

# **The ‘Third Wave’ Religious Right Movement and the growth of Zimbabwean Christianity: Faith or Economic Response?**

**By**

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**2013**

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**Promoter:**

**Professor G.A. Duncan**

## **Dedication**

This piece of work is dedicated to my late father, Toyi Mathambo a people – centred and peace loving person who dedicated his whole life for the common good of the people whom he always referred to as ‘*Abantwana BeNkosi*’ (God’s children) and my late spiritual mentor, Reverend Amos Mzilethi, whose religious devotion and astuteness inspired me to read and research in search of fundamental issues which relate to people’s religious zeal and expression. Toyi was a principled community leader who believed that a religious person was a crucial asset for community well – being and development. Reverend Amos Mzilethi was a deeply spiritual pastor who believed that the growth of Christianity was linked to proper Christian education hence the need for Church leaders to be properly informed on the fundamental benchmarks and values which assist them to sincerely and honestly declare the gospel of Jesus Christ in the context of the varied socio-economic and political challenges of their times. The motivation of the late Reverend Amos Mzilethi has been the main source of my hard work toward accomplishing the task of this research.

## **Acknowledgments**

This research could not have been a success without the support of many people and Institutions who willingly opened up to my dream to study and assisted me to conduct my work in an enabling environment with their positive encouragement and insights. Indeed this piece of work is a result of the wise counsel and input of many simple and great minds which contributed in a complex academic process through their varied support.

My profound gratitude goes to my wife Kitso whose inquisitive questions on the issues related to religious fundamentalism and charismatic prophetic trends helped me to engage on this research of which I am humbled. I am also grateful to the moral support and insights of my children, Thembelihle and Musawenkosi who kept on prodding me on the progress of my studies. Without their interest in my studies, this research may not have come into fruition.

For all intents and purposes, I am indebted to my promoter, Professor G. A. Duncan, for his astute comments which challenged me to work harder in my reflections and analysis of the issues at stake in this research. Professor Duncan's professionalism (his critique of my work) was extremely helpful in motivating me to read further and think deeper in the progress of this research. I am indeed indebted to his guidance both as a mentor and model to my academic aspirations.

I thank the leadership of my church, the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, for encouraging me to engage in further studies after having noted my talent and interests on academic matters. I also want to thank my colleague at the United Theological College; Reverend Dr. Levee Kadenge for his moral support while I was wavering on whether to continue with my studies or to take a break when there was too much work to be done on my table – thank you colleague. My sincere appreciation goes to Rev. Sandra Gourdet and the Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and the Church of Christ in the United States of America as well as the United Church of Canada for their once off financial support which helped me to travel between Harare and Pretoria during the course of my studies. Special mention of Mrs Carol Boone and his husband George my “parents in faith” who paid for a large quantity of the research books necessary in the process of my studies. Last but not least, I thank all those who helped me in my research through the varied interviews which I conducted. I salute all of you for your contribution to my thesis.

Finally, this piece of work is a product of faith and trust in God’s guidance and revelation in my life through the lordship of Jesus Christ whose invisible presence in my life kept me alive and active during my studies. May this piece of work be an inspiration to the Church in general and those in positions of authority in particular, as they seek to grow the mission of Christ in a fast changing world order whose needs and aspirations are also a threat to the authentic religious expression and values of Christianity.

## **Declaration**

I declare that this dissertation on: The 'Third Wave' Religious Right Movement and the growth of Zimbabwean Christianity: Faith or Economic Response? is my own academic product and that all the sources I have accessed and or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed: ..... Date: .....

SIFISO MPOFU

## **Abstract**

This thesis is an historical analytical investigation and theological analysis of the fundamental trends of the ‘Third Wave’ Religious Right Movement and the growth of Zimbabwean Christianity. In an attempt to understand the appealing and growth factors of this religious movement in the Zimbabwean Church scene, the research focuses on the trends and behaviour of the Third Wave Religious Right Movement in Zimbabwe and the critical aspect of how this religious movement communicates the Christian faith to its audience. A critical thrust of the study is the question of whether the disciples of the charismatic movement are motivated by faith or economic factors which may ultimately not be the authentic summons of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The research addresses fears and suspicions of many Christians who are caught up between faith and fear response to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by the New Religious Right Movements, particularly in Zimbabwe.

The hypothetical statement of this work is that there seems to be a subtle reconstruction identity in the theology of the “Third Wave” Religious Right Movement as is clearly manifested through the maneuverings of Christians from the ‘traditional churches’ to these ‘newer charismatic churches in trends which reflect the changing religious geography and the face of African Christianity in general and Zimbabwean Christianity in particular. The research explores the nature, impact and significance of the post – modern

‘Third Wave’ Religious Right Movement in Zimbabwean society in particular. The identity and nature of the ‘Third Wave’ Religious Right Movement in its historical perspective discussed by means of identifying and analyzing the characteristics of this movement and its theological perspectives as well as discussing the factors that promote the growth of the movement in the context of *Missio Dei* (God’s Mission) and the society in general. Critical to this type of Christianity are the images of power and prosperity which are understood as signs of faith. The impact and effects of this type of faith expression in the socio-political landscape is fully explored.

The primary methodology in this study is the historical critical method complimented by oral historiography. Both primary and secondary sources are utilized in this research in a holistic framework for analyzing the historical trends as they unfold in the context of religious declarations and transformations that are part of the phenomenon under investigation. The study observes the translation model of evangelization in the unfolding discourse of the ‘Third Wave’ Religious Right Movement.

The study ultimately reveals how people’s economic fears and hopes in the midst of life’s challenges draw them toward religious movements which promise to positively promote a glorious life with practical results being realized “here and now”. This study has clearly exposed how religion, specifically charismatic Christianity, is seen as a package of an abundant life in the context of humanity’s needs and challenges. There is a clear



obsession, in the charismatic New Religious Right Movement, with wealth and health as pedestals of salvation and a faithful Christian life.

Surprisingly, there is very little reference to moral and ethical issues from the charismatic prophets who are the founders of these New Right Movements. The research notes that the interests of these newer right movements are in prosperity and health: “signs of being saved and blessed”. Lack of economic success is blamed on demons which also causes poor health hence the need to denounce the powers of Satan and engage on “the heavenly gear”. Such teachings have conditioned the prospective converts to seek after material benefits and values as critical aspects of the meaning of salvation and the mission of Christ.

The study further reveals that the ‘Third Wave Religious Right Movement promotes a subtle way of making disciples instead of the traditional way of faith response to the gospel proclamation. But does this charismatic religious life have any relevance to our human situation today? The seven compelling chapters of this study have tackled this question and many others, pointing the way to an authentic Christian mission that is alive and relevant to the meaning of salvation in the context of orthodox Christianity. This study concludes that the Church is a catalyst which carries the keys of salvation to bring meaning and solutions to the varied human fears and failures that characterise the temporary nature of human existence. But in doing so; the Church must act in spirit of orthodox Christianity which is the *sine qua non* of salvation.

