GOM, the urban space provided unique advantages such as a transport network that made it easier to bring people together for religious events such as services and prayer fellowships where newcomers were integrated into the ministries. These activities helped strengthen and create new networks among the members, which laid the foundation for other economic activities. Through the ministry, members embarked on various projects such as buying and selling fresh produce and non-perishables, rearing chickens sold amongst believers, and creating networks.

One of the believers in a focus group discussion (FGD) 1, Ranga, pointed out, “through working together, coming together and share our stories, we have managed to sell our chickens and vegetables to one another.” Other participants pointed out: “we sell vegetables and chickens amongst ourselves here at the worship centre or in our local townships” (FGD 1, 23/12/2017). GOM built and sustained social capital through believers' participation in personal projects, which they also shared about when they met before and after services. NRMs encourage social connections outside church or ministries and have since introduced several forums for men, women, and youth (Shumba 2015, 154). Such interactions cultivate shared values conducive to social cohesion, partnership, and entrepreneurship.

During all the movements from Hatfield to Epworth and then to Harare city centre, services were held on Saturdays. When GOM moved to Mabvuku, ministries' services

14 Mabvuku is a high-density suburb some 17 km east of Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe. It is classified as a suburb or township of Harare, with Harare City Council constituting a local government.

moved from Saturday to Sunday. Pastor Tinashe argues that: “Our members pointed out that, if Saturday services are to continue, we will not have anywhere to go on Sunday for worship. We have become full members of GOM.” (Pastor Tinashe, Interview, 20/09/2018). Saturday services allowed members to discuss their quest to belong to GOM and showed personal investment into ideology, doctrine, practice, and participation in networks and activities. One of the respondents in FGD 1 argued: “After Saturday services, we would ask each other what we would be doing on Sunday and if some would be going to attend services at their previous churches” (Masa, FGD1, 23/12/2017). In this way, NRMs provide a space for members to commit to a community of practice and be part of a social institution. As such, it gives members a sense of belonging and some form of social support system, which may be influential in building livelihood activities (Chiweshe 2017).

Believers in GOM valued their membership, leading to social and economic gains through reciprocity. Many initially attended services at the PHD Ministries before joining GOM, strengthening relationships and trust. Worshipping together and associating created a sense of community, enabling believers to sell goods and services among themselves on credit, emphasising the presence of social capital. Trust was evident as believers conducted transactions with confidence. NRMs such as GOM rely on their members to recruit new ones, spreading the gospel. Neighbours and friends often introduce others to the ministry, highlighting the role of personal connections in expanding the congregation. Pastor Tinashe's gifts were affirmed by those around him, bolstering his confidence and the ministry's growth. In 2018, GOM had over 500 congregants, with around 300 attending the Sunday morning service in Mabvuku and 200 attending the Sunday afternoon service in Epworth.

Emmaus Encounter and Change of Emphasis

Reverend Makaha, the founder of EE, had a background as a Catholic priest in Mabvuku, Zimbabwe. He connected with Prophet Walter Magaya and Pastor Tinashe, even celebrating Magaya's wedding. After leaving the priesthood, Makaha worked with Magaya and Tinashe in their ministries, helping with their teachings and practices. Makaha established EE in December 2015 with a different approach. The name "Emmaus Encounter" (EE) chosen by Reverend Makaha for his ministry carries deep theological and narrative significance, reflecting the biblical story of Cleopas and his companion's encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). In this narrative, the disciples walked away from Jerusalem, discussing the events of Jesus' crucifixion and reported resurrection. Jesus joins them, unrecognised, and explains the scriptures concerning himself. Their eyes are opened to his identity in the breaking of the bread. In the context of EE, the name signifies a transformative experience of recognising and encountering Jesus personally and profoundly, akin to the sudden recognition Cleopas and his friend experienced. This encounter led to a shift in understanding and a deepened faith, propelling them back to Jerusalem to share the news of the resurrection. Similarly, EE aims to foster personal relationships with God

without fear or intimidation and encourages direct encounters with the divine, mirroring the direct and personal encounter with Jesus on the Emmaus road.