## **Abbreviations**

AACCA: All African Conference of Churches

AFM: Apostolic Faith Missions

AIC: African Initiated Churches

ALFA: Abundant Life for All

ARPRM: American Religious Political Right Movement

EFZ: Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe

FGBFI: Full Gospel Businessmen's fellowship International

Fambidzano: Fambidzano Yamakereke Avatema

NRRM: New Religious Right Movement

RRM: Religious Right Movement

TWC: Third Wave Christianity

TWM: Third Wave Movement

TWRM: Third Wave Religious Right Movement

UCCSA: United Congregational Church of Southern Africa

UFIC: United Family International Church

UFIM: United Family International Ministries

VBF: Victory Business Forum

WCC: World Council of Churches

ZAOGA: Zimbabwe Assemblies of God in Africa

ZCBC: Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference

ZCC: Zimbabwe Council of Churches

## Key Terms of the Research

- Charismatic movements
- Prophetic movements
- Authentic Christianity
- *Missio – Dei* (God's Mission)
- *Missio Hominum* (Human Mission)
- Religious Right
- Subtle Christianity
- Efficacy of Religion
- Economic spectrum
- Born Again movements
- Miraculous healing
- Passionate piety
- Belief systems
- Powerless Christianity
- Charismatic Ministries
- Faith response
- Mainline church denominations
- Primary religion

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Signed: ..... Date: .....

SIFISO MPOFU

## **Chapter One**

### **An Introduction to the Study**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Chapter one introduces the subject of my investigation in a critical and logical framework. This chapter basically explains the topic and provides some justification for the research; the chapter also states the problem to be studied (hypothesis) and provides the aim and objectives of the thesis. This introductory chapter also discusses the methodology to be followed and provides a literature review of relevant material which is referenced in this thesis. The chapter provides a bird's eye view of the thesis in an academic perspective in the form of a summary.

#### **1.2 Area of Investigation**

This thesis is in the field of Church History and Polity with specific interest being the historical perspective on contemporary African Christianity. The thrust of the investigation centres on the nature and impact of the post-modern "Third Wave" Religious Right Movement on the African Church and specifically in the Zimbabwean society. The origins and character of the "Third Wave" Religious Right Movement is on its own a very interesting phenomenon to study as the movement exhibits many traits that are true to African religious expressions hence the value and scope of this research for current academic scholarship. The origins of the "Third Wave" Religious Right Movement are to

be located in the 1970s when the movement first appeared in United States of America. The deepest roots and most lasting impact of this movement were within the Evangelical Protestant churches and some fundamentalists whose theological emphasis was appealing to a charismatic ideology (Needleman 1981:59). It is fundamental to note that the 'Third Wave' Movement or 'Third Response', as Ogbu Kalu (1988:2) referred to, has had a huge impact on the African Church thereby altering the trends and geography of Christianity in Africa in a large scale. Critical to this type of Christianity are the images of power and prosperity which are understood as signs of faith to those who fear the Living Lord. Many have wondered whither African Christianity? The impact and effects of this type of Christianity on religious, sociological, economic and political landscape is the focal point of this research. The scope of this research is framed around the Zimbabwean Church landscape.

There is no doubt in my mind that the historical and theological growth of the "Third Wave" Religious Right Movement in the African Church continues to attract the attention of the masses in an amazingly way while on the other hand the old mainstream denominations' membership base is dwindling. The phenomenal growth of the "Third Wave" Religious Right Movement demand that Church historians need to dialogue about the direction and fundamentals of this new wave of Church movement and its impact on the African Church.

The desire to open dialogue on the “drivers” of religious conversion in general and the motives that propel the believers within the “Third Wave” church groups to exude fervent prayers, emotions and a deep spirituality that literally leads them to disclaim their identity with this world requires an honest theological analysis. It is noted that the different environments within which the human race find themselves challenged, have had their toll on influencing patterns of religious perceptions and values, as well as the real impact on the dimensions of religious conversion and proclamation. My understanding of the Church as Christian and preacher has led me to conclude that our varied religious experiences and worship styles are indeed influenced by the environment in its sociological, political and economic nature. In this regard, it becomes crucial to investigate the factors at play in the growth of the “Third Wave” Religious Right Movements (hereinafter called TWRRM).

The real questions to be posed are: What is in the “Third Wave” proclamation that is not in the old Protestant churches? What is it that people hear loud and clear from the prophet–evangelist message which they have not heard before? What is the cause of the excitement, joy and celebration in the newer Church movements? Can there be something wrong with the way the gospel has been preached in the older Protestant churches or is there a salient factor within the style and proclamation of the “Third Wave” movement which is unique? An honest interrogation of these questions will enable an honest and better understanding of the TWRRM.

The critical space that has been taken over by the TWRRM is a clear indication of the complex nature of conversion and religious expression in the African worldview. The role played by the TWRRM in the African Church landscape is an embodiment of the uniqueness and complexity of faith, which faith represents the way people perceive their wider and immediate worlds. Faith response, in this regard, celebrates not only the goodness of God but also reveals people's fears and anticipation as they visualize the meaning of life and their destiny in non-intelligible words. David Maxwell observes that one of the fundamental concerns in the TWRRM's theological complexity is its ability to relate with God "and the search for healing and personal security, all realized through prayer" Maxwell 2006:61). Lovemore Mukwakwami observes that the TWRRM "is a very powerful adaptive force, creating a web in which our consciousness may now be spinning, round and round in endless life cycles. When honestly examined, it emerges as a subtle power indeed" (Mukwakwami 2010:1). This theological perception is modelled around the translatability of the Christian faith in its simple but effective declaration of the message of hope to any community in its existential nature. The reality of this type of Christianity shows that people's faith response is heavily conditioned by their environmental factors, which also define how worship should be conducted. What is also clear is the fact that the TWRRM has been courageous enough to depart from a missionary mentality which assumes that the proclaimer's style of worship must be the norm for all people across generations.

### 1.3 Justification

The Church in Zimbabwe, as in other parts of Africa, is one of the few social and historical institutions that wields the greatest influence in the lives of the people and determine the social trends of the day. The fact that the 'Third Wave Christianity' (hereinafter called TWC) is the fastest growing strand of the Christian faith in Zimbabwe means that the impact and or effects of this strand of Christianity deserves serious investigation as we seek to locate, the nature, impact and geography of the African Church. Another interesting stimulus toward developing this thesis is the fact that the TWRRM attracts the attention of the young and old, male and female, poor and rich, educated and uneducated alike. The question which follows is: What are the attractive factors that grow this movement? Is this genuine faith or an economic response to the movement's promises? In raising such important points, the thesis deliberately focuses on a holistic nature and approach to the study of Christianity in Africa. Today, one observes the many faces of Christianity and asks: Where do I find God? Which is the right Church for me today? In other words the questions are about the moral authority of the Church in the context of the varied Christian denominations that tend to compete for space and converts.