While many NRMs focus on material prosperity, Makaha's journey reflects a shift towards a more personal and spiritually oriented ministry within Zimbabwean NRMs. Reverend Makaha stressed: "This is entirely different, and we want to inspire people. We want to build a personal relationship between people and God." This statement implied building a personal relationship without intimidation or fear of the government or the man of God. Reverend Makaha's choice reflects a desire to move away from the prosperity gospel and hierarchical structures prevalent in many NRMs, where leaders are often seen as mediators between the divine and the congregants. Instead, EE emphasises direct, unmediated spiritual experiences, aiming to empower individuals in their relationship with God. This aligns with the Emmaus story's personal revelation and transformation theme through direct encounters with Christ, challenging the status quo and encouraging a return to authentic, scripture-based faith. By naming the ministry Emmaus Encounter, Makaha signals a foundational ethos for the church: to be a place where believers can experience the transformative presence of Jesus directly and personally, leading to renewed faith and active discipleship. This approach counters the criticisms many NRMs face of being overly focused on material prosperity and under charismatic leaders' sway instead of prioritising spiritual depth and personal transformation. Zimbabwe's economic and political challenges created the space for the mushrooming of the NRMs. Reverend Makaha linked such an environment and the rapid increase of the NRMs to the politics of appeasement of political leaders. He argued that: "most of the so-called prophets appease the government officials by telling them that God ordains them. The prophets claim that God has ordained them while arguing that God also ordains politicians. This made it difficult for other people to challenge these politicians based on the assumption that they are ordained by God as political leaders" (Makaha, Interview, 19/09/2018). Prophets, hence, tend to appease the political leaders, as noted by Gari, a member of EE, who argued:

I would say the gospel of prosperity diminishes people in different sectors. For instance, I have come across prophets who cannot challenge government ministers involved in some corrupt activities. They both ended up buying and selling land through illegal means (Gari, Interview, 28/12/2017).

Reverend Makaha argued: "When I look at Zimbabwe's current situation, I want to bring something new that appeals to the people through a paradigm shift where people create a personal relationship with God and challenge the socio-political situation of Zimbabwe." NRMs like PHD Ministries and GOM tend not to confront the Zimbabwean government on issues like corruption and poverty. Believers often avoid challenging their leaders, driven by superstition and reverence for the "man of God." This fear discourages dissent, even when government-related problems arise. In contrast, EE aims to challenge the government and promote a more personal relationship with God.

Personal Relationship and the Founding of Emmaus Encounter

Reverend Makaha argued that some of the NRMs' preachers hoodwinked believers in an economic context, which attracted the poor people, as also noted by Soboyejo (2016, 2). Bishau (2013, 5) stressed that "there is no doubt that the proponents of the gospel of prosperity within NRMs have become crowd pullers where believers are convinced that NRMs preachers have answers to their immediate problems." EE was founded as a response to this perceived weakness of other NRMs. In relation to the change of emphasis, Reverend Makaha highlighted: "I got frustrated, I prayed and came to the conviction that what people need is an encounter with the person of Jesus rather than telling them what they want to hear." Reverend Makaha aimed to establish a personal relationship between individuals and God within Emmaus Encounter (EE). He questioned the practices of other NRMs, emphasising that if the relationship with God is like that of a Father and a Son, there should be a direct connection without the need for intermediaries like prophets. In contrast, NRMs like PHD Ministries rely on the prophet as a mediator between congregants and God, potentially leading to power imbalances and manipulation. Makaha aimed to break down these barriers and promote a more direct and personal connection between individuals and their faith.

EE's emergence is fuelled by disillusionment among some NRM members who have grown sceptical about the impact of prophets on their lives. They believe in self-driven change rather than relying on prophets. This disillusionment is amplified by the association of prominent prophets like Walter Magaya and Makandiwa with corrupt politicians who make donations during church services, silencing pastors from addressing political crises and causing widespread suffering. Critics argue that these new churches promote arrogance, conceit, and materialism, replacing spiritual growth and moral values, ultimately leading to greed and capitalist tendencies within NRMs and society (Soboyejo 2016, 7; Kwaku Golo and Novieto 2021, 82).

The Catholic Church's Response to NRMs

While Maxwell (2006) and Togarasei (2011) noted that the economic downturn in Zimbabwe led many people to seek spiritual solutions to financial problems, resulting in the growth of NRMs, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC)¹⁵ was not specific in its critique of the prosperity gospel. The bishops expressed concerns about how some church leaders manipulate the poor and vulnerable, offering false hope in exchange for financial gain (Mkandla 2019). The ZCBC's pastoral letters and statements