It is, therefore, the task of every serious Church historian never to pass judgment on what one sees unfolding in the Church environment, but rather to communicate in clear terms so that the world is better informed about the circumstances and dimensions of what is happening in their midst. This thesis seeks to reflect on the TWRRM's appeal to masses with particular interest

placed on the factors that influence people's response to a charismatic and highly emotional gospel message. It is also critical to point out that the story of Jesus Christ has been told, is told, and will continue to be told in the parameters of people's experiences; their world view and ultimately their environmental setting. In the same way, the response to the gospel message will always be influenced by people's real emotions and fears as well as their anticipations.

In this case, the TWRRM is a necessary entity to investigate in the context of people's real religious zeal and experiences. Any endeavour directed toward the promotion of knowledge and empowering others is a worthy cause to investigate. This research does not only help people to know more about the TWRRM, it also enables people to be well informed about the dynamics of a genuine religious experience in the context of a real life's setting and worldview. Such a thrust helps the Christian Church to re-look at self in the mirror and see whether she is a living and loving community or a mere Sunday day event. There is a lot that can be learnt from every new phenomenon just as there is a lot that the "old" can pass as an inheritance to the young or new movements.

#### 1.4 Hypothesis

It is my hypothesis that there seems to be a reconstruction identity in the spirit of the charismatic prophetic religious movements as is clearly manifested through the manoeuvrings of Christians from the 'traditional churches' to the

newer charismatic church - movements associated with power and prosperity in trends which call for a thorough investigation of the historical and contemporary factors at play in the fast changing geography of Christianity in Africa. A study of this subtle movement will enable this research to establish the nature and relevance of this type of Christianity in meeting human needs which are the backbone of quality life and social harmony.

## 1.5 Aim and Objectives

### 1.5.1 Aim:

The aim of this research is to explore the nature, impact and significance of the newer charismatic and prophetic movements in the Zimbabwean Church scene in particular, and society in general.

### 1.5.2 Objectives:

The following objectives will be the guiding torch toward the attainment of the desired goal:

- i. To establish the identity and nature of the TWRRM in its historical setting and perspective
- ii. To identify and analyse the characteristics of the TWRRM and its theological perspectives
- iii. To discuss the factors that promote the growth of the TWRRM in the African Church scene



- iv. To critique the structures which are used by the TWRRM to attract converts
- v. To evaluate the effects of the TWRRM on the *Missio Dei* (God's Mission) and the society in general.

## 1.6 Research Methodology

This investigation will employ as its fundamental method of study, the historical critical method. To compliment this method, the theological and sociological methods will be used since the scope of the research learns from the theological nature of the Church as well as the social nature and relevancy of the Church. The oral historical method is also critical for the practicality and relevancy of this research since the setting of the study is the African – Church scene where oral – tradition is the norm in the communication of the gospel message.

The historical critical method is interested in the development of events and the behaviour of the main players behind the identified events. Krentz (1975:35) argues that “the historical critical method produces history in the modern sense, for it consciously and critically investigates (behaviour and) documents to write a narrative of the history they reveal”. Aspects of time and place are of great significance for historical criticism as one looks at the aspects of origins, growth, and effects of the TWRRM in the Zimbabwean Church scene. This

method, therefore, enables the researcher to explore analytically the historical trends associated with the TWRRM. The demerits of this approach are that it tends to dwell much on the past and can easily forget the future. Nevertheless history helps people to be focused and hence avoid the pitfalls of life.

The sociological method, also called the scientific approach recognises the fact that events happen in a dynamic social context. The approach therefore employs sociology, psychology, anthropology and economics to better understand the dynamics of Church ethics (Holmberg 1978:43)]. Such a sociological approach appreciates the fact that Christianity exists not in a vacuum but in a society that has its own challenges and successes. This method acknowledges society's behaviour in the growth and impact of religious ideals. It is based on "analysis of what has happened, or is happening in a society, rather than upon the situation artificially created by a researcher" (Haralambos & Holborn 1984:13). Its limitations are that too much emphasis on it may make Christianity look like any other social organisation regardless of its religions uniqueness.

The theological method clearly states that theology promotes clear socio-cultural values which will enhance a quality of life (Schreiter 1992:180). This method "views scripture not as absolute divine truth, at least not totally so but as, a product of human imagination, experience, research, and reflection"

(Ferguson 1988:426). What this means is that the Church as a human institution operates under human power and limitations hence the need to question certain issues that the Church does or fails to do (Schreiter 1992:180). The method, therefore, assesses the conditions in which the Church operates under, the Church's relevancy and authenticity to the socio-historical context of its mission (Beavan 1992:31).

The fact that this research is premised in African Christianity calls for the use of the oral historical method seeing that oral historiography is the major method at play since Africans' best way of preserving their history is through oral memory or history. Oral historiography is a fundamental method of reconstructing African Church history as it relates to "the past, to the present and the future in all aspects of life" (Kalu 1988:11). But what is oral historiography? In the book, General History of Africa-Vol 1, Ki-zerbo defines oral history as "a living museum of the whole of the stock of socio-cultural output stored up by peoples who are purported to have no written history" (1989:3). The oral historical method attends to "history that is written in the hearts and memoirs of the people, it is dynamic and spontaneous" (Beekan 1993:82). Oral history deals with aspects of human life and community identity. It deals with stories in an artistic, poetic and dramatic style as the story is told in pictorial language. Oral historical method connects the historical events with real issues of values, belief systems and cultural identity.

The use of oral historical method enables this research to be authentic in terms of being able to access salient information which is hidden in people's values and religious rituals and actions. Oral historical method accesses the key figures that are custodians of the religious information and values. This information is transmitted through the "testimonies of the living theology founded in the worship tradition" (Beekan 1993:87). The 'text' of oral history never loses its elasticity which frequently confronts the audience. In the African setting, oral history is the greatest "school of knowledge and life" (Ki-zerbo 1989:62). That oral history has a weakness of embracing mythological trends does not substitute for quality in terms of being "a vehicle of ethical and political instruction" (Ki-zerbo 1989:23). This method assists toward appreciating cases of moral and ethical standards which are oracles of the pulpit that have not been written down as creedal statements. Since Christianity is in essence an interpretation of the Bible, oral historical method is useful since its interests are not in a primary description of events but an interpretation of actions, faith and theology. This makes the oral historical method a fundamental method in the study of African Christianity.

A variety of research tools such as: websites, observations (worship services and rituals will be observed from a neutral perspective), interviews, questionnaires, newspaper articles, visits to the national archives and use of both published and unpublished sources will be employed to help give the research a broad base.

## 1.7 Literature Review

A critical study on religious trends and social response in modern day Zimbabwe has not received thorough attention save for Paul Gifford's pioneering work Christianity to Save or Enslave, (1988). African Church historians have tended to dwell much on the 'Western Missionary established churches' and the Zionist churches. A critical study on the Religious Right Movement in Zimbabwe has relatively remained unpopular with Zimbabwean theologians and Church Historians. Such research, therefore, examines real issues of concern and of theological relevancy to the life and work of the Christian Church today. I however acknowledge that many scholars have written a much on the role of the Church in society as well as a mapping out the churches by reference; they have also alluded to the newer and fast emerging movements. Their work will help me engage within the realms of an historical paradigm in my investigation.

Gifford (1998:13) in his book Christianity to Save or Enslave argues that historical research has revealed that a church which becomes relevant is the one which creates space for growth and attracts social attention in its proclamation of the Gospel. In line with this theological thinking, one would be forgiven in deducing that the newer charismatic Christian movements have indeed become relevant churches in the African religious landscape. What is at

play in the proclamation and worship service of the 'Right Movement' is the way the prophet cum pastor attacks the manifestation of poverty as the devil's fallacy that destroys those of little faith. The message of the Gospel of prosperity is declared as the will of God to enable the believers to make the best of the rapid social change (Gifford 1998:13-17). Such an analysis helps me to explore the nature of the TWRRM's theology and its historical impact on African Christianity today.

David Maxwell (1998:350), in his analysis of the efficacy of Christianity, argues that the Church has a pivotal role in society, to save and not to enslave.

Interestingly enough, the TWRRM declares life in its abundance to those who are born-again and have become part of the movement. The confident declaration of the abundant blessings and the presence of God's Kingdom for the believer becomes an attractive factor to the many yearning and searching souls. Maxwell demonstrates that even though the churches of the TWRRM are generally influenced by an economic culture and the spirit of capitalism they have become the most attractive places to be on Sunday because of the appeal to the emotional needs and fears of their congregants. I find this observation quite interesting because in the TWRRM, the Sunday sermon is about giving one's resources to the "church" (in essence to the pastor) so that one will in turn be economically blessed. But what nature of theology is this? - A theology that robs Tom in order to help John? Are we to witness blind faith or fear at play in the people's response to the prophetic declarations? Is the concept of

conversion at play in its traditional and theological sense or is there more to the loud cries of hallelujahs' and Amens? A bold analysis of the factors at play in the worship environment within the fold of the TWRRM will help us to better understand the mystery and myth behind the enormous growth of the newer charismatic movements in the Zimbabwean Church parameters.

Afe Adogame (2011:11) argues that the charismatic prophetic movements represent one of the most popular, fastest growing religious movements in the African church landscape which demands our attention as we study the history of the Church in our own generation. In the book: Who Is Afraid of the Holy Ghost? (2011: ix), Adogame deduces that the newer charismatic movements represent one of the most popular, fastest growing religious movements not only in the African Church scene but beyond the whole world. I fully agree with this argument that such a fast growing church movement deserves the attention of Church historians because “a quarter of the world’s two billion Christians are thought to be members of this lively, highly personal faith (Adogame 2011:2). Adogame argues that the thrust of the charismatic movement of our times has a global thrust which projects two extreme thought paradigms in scope; “the one he calls ‘the sceptics’ and the other the ‘radicals’ ” (Adogame 2011:12). The two extremes as noted by Adogame, relate very well to how people have generally viewed or judged TWC. There are the skeptics who see nothing good in the TWRRM; such scholars tend to discard outrightly the TWRRM’s message as a bunch of intellectual nonsense “that leads us to ignore

the real issues before us, and to misunderstand the historical crisis within which we find ourselves” (Adogame, 2011:12). I concur with Adogame on his analysis since a total rejection of the TWC will be tantamount to a denial of the obvious. On the other hand the radicals tend to over-exaggerate the phenomena to a narrow “economic spectrum” (Adogame 2011:13). The radical thrust is dangerous because it becomes extremely prescriptive and exclusive to the extent that it makes the whole act of worship a piece of drama which lacks a balanced perspective of the age-long religious phenomena “a feature which has always been identified with human history” (Adogame 2011:13).

In the interests of academic scholarship, I subscribe to the call for a balanced analysis of the faith of the TWRRM so that history does not have to find us guilty of having failed to present a fair critique of the TWC. As I explore the theme of an objective historical analysis, I am also mindful of my own personal views on the subject at hand. In this regard, I will attempt to do justice to scholarship and fair to the theology of TWC while also listening to my personal conscience in terms of my personal critique.

Samuel S Hill in his book, The New Religious Political Right in America, 1982; clearly defines the ideology of the Religious Right Movement (hereinafter called RRM) in the perspectives that assist the direction of my argument as whither to the TWC. Hill’s view helps me to demonstrate the roots and nature of the movement in the Zimbabwean Church scene. Birgit Meyer in her article ‘*Make*



*a Complete Break with the Past*’ argues that the Religious RRM manipulates issues of modernity while criticising the traditional styles of worship (Meyer 1988:317). Such an attempt to criticise the past and glorify the new has been viewed as unproductive in real life yet it seems to win converts for these newer churches. The question is what is at play here and why? It is the interest of this thesis to investigate these salient trends of evangelism and Church growth in the light of the growth of the TWC.

David Maxwell (2006), in African Gifts of the Spirit, explores the relation between social ruptures and the individual rupture of conversion linking such trends to the impact of neo-colonialism. Maxwell observes that the TWC’s growth factors are premised on the help and inspiration it affords believers towards “personal security and ‘teaches’ them how to make the best of modernity” (Maxwell 2006:134). The most interesting thing that the RRM has achieved is to create a culture of prosperity within its ranks and file in a way that has created a trans-national business enterprise under the name of religion and God.

In his book, African Pentecostalism–An Introduction, 2008, the late Professor Ogbu Kalu states that “The explosion of Pentecostalism in Africa needs an explanation” (Kalu 2008:169). Kalu observes the new dynamics or the growth and impact of the Pentecostals in rural areas hence he declares that his

research “does not recognize the force of cultural villagization of the modern public space: that most of the inhabitants of the towns carry medicine made in the villages to empower their successful foraging in the towns “(Kalu 2008:169). What is clear from Kalu’s argument is that there is need to acknowledge that the new strands of Pentecostalism grows from among the believers’ context and is influenced heavily by the believer’s environmental and religious world view. It is, therefore, clear that the African moral universe learns a great deal from “the village public, the emergent urban public and the Western public.... represented by international institutions” (Kalu 2008:169-70).

Critical to Kalu’s observation is that an emphasis of “being born again entails a complete break with the past” (Kalu 2008:171) which in turn brings about a highly emotional and dynamic confession of faith. This emphasis on the newness of all things introduces, in the mind of the believer, “the notion of rupture much more than nineteenth and early twentieth – century protestant missionaries” (Kalu 2008:171). The highly emotional declaration of faith tends to also exude a “protective fear”. This is the “fear of faith” as well as the fear of “what if.” The “fear of faith” is jealous and positive since it expresses a protective attitude which grows the believer. The fear of “what if” is negative since it looks back and feels the threats of the “past life.” This fear does not look forward with hope but is not sure of what the past means in the context of a new life hence the denial attitude. The denial of the “yester-story”, (the story of one’s past) is not objective but superfluous in nature.