15 The ZCBC founded in 1969 after the Second Vatican Council in 1976 is an association of local ordinaries other than the vicar generals, co-adjutors, auxiliaries and other titular bishops who perform special work entrusted to them by the Apostolic See or the conference itself (Randolph 1978, 12). It represents the theological and social interests of the Roman Catholic Church in Zimbabwe. Its objectives are to give visible witness to the church's concern for justice and peace, to inform the conscience of people on the social teaching of the church, to recommend reforms- both radical and intermittent- to social structures and to investigate allegations of injustices and publish its findings (Hallencruetz 1988, 452-453).

often emphasise the Christian call to social justice and the ethical problems associated with the government and any other leaders who would exploit the vulnerable (Mkandla and Dreyer (2020, 6). The prosperity gospel is critiqued for its commercialisation of faith and how it exploits people's economic desperation. The Church advocates for a gospel that promotes spiritual depth, social justice, and community support, in contrast to the individualistic and materialistic focus of the prosperity gospel (Zimbabwe Catholic Bishop's Conference 1996). Machingura (2011) and Chitando (2013) analysed the Catholic Church's stance, emphasising a more holistic understanding of the gospel that addresses spiritual and material needs without succumbing to the excesses of prosperity theology. They argue that the Church's response is grounded in a theology that values human dignity and social solidarity. It reflects a comprehensive approach to Christian teaching, emphasising the need for a gospel that liberates and uplifts the human spirit without exploiting economic vulnerabilities.

The Notion of Confirmation within the Catholic Church

The notion of Confirmation in the Catholic Church signifies the strengthening of baptismal grace, imparting the Holy Spirit to foster a mature Christian faith. This sacrament, rooted in tradition and scripture, marks the believer's full initiation into the Church, empowering them to witness Christ's teachings actively. Such a teaching is understood differently within NRMs and the selected NRMs. The Roman Catholic Church's position on confirmation is deeply rooted in its sacramental theology, as outlined in its key doctrinal texts, including the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) (2003), the Code of Canon Law (1983), and various papal encyclicals and documents from the Second Vatican Council¹⁶. Regarding the nature and effects of confirmation, the CCC describes confirmation as one of the seven sacraments instituted by Christ. It is understood as the sacrament of the Holy Spirit, where the confirmed person receives the "mark," a spiritual character that completes the grace of baptism. Bernier (2014) argues that this sacrament equips the confirmed with the strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross as highlighted in the CCC 1303. The theological basis of confirmation is deeply rooted in the New Testament, reflecting the laying of hands as a sign of the Holy Spirit's coming, as seen in the Acts of the Apostles (8:14-17; 19:5-6). It is an integral part of Christian initiation, alongside Baptism and Eucharist (CCC 1285-1314). More so, the CCC elaborates on confirmation's intrinsic link to baptism, viewing it as its completion. It strengthens and confirms the graces and gifts received at baptism. Thus, it is often called the sacrament of Christian maturity (Gabielli 2013). However, despite this maturity, confirmation does not presuppose a mature faith; it is instead a sacrament of faith's growth, which presupposes a living faith in the candidate (CCC 1304).

16 The second Vatican Council was the twenty-first ecumenical council of the Catholic Church. It was convened by Saint John XXIII and lasted for four sessions from 1962 through 1965.

According to the Code of Canon Law (Canon 882), the original minister of confirmation is the bishop. However, priests can also confer this sacrament when granted the authority under certain conditions (Canons 883-885), emphasising the bishop's importance in the church's sacramental life. Keener (2020) argues that the recipient of confirmation also goes through preparation, which aims to lead the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit. Hence, candidates for confirmation, as per Canon 889 of the Code of Canon Law, must be baptised, reach the age of reason, be suitably instructed, properly disposed of, and be able to renew their baptismal promises. Within confirmation, a sponsor has a role similar to baptism, to support the confirmand in their spiritual journey. The role of the sponsor is to ensure that the confirmed person behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfils the obligations inherent in this sacrament (Canon 892-893). The Catholic Church has liturgical expressions and symbols essential for the rite of confirmation where the confirmed person is anointed on the forehead with sacred chrism, together with the laying on of the minister's hand and the words: "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit" (Smolarski and DeGrocco 2017). This anointing signifies and imprints a spiritual seal, a sign of consecration, and the indelible effect of the sacrament, which configures Christians more fully to Christ and strengthens them to be witnesses of Christ. These positions and nuances showcase the Roman Catholic Church's comprehensive understanding of confirmation as a critical sacrament of spiritual strengthening and maturity, deeply intertwined with the broader context of Christian initiation and life.

Confirmation with NRMs

The concept of confirmation in New Religious Movements (NRMs) in Zimbabwe, while sharing some similarities with the Catholic Church's sacrament of confirmation, has distinct characteristics that reflect the region's unique cultural and religious landscape. Whitehead and Chryssides (2022) studied the adaptation and transformation of Christian practices in NRMs, noting that while NRMs might borrow elements from mainstream Christianity, they often reinterpret these elements to fit their specific doctrinal and cultural contexts. In contrast with the Catholic Church's concept of confirmation, NRMs in Zimbabwe use the term "confirmation" or a similar concept to denote a divine calling or endorsement, which resonates with the cultural emphasis on spiritual authority and validation, as noted by Mapuranga (2013). This confirmation form is less about formal liturgical rites and more about personal legitimacy and authority, often validated through spiritual experiences or the endorsement of influential figures within the community. Therefore, while there is a superficial resemblance to the Catholic sacrament, the confirmation process in Zimbabwean NRMs is fundamentally different in its function and execution. It establishes leadership and authority within the NRM rather than integrating individuals into a larger religious community, as in the Catholic tradition. This difference underscores the importance of understanding the specific religious and cultural context in which these practices are situated rather than assuming a direct borrowing from the Catholic Church, evident within the selected NRMs whose founders emerged from the Catholic Church.

Confirmation within the Selected NRMs

The notion of confirmation within the selected NRMs suggests the significance of Catholic Church origins. All three founders grew up as members of the Catholic Church. Within the NRMs, there have been similar confirmations of pastors from other pastors who seem more powerful and famous. It has been noted that firstly, the founding of the PHD ministries through the influence and advice of T.B. Joshua brought aspects of confirmation. Such confirmation proved that God calls one to be a pastor or prophet. Some scholars have pointed out within the selected NRMs that T.B. Joshua confirmed Prophet Walter Magaya's calling to establish a ministry. He was regarded as one of the most powerful and popular prophets (Chibango 2016; Mahohoma 2017; Chitando and Biri 2016).

The sacrament of confirmation administered by a bishop or priest giving Catholics the mandate to go out and preach the word of God seems to influence the selected NRMs. This meant the need to have someone higher than the individual to impart and confirm the mandate that one is chosen to practice their faith as a pastor or prophet. It was observed that the PHD Ministries founder, who was Catholic, could have shared the same understanding of what confirmation means and the need for it to be confirmed by someone of higher authority, such as a bishop or T.B. Joshua. The same points on GOM reiterate that confirmation within the PHD Ministries and GOM is expected from famous and influential prophets such as T.B. Joshua and Walter Magaya, respectively. Within GOM, Pastor Tinashe argued that his calling was authenticated or confirmed by Prophet Walter Magaya. Pastor Tinashe's call to founding a ministry also brings another aspect of confirmation from his followers, who informed him that they no longer had anywhere to go and worship besides being members of GOM. Confirmation and authentication of the call of the NRMs' pastors and or prophets were either through a powerful and popular figure or followers who had the quest for belonging, which Daneel (1987) emphasised in his writing about African Independent Churches in Southern Africa.

Another point is that the study noted that Reverend Makaha guided Pastor Tinashe in founding his ministries. The guidance and assurance provided demonstrated another aspect of confirmation, which showed that Pastor Tinashe had been called to start a ministry. The Catholic church teaches that once a priest, one remains a priest. Priests and bishops within the Catholic church are mandated to administer the sacrament of confirmation. Reverend Makaha, the former parish priest of Pastor Tinashe, would have administered various sacraments to him. His confirmation through guidance and assurance would have also inspired Pastor Tinashe. Hence, confirmation within the Ph.D. ministries and GOM showed some Catholic resemblance, which could not be ignored, though a doctrinal shift was noted.

NRMs' Doctrinal Shift

This paper suggests that there has not been research on the NRMs that emerged from the Catholic Church. This point is not mentioned in the work of Gifford (1988; 2004) and Kalu (2008). It indicates a shift in the sense of belonging and doctrine. The Catholic Church tends to focus and believe in the church as an institution. There seems to be less movement of believers from the Catholic Church to other churches because of its emphasis on the sense of belonging. Protestants and Pentecostals tend to emphasise less the church as an institution. Many people move from one denomination to another, while others join NRMs. What makes the selected NRMs remarkable is the shift of Catholics to NRMs. The pneumatic manifestation within the Pentecostal movement also made people shift to the NRMs in Africa, which solved the problem of traditional worship that no longer met the needs of the African people. Asamoah-Gyadu (2015, 18) argues that many people in Ghana have left the traditional churches seeking a pneumatic worship experience, witnessing the living and transforming God. This pneumatic experience occupies a key place in Pentecostal theology, where the Holy Spirit overrides all other spirits, shattering covenants with demonic and oppressive spirits and free converts (Chitando 2007, 116).