I am in agreement with Kalu's observation that: There could be a connection between the economic collapse and the proliferation of the frightening fear which is true of the Pentecostal faith response to the Gospel (Kalu 2008:208). What require scholarship's attention are the nature and the value of the faith that is a product of the fear of God that springs from a 'heartfelt religion'. Church historians need to get another glimpse as to the content of faith and fear in the Pentecostal Theology.

Duncan and Kalu (2005:278-9) in the article "*Revival movements and indigenous appropriations in African Christianity*" in Kalu (2005), argue that in the new charismatic movements some ethical imperatives are repeatedly emphasised to the extent of generating a great excitement and popular interest beyond what may have been witnessed in years. This excitement, which in turn becomes faith response, is not only an element of faith but also a reflection of the convert's fears of one's life in the context of a new paradigm shift and experience. What becomes imperative is the need to investigate whether the component of fear plays a leading or passive role in the conversion proclamation that follows.

For Akintude (2005:117-49 in Kalu 2005) the "spread of Christianity ... has continued to generate interesting insights that relate to the character of faith" (Kalu 2005:119). This deduction is true in both its historical and theological

analysis; the face of Christianity has continued to be reformed with each generation and in every age. From the content of the faith, the theology of TWC engenders passionate piety even though the real content of what is proclaimed has not changed. In this context, I find it appealing to investigate the underlying motives at play in the growth of TWRRM. The investigation enables Church historians to judge fairly this style and content of worship in light of the varied assumptions that have come about in regard to the relevance and authenticity Christianity.

In his book, Our Subtle Spirituality Lovemore Mukwakwami (2010) argues that: “it is of the essence and right to completely undress the prevailing Christian mentality (since) it is a very powerful adaptive force, creating a web in which our consciousness may now be spinning, round and round in endless life cycles” (Mukwakwami 2010:1). Mukwakwami’s observation of the powerful influence that the new Christian movements exert in the human faculty of judgment leads him to conclude that such a religious phenomena has emerged as “a subtle power indeed. Today, ‘the theology of the NRRM dominates the worship setting of the Church in Africa’. No one is free from its subtle awesome power.” (Mukwakwami 2010:1).

I find Mukwakwami’s assertion quite revealing because the reality of the TWC in the African Church landscape is amazingly vast; it dominates the believer’s actions and thought patterns. The faith of the TWC has indeed become “the

global heartbeat, throbbing as a certainty in many lives” (2010:1). The converts are bound to its subtle awesome power as they declare their faith in “more of an emotional surge ignited by a sentimental inner drive” (Mukwakwami 2010:5). This faith response is spontaneous and instant. What is unique about this faith response is that the new Christian experience brings about new energy and courage without the believer’s consciousness in an atmosphere which is electric and the believer becomes, in no uncertain terms, “free from the cycle of death, poverty and sickness--- prosperous and rich in material and spiritual things” (Mukwakwami 2010:11).

As I listen to varied scholarly views, I am convinced to argue that the religious declarations of the TWRRM generate enough room for both fear and faith (a phenomenon which deserves a critical theological analysis). What becomes apparent is that the reality of humanity’s fear of both the known and the unknown has consequences visible in both their actions and behaviour. The content of fear is related to self-blame and condemnation for the story of one’s past. The faith element brings about great relief as the old life is declared dead and buried: “It ‘ridicules’ all other belief systems, exalting its own Christian brand to the highest pinnacle ever” (Mukwakwami 2010:21). The new life leads to a scenario “where both physical and spiritual needs (are) effectively catered for” (2010:23). I observe that in the context of this great “drama of faith” people become pliable, they “consent to the will and so called truths delivered by Prophets, Messiahs, and Seers ...” (2010:29). In this great drama, therein

lies a subtle spirituality which is driven by both fear and a faith response. This type of religious behaviour brings about many questions on my part which demand that one's faith has to be weighed and judged unsympathetically.

In his book, Say Goodbye to Powerless Christianity, (Ahn 2009:62) argues that the new charismatic movements bring "reformation to society and the church, much as the Protestant Reformation did". This understanding of Christianity tends to view the old Protestant churches as having glaring limitations hence the need for the "new apostolic reformation in the truest sense" (Ahn 2009:62). What becomes clear from this perspective of the TWC is that conversion brings about a new person who has no relationship with the past, no links with "yesterday", one who must fear God, hate everything that is a product of the mind even one's own family save those who are Christians. But what does this mean to one's relations? What does it mean to the fruits of yesterday? Is there a blessed future outside one's sociological and biological relations? These questions are meant to demythologise the popular proclamations of faith that tend to lack objective thinking and reality.

I am tempted to explore in essence Ahn's argument that there is some form of Christianity that is powerless. What then is the nature and form of powerless Christianity? Is there merit in seeing old Protestant churches as havens of "powerless Christianity"? I am of the view that a lot of what happens in the worship context of the TWRRM is not faith at work but some form of religious

drama that is at play in the denunciation of religious values of the old Protestant and Catholic churches. One must, therefore, attempt to objectively examine the nature of faith response as expressed by the followers or adherents of the TWRRM.

Allan H Anderson (2001), in his book African Reformation observes that there are “newer Pentecostal and charismatic churches” (2001:167) whose thrust has brought a huge impact to the Christian landscape and theology in Africa. Because of the enormous impact of this “newer” form of Christianity in the African Church context, it is fundamental that a deeper appreciation of its growth should be explored from an historical and theological perspective. Anderson concludes that: “We can’t understand African Christianity today without also understanding this latest movement of revival and renewal” (2001:168). The argument of Professor Anderson clearly shows the significance of the need to explore the meaning and growth of the NRRM in the Zimbabwean Church context today.

In my analysis of the ‘newer charismatic and prophetic movements’, as they are popularly called; I am inclined to agree with Anderson in observing that these movements tend to respond “to the existential needs of the African worldview” (Anderson 2001:168) hence they attract huge crowds who live in fear of the spiritual realm in the context of life’s challenges and experience. What is fundamental for the African believer is the experience of the divine in a way

that challenges both the past and the present. The divine must bring an answer which takes care of one's fears and promises a future with bliss. The real fears of what one has done and omitted to do must be addressed by the religious experience for one to be at peace with self, past and present, if one is to be at peace with God. One such fundamental factor that appeals to the fears and faith of the believer is the "prayer for healing and problems like unemployment and poverty, deliverance from demons and 'the occult' ... and prophecy" (2001:172). This factor, for me, is the basis for the huge impact and growth for the newer charismatic ministries. I shall, therefore, base my argument and critique of the TWRRM on these fundamental milestones in my attempt to explore the myth and power of the unique forms of faith response to the charismatic and prophetic gospel message.

David Maxwell (2006:133) in his book African Gifts of the Spirit explores the relation between social ruptures and the individual rupture of conversion linking such trends to the impact of neo-colonialism. Maxwell observes that the TWRRM's growth factors are premised on the help and inspiration it affords believers towards "personal security and 'teaches' them how to make the best of modernity" (Maxwell 2006:134). The most interesting and appealing factor that the RRM has given birth to is a culture of prosperity within its ranks and file in a way that has created a trans-national business enterprise under the name of religion and God. As I explore the growth of Zimbabwe's NRRM, I will demonstrate the facets of the movement's growth which are based on the



search for economic prosperity by many who flock into the “New Right Movement” (hereinafter called the NRM).

Edward Schillebeekx’s (1987) book, The Church with a Human Face, clearly reveals that the Church has to be in constant dialogue with issues that affect people in all areas of life since the Church is about the people and for the people (Schillebeekx 1987:21). But are we to locate the TWRRM within the mission and understanding of the Church? Indeed the history of the Christian Church is coloured with varied historical epochs and a vast outlook of the trends employed in the processes of how the Gospel message has been proclaimed. The diversity of the many trends in the proclamation of the Gospel and its effects on the circumstances of life assists me to locate my argument in this particular research.

Avery Dulles (1987), Models of the Church, argues that true religion should protect the poor and proclaim justice instead of taking away from the poor (Dulles 1987:6). Dulles’ argument is a direct critique of the theology that enriches a few in the name of faith and obedience to the will of God. In line with Dulles’ critique, it is historically and theologically deduced that within the NRRM, one comes for worship materially rich and spiritually poor, but returns home spiritually rich and materially poor after giving to the pastor in anticipation of a great miraculous reward. Observably, only the pastor retains

both portions of blessedness (spiritual and material) if not the materially prosperity alone. But as the week unfolds everyone must work hard and earn good monies so that s/he has a good testimony in the following fellowship meeting. The principle that religion exists for the common good of all is lost in one-way or the other since a few enjoy the benefits while others help them to sing hallelujahs of praise.

Paul Gifford observes that the preaching in the NRRM carries a sense of desperation and anxiety and not faith and grace (Gifford 1988:1). On the other hand, Kalu in his book, African Pentecostalism, (2008) observes that the 'Third Response' "is placed on socio-economic and reconstructive perspectives" (2008:251) hence the departure from traditional Christianity. From this focus I argue that the Church is a place where human-beings encounter both Divine Revelation and total freedom from sin and fear. The literature cited above and many others to be referenced in the process of this Thesis help me to argue my thrust from an historical and theologically informed perspective.

This chapter has dealt with the fundamental issues of nature and scope of the whole research by clearly presenting an outline of how the thesis will look-like in its structural formation and content discourse. The chapter attempted to help the reader to appreciate the flow of the research both as an academic discourse and logical piece of work. The introductory component of the thesis

has been framed as Chapter One of the research. Chapter Two will focus on the Historical Survey of the TWRRM. The chapter outlook will present a general background of the Church groups in Zimbabwe as a way of helping the reader to appreciate the general trends and geographic outlook of the Christian Church in Zimbabwe. A general historical survey of the roots of the Pentecostal Movement will be given in order to establish a sound historical premise toward the full thrust of the thesis' area of investigation and the logic of the hypothesis. This survey will take us through the varied historical phases which will assist the reader to appreciate the roots and developments of the trends within the charismatic religious movements. The chapter will conclude with a critical evaluation of the nature and spirit of the TWRRM.

Chapter Three will focus on the Characteristics of the TWRRM. The general and fundamental traits of the RRM will be fully discussed as way of clearly distinguishing the unique character of TWC. This chapter constitutes a critical aspect in trying to assist the reader to appreciate the uniqueness and relevancy of the thesis. The historical and theological characteristics of the TWRRM will be identified and critiqued toward a clear attempt to give a construction model of TWC. Chapter Four of the thesis will explore the fundamental factors that have and continue to promote the growth of TWC. Issues of religious values, spiritual realities, economic environment and socio-political environment will be tackled as some of the crucial factors that have helped to grow the TWRRM. Chapter Five will explore the historical and theological implications of the

TWRRM towards the orthodox scope of Biblical and traditional Christianity. The pre-modial beliefs and doctrines of ancient Christianity will be assessed against the theology of the TWRRM. Chapter Six will analyse the ecclesiological and sociological impact and implications of the TWRRM's message in terms of the gospel message and in the light of the mission field in making disciples for Christ. A conclusion will be deduced (Chapter seven) as to whether people's response to the theology of the TWRRM is motivated by a genuine religious faith or an existential fear factor.

## **Chapter Two**

### **An Historical Survey of the “Third Wave” Religious Right Movement**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines the historical nature and setting of the TWRRM from its historical settings to its manifestation and growth in Zimbabwe. As a way of properly locating the TWRRM in Zimbabwe, varied Church groups and their trusts are noted in the context of the mission thrust of the Christian Church and the varied strands that characterise Christianity in Zimbabwe. A general historical background of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements is given as a way of appreciating the roots of the TWRRM in the Zimbabwean Church scene before an evaluation of the impact of the movement in Zimbabwe.

The recent history of the Church in Zimbabwe clearly reflects that there are varied strands as it relates to the Church groups in the country. This chapter endeavours primarily to give a general survey of the Christian Church groups in Zimbabwe. It is in the context of this survey that this chapter will examine the role these Christian Church groups have played and are playing in the processes of Christianising/evangelising Zimbabwe. It would be a mammoth task, if not an impossible one, to give a mapping and an outline of individual Church denominations and their vision programmes. Therefore, this research will treat the mission programmes of the varied Church denominations, and

the way they relate to various components of the Christian body and to the state, via their ecumenical agencies such as the Zimbabwe Council of Churches.

## 2.2 A General Survey of the Church Groups in Zimbabwe

The Christian Church in Zimbabwe is basically divided into four major bodies which define their historical and theological thrust. The three bodies are: a) the Zimbabwe Council of Churches b) the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference c) the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe and d) *Fambidzano Yamakereke Avatema* (henceforth Fambidzano). These four church bodies are generally referred to as mother bodies of the Church in Zimbabwe. The role of the four Christian mother bodies is complimentary in nature even though there is a tendency to fish from each other's pond when it comes to church (denominational) growth and discipleship.