Doctrine on Suffering

The selected NRMs exhibit a doctrinal shift away from the suffering and selflessness of Jesus' teachings and life towards the prosperity gospel. The Catholic doctrine on suffering contrasts significantly with the gospel of prosperity often preached in NRMs. Sunquist (2013) argues that Catholic theology views suffering as a complex reality that can lead to spiritual growth, an opportunity to participate in Christ's Passion, and a way to express solidarity with the less fortunate. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2003) teaches that suffering has redemptive value when united with Christ's suffering and sacrifice, reflecting a deep spiritual and theological understanding of human suffering in the context of salvation history.

While the Catholic Church emphasises living a life akin to Jesus, the NRMs' prosperity gospel emphasises material wealth and physical well-being as signs of divine favour and spiritual attainment (Nel 2020). In this view, faith is often seen as a transactional relationship with God, where belief and positive confession are expected to yield financial success and health, minimising or outright rejecting the notion of redemptive suffering. This shift underscores the belief in accumulating resources through faith in a miraculous God. NRMs place significant emphasis on prosperity, miracles, and abundant life, encouraging believers to activate their faith for wealth and health (Zimunya and Gwara 2013). This theological divergence points to a fundamental difference in worldview. While traditional Catholic doctrine acknowledges suffering as an integral part of the Christian experience, potentially leading to greater union with God and moral development, the prosperity gospel in NRMs tends to prioritise immediate worldly success and comfort, often at the expense of deeper spiritual insights

and the communal and sacrificial aspects of Christian life. The Catholic approach to suffering is not about seeking it actively but recognising its redemptive and transformative potential. In contrast, the prosperity gospel often implies that faith can be used to bypass suffering altogether.

Doctrine on Salvation

Gaillardetz (1997) argues that the Catholic doctrine of salvation is deeply rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ, the sacraments, and the Church's magisterium. It emphasises grace, the redemptive act of Jesus on the cross, and the importance of faith and good works in achieving salvation. According to Catholic teaching, salvation involves justification, sanctification, and eventual glorification (Rushdoony 2019). The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2003) states that salvation is attained through faith in Jesus Christ, baptism, and adherence to the Church's teachings and sacraments (CCC 1992, 2016). In contrast, New Religious Movements (NRMs) often present diverse and sometimes conflicting teachings on salvation, distinct from traditional Christian denominations like Catholicism. Salvation is framed as deliverance, healing, transformation, and empowerment, reflecting a response to Africa's socio-economic challenges and underdevelopment. (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005). Coleman (2011, 23-45) argued that health and wealth contribute to the believer's salvation, while the gospels teach that salvation is attained through the life Jesus lived. Melton (2021) and Chryssides (2016) explored the diversity of salvation concepts in NRMs. They note that while traditional Christianity, including Catholicism, often views salvation as a communal and sacramental process mediated by the Church, many NRMs emphasise personal experience and direct access to the divine. Many NRMs focus on individual spiritual experience, direct revelation, or new interpretations of sacred texts. For example, some NRMs may teach that salvation is achieved through personal enlightenment, adherence to specific practices or doctrines unique to the movement, or even through the leadership of a charismatic leader. The Christian concept of redemption from sin through Jesus Christ is lacking within NRMs, where the role of Jesus in salvation varies, with some elevating Him as a spiritual master among many (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005; Ryan 2015). Others may see Him as a symbolic figure or even deny His central role in salvation altogether.

The Notion of Prophecy

The Catholic Church's notion of prophecy is multifaceted, grounded in a rich theological and biblical heritage that sees prophecy not primarily as foretelling the future but as foretelling God's message for humanity (Bartholomew and Thomas, 2023). Cantalamessa (2010), the Preacher to the Papal Household, emphasises prophecy's role within the Church as a charism that encourages, warns, and guides the faithful towards a deeper understanding of God's will. Cantalamessa and Daigle-Williamson (2005), in "Sober Intoxication of the Spirit: Filled With the Fullness of God", argue that prophecy in the Catholic tradition is less about predicting specific

events and more about discerning and communicating God's will to the Church and the world. This understanding aligns with the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, which highlighted the universal call to holiness and the participation of all the baptised in Christ's prophetic office. The Council's document *Lumen Gentium*¹⁷ elucidates how the faithful are called to spread Christ's message and bear witness to the faith. Contemporary theologians, drawing from biblical examples and the history of the Church, further explore how prophecy can serve as a means of spiritual renewal, challenging the Church to remain faithful to its mission and calling (Akin 2014). Thus, prophecy is seen as a vital and dynamic expression of the Spirit's work in the contemporary Catholic context. It guides the Church through the voices of its members, lay and clerical alike, in a continuous journey towards truth and holiness.