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches (hereinafter called ZCC) is an umbrella body representing more than twenty – five churches and a number of others with observer status (Verstraelen 1995:189). The ZCC is directly linked to All Africa Conference of Churches (hereinafter called AACC). It is also an associate of the World Council of Churches (hereinafter called WCC). Some of these Churches are Methodists, Anglican Church, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Church of Christ, Dutch Reformed Church, and Reformed

Church in Zimbabwe, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, Salvation Army, the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa and United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe. There are also three African Initiated churches that became members of ZCC, namely, the Christian Marching Church, the Independent African Church popularly known as Muchakata, and the Ziwezano Church. The ZCC was founded on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July 1964 at St. Cuthbert's Hall in Gweru as a fellowship of the "mainline" Christian denominations and Church related organisations. The ZCC emerged as a result of a largely inspired social responsibility movement to create a forum where Christian leaders from different denominations could tackle matters of mutual concern in an increasing tense political atmosphere (Hallencruetz 1988:52). There is no direct thrust to the traditional evangelical witness of the Church besides the preamble's salient reference to the "common calling, to the glory of the One God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (ZCC Constitution 1964:1). The Rt. Rev. Jonas, Bishop Emeritus of the Lutheran Church and former president of the ZCC says:

The ZCC was formed as a result of disagreements among the black and white leaders in the former Southern Rhodesian Christian Conference (SRCC) in 1964. Some white church leaders felt that it was not the duty of the Church to speak against the government on political matters. It was then decided to form another organisation called the Christian Council of Rhodesia. (Gundani 2001: 80)

It is clear that the founding of the ZCC constituted a turning point in the Christian perception of Church-State relations as well as in the overall

responsibility of the Church to society and its *modus operandi*. There, however, was no direct evangelical imperative toward saving souls from the “fires of hell”. More so, its period of formation coincides with decades of high African nationalism (1950s to 1970s), when the political struggles and the changes that were taking place in the local ecumenical field questioned the responsibility of the religious institutions in the context of advancing peace and justice in the land. It is really interesting to note that the first president of the ZCC was Bishop Skelton of the Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland who later resigned from his post as Bishop in protest against the Rhodesian racist policies. The ZCC set out to achieve the following objectives: first, to increase mutual understanding and to develop more effective ecumenical witness and action on local, national and international level; second, to foster closer unity among Churches through joint action and service and by ecumenical studies in faith and order, life and work; third, to coordinate the work of the churches in Rhodesia in order for them to live to their prophetic witness; and fourth, to encourage ecumenical initiatives and the reunion of denominations (ZCC Constitution 1964: 1). Many observers have questioned what they call the glaring missing link with the Great Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all Nations, baptising them ...” (Matthew 28:19). Could this be symbolic of the “mainline” churches lack of vibrancy when it comes to evangelical witness? The quest for an answer to the rhetorical questions stated above will be proffered in my analysis of the TWRRM’s impact and growth in the Zimbabwean Church landscape.



In post independent Zimbabwe, the Church denominations under the banner of the ZCC have not realised any significant membership growth; it is generally alleged that most of the older Church denominations have lost their members to newer charismatic Pentecostal churches but there is absolute scholarly evidence to these assumptions. What is common, however, is that some people tend to move between the older Church denominations and the newer charismatic churches of the TWRRM in search for quick fix for the social and economic problems. A good example is that of my own sister, Catherine, who has been moving from one Church group to the other “in search for real solutions to my economic and social challenges” (Catherine, Interview: 13<sup>th</sup> October 2012). Whenever things do not go as per expectations, for my sister Catherine, she always comes back to the family Church denomination protesting that “these Nigerian Churches are full of crooks and cheats that rob people of their money” (Catherine, Interview: 13/10/2012). Surprisingly, Catherine will always be excited to move to a new charismatic Church movement in the community arguing that she now has found a good Church that will bring a solution to her problems. Within the same year of her new discovery, she will go to great pains dismissing the same newly found Church that has the solution to her challenges.

In my broader observation and analysis, the story of Catherine is true of many people who are always on the move in search of a new life giving Church

fellowship. My sister, Catherine's story is not about the search for God, but the search for material benefits within a Church movement. This is the tragedy of many people who are always moving from one denomination to the other. Without departing from the lack of membership growth in the ZCC aligned churches; it may be noted that the stagnation may be a result of lack of authentic and contextual self-examination in the context of doing mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The ZCC's constitutional provision "to engage in a sustained effort to bring total salvation to all" (ZCC Constitution 1964:1) has not being explored from a spiritual perspective but rather from a sociological perspective. But from a socio-political responsibility perspective, the ZCC has made a notable contribution to the widening of the democratic space in the country by calling for Constitutional democracy since the late 1990s. What remains a challenge to the ZCC is the need to strike a balance between the spiritual and the socio-political responsibility without ignoring one aspect of mission or the other since they are both crucial elements of doing ministry.

The Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference (hereinafter called ZCBC) was founded in 1969, as 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). The ZCBC represents the theological and social interests of the Roman Catholic Church in Zimbabwe. The Conference has up to 12 commissions, each chaired by a bishop: Catechesis, Clergy, Laity, Seminary,

Marriage, Liturgy, Communications, Education, Social Services and Development, Justice and Peace, Theology and Ecumenism. The ZCBC was formed as a result of the Second Vatican Council in 1967. The ZCBC's 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).

In both pre and post independent Zimbabwe, the ZCBC has been a protagonist of justice for all citizens by documenting and collating cases of human rights violations in the country. As a result of its thrust on social justice issue, most of its members were viewed as enemies of the State. The fact that the roles of the Church and the State were distinctly highlighted, did not however, assist the ZCBC to explore vigorously the spiritual welfare of its membership. This glaring missing thrust has not helped the image of the Catholic Church when it comes to the spiritual matters that affect the African worshipper in his/her daily experiences. As a result of clear programmes of a spiritual thrust for the ordinary members, many adherents of Catholicism have been a target of the newer Pentecostal movements. They are accused of being "Sunday Christians" who go to Church as a mere tradition without really worshipping God in spirit and truth. One wonders whether, at all, the Catholic Church has Africanised

itself towards meeting the contemporary spiritual needs of the African worshipper.

Some of the common questions which have been asked about the ministry of the Catholic Church are: Is the Catholic Church's style of worship satisfying the needs of the worshipper? Is there a balance between the Church's social responsibility and its spiritual growth? Has the Church not left room for doubt and uncertainty in its worship tradition? In response to the questions noted above, I am inclined to argue that while many of the pre-modial traditions might have created a strait-jacket style of worship thereby opening avenues for spiritual introspection nevertheless the Catholic Church has been one of the few traditional churches to make Africans feel at home while in worship. The question of satisfying people's needs during worship as well as balancing between spiritual and social responsibility is really a question of self-introspection and renewal and not schism and rebellion.