There are varied and nuanced views on the notion of prophecy, reflecting the Catholic Church's rich theological tradition and its evolving understanding of charismatic gifts (Kydd 2015). Catholic scholars, drawing from biblical texts and Church tradition, recognise prophecy as one of the spiritual gifts (charisms) bestowed by the Holy Spirit (Sullivan 2004; Hvidt 2007; Van Oort 2012). This aligns with St. Paul's discussions in 1 Corinthians 12-14, where prophecy is esteemed for edifying, exhorting, and comforting the Christian community. Cantalamessa emphasises that prophecy should be aimed at building up the Church, not just predicting future events. More so, prophecy within the Catholic tradition serves both to edify the Church and to offer correction or warning. This dual role is seen in the prophetic voices throughout Church history, from the prophets of the Old Testament to figures such as St. Francis of Assisi and modern-day saints, who have called the Church to renewal and reform. A critical aspect emphasised by Catholic scholars is the need for discernment. Jenson and Wilhite (2010) argue that the Church teaches that not all claimed prophecies come from God. Hence, the need for discernment guided by Church authority and aligned with Scripture and Catholic doctrine. This perspective is based on 1 John 4:1, which advises believers to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God." The liturgical and sacramental contexts are vital for understanding and receiving prophecy in the Catholic Church. Prophecy is integrally connected to the Church's worship life, particularly in the context of the Eucharist, where the Word of God is proclaimed and made present.

The Catholic Church also sees the prophetic role of the laity, where the Second Vatican Council marked a significant shift in understanding the role of the laity, including their participation in Christ's prophetic office. *Lumen Gentium* describes how the laity is called to contribute to the Church's prophetic mission by bearing witness to their faith in the world. Doohan (2016) further explored this aspect, emphasising the universal call to holiness and the importance of the laity's active engagement in the Church's life and mission. Prophecy is also linked with the Church's social teaching, arguing that

17 *Lumen Gentium* is one of the principal documents of the Second Vatican Council, a significant event in the modern history of the Catholic Church. The Latin title translates to "Light of the Nations" in English, reflecting the document's purpose of shedding light on the nature and mission of the Church. *Lumen Gentium* was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on November 21, 1964.

prophetic voices are needed to challenge injustices and advocate for the marginalised and oppressed. This view reflects the prophetic tradition of speaking truth to power and aligns with the Church's commitment to the common good and dignity of every person. Catholic scholarship on prophecy, therefore, underscores its complexity and central role in the life and mission of the Church. Hvidt (2007) noted that prophecy, grounded in faith and exercised in accordance with Church teaching, contributes to the community's spiritual growth and its response to contemporary challenges. However, Chimuka (2013, 114) argues that NRMs in Zimbabwe emphasise prosperity, personal prophecy, and extraordinary miracles, challenging traditional Christian beliefs. Prophets perform miraculous acts that defy natural laws, including "miracle money," cancer and HIV healing, raising the dead, and more. They also claim to make accurate predictions. This represents a doctrinal shift in the perception and purpose of Christianity and its teachings, moving away from traditional interpretations.

Conclusion

The exploration of NRMs in Zimbabwe, particularly those with Catholic origins, reveals a complex tapestry of religious innovation and doctrinal realignment. While rooted in Catholicism's historical and spiritual soil, these movements have branched out to develop distinctive theological narratives that prioritise prosperity, miraculous healings, and direct prophetic encounters. This shift reflects a broader trend in religious evolution, where community and tradition give way to individualism and immediacy in spiritual experiences. The transformation of the confirmation concept from a communal rite of passage to a personal endorsement of divine calling signifies a deeper doctrinal and ecclesiological metamorphosis within these NRMs. By examining these shifts, the study contributes to understanding religious change in Zimbabwe and engages with the global discourse on the nature and direction of contemporary religious movements.

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