I am aware that the new Catholic Pope, Pope Francis 1 has already invoked Catholics to reflect the attitude of Jesus toward dealing with both spiritual and social problems that stare at the world today ([www.vaticannews.com](http://www.vaticannews.com) accessed 18/03 2013). The Pope's call carries the imperatives of mission in an evangelical thrust. As to whether the Church has left room for doubt and uncertainty in its worship traditions one is persuaded to argue that in terms of its structural provisions, the Catholic Church presents one of the best models

for mission. Every society or group seems to have and appreciate its role in very clear means/ways. The challenge to be faced may relate to leadership personalities more than the structural provisions. The lessons from Church history clearly show that the Church is a reforming institution. What the Catholic Church needs is a courageous leadership to audit its ministries. The excitement around the new Pope, Pope Francis 1, a Jesuit priest, has brought hope for a Catholic reformation and renewal towards being a just Church.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (hereinafter called EFZ) is a fellowship of churches, Church related organisations, and individuals who share a desire to express unity, fellowship and combined action among churches and organisations of evangelical persuasion. The idea of forming the EFZ was mooted in 1962, at a meeting in Harare by Clyde W Taylor, the executive secretary of the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (Verstraelen 1995:192). His message was that in the face of the rising tide of liberalism and ecumenicity, Evangelicals must join hands and hearts in a practical outworking of that spiritual unity that is already there in Christ (Bhebhe 1988: 314). The second meeting in Harare, October 1962, intended to explore the possibility of establishing the Evangelical Fellowship of Central Africa. To pursue the idea, two other meetings took place in 1963 in Lusaka and Choma (Verstraelen 1995). The meeting in Choma resolved that the uncertainties of the federation militated against the idea of an Evangelical Fellowship of Central

Africa. Members at the meeting agreed that territorial fellowships be established. After its foundation EFZ embodied the following objectives:

- a) To provide a spiritual fellowship among evangelical Christians as a means of united action in promoting Bible teaching, prayer and Evangelical ministries in accordance with Evangelical faith outlined in the fellowship's statement of faith, directed towards the perfecting of the individual believers, and the salvation of lost souls.
- b) To cooperate with other similar Evangelical bodies throughout Africa and other countries.
- c) To take common action with a view to awakening Christian people to the danger of modernism, false cults, and from ecumenicity that is achieved at the expense of vital Christian faith (Bhebhe 1988:321).

In its objectives, the EFZ took a spiritual and an anti-ecumenical thrust. The EFZ has always been silent on political and social evils. It claims no interest in earthly things. Christians of the EFZ argue that their role is to preach the gospel and condemn sin hence that makes them truly evangelicals and not politicians. The theology of the EFZ is pacifist. The evangelicals do not speak out against the oppressive structures and systems; they just declare the word of God over sin and evil as well as sickness and poverty. During Zimbabwe's liberation struggle the evangelicals interpreted the armed struggle in terms of

the advance of communism and Russian influence. Many evangelicals felt that it was their duty to speak out against communism and the liberation movement. The major interest for the evangelicals is to witness to the kingdom and condemn sin and evil, probably, without critically looking at the causes of sin and evil. Prayers are made for the destruction of the devil and his works in a way that is ritualistic and appealing to the audience. This attitude of the EFZ greatly appeals to people's emotions in the context of many challenges and needs of the worshipper.

There is also a fellowship of African Initiated Churches (hereinafter called AIC). This organisation is also generally called *Fambidzano Yamakereke Avatema* (henceforth Fambidzano). This Fellowship/Fambidzano has about 99 member churches on its list. This movement engages itself in theological training, rural development, and the promotion of co-operation among members. *Fambidzano* does not have a clearly spelt out programme on how it seeks to win souls to Christ but simply assumes that every African will find space/room in the worship service under their banner. Most AIC tend to be conservative in nature and enjoy a pan-Africanist agenda. They tend to support the status quo. *Fambidzano* has a devoted thrust toward dealing with the spirit world and spiritual matters such as prophecy and healing. There is no interest in evangelisation. Believers come to get help on their own volition and can leave as and when they want.

The most interesting aspect of *Fambidzano* is that of no outreach thrust. Worshippers come from varied backgrounds and there is largely no interest in membership. The worshipers' interests are in getting answers to certain challenges of a spiritual nature as well as knowing what the future holds for them. The Bible is not necessary in the worship context since the prophet receives direct oracles from the "spirit-world". Their lack of a clear biblical educational thrust has led to many viewing this group as pseudo-Christian. For the Pentecostal preacher, the *Fambidzano* group is a "satanic group that must be disbanded through prayer and public condemnation" ([www.kubatanaarchive.org](http://www.kubatanaarchive.org): accessed on 14/07/2011).

The Christian churches (denominations) in their public role in the evangelisation of Zimbabwe continue to exercise their moral and spiritual influence from varied perspectives. The mainline Protestants, the Catholic Church, and the Evangelical/Pentecostal churches all claim to be involved in God's mission for the betterment of the world and yet they do not share a common agenda as to how to fulfill the mission without causing pain and harm to each other within the mission-field. The only common entity that these groups share is that they all claim to represent the Church and gospel values. The *Fambidzano* group is not concerned about making converts since its interest is not to evangelise but simply to help people deal with real socio-religious challenges from a spiritual perspective. What is clear is that the mission of God is done through human-beings whose agenda is through *Missio*



*Hominum* (mission from a human perspective). But this mission is understood differently in terms of its imperative and justification when it comes to the basics of making disciples for Christ.

## 2.3 A General Survey of the origins of Third Wave Religious Right Movement

### 2.3.1 Why the “Third Wave”?

Interestingly, the newer African charismatic movements do not necessarily refer to themselves as Pentecostals but as “Charismatic churches, Born Again Christians, etc.” (Kalu 2008:4-5). The naming or identity of the movement is centred on the origin of the religious phenomena which is central to the group’s experience. Church historians have defined these newer charismatic movements from a socio – historical perspective hence the title the TWRRM. The phrases “Third Wave” and or “Third Response” (Kalu1988:2) are historical in nature. The case of the “Third Wave” clearly implies that there is a “First and a Second Wave or Response” in the context of the growth of the Christian Church. The first response is generally understood to be within the missionary evangelicalism of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century while the second response is the 1920s’ “pneumatic challenge to white theology” (Kalu 1998:1). These waves are tools of identifying particular trends in the missional life of Christianity as the religious faith took route amongst varied and different sociological and political contexts. An historical analysis of the growth of the Christian Church demonstrates the first and second waves as: Evangelicalism on one hand and Ethiopianism and

Zionism on the other. These Waves or Responses are essential vehicles toward appreciating the story and identity of Christianity in the growth of the Church in terms of its mission outlook.

The First Wave or Response in the spread of African Christianity was Evangelicalism which unfolded by the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and making a huge mark on the African landscape in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the emergence of Protestant world missions (Isichei 1995:75). The Protestants, through Evangelicalism sought to respond to developing trends of too much formalism and rigidity which were slowly creeping into the worship life of the European reformation movement. Therefore, the term Evangelicalism describes the “Protestant understanding of the Evangel” (Douglas ed. 1978:360). This wave of Christianity was concerned about winning lost souls to Christ in the Dark Continents such as the African continent. Evangelicalism emphasized personal conversion and commitment to God by every recipient of the Gospel message. The Evangelicals concerned themselves with the sinfulness of humanity hence the preaching of divine grace and forgiveness to every penitent sinner (Isichei 1995:82 – 83)). The wave of Evangelicalism in Africa gave birth to Christians who loved God and denounced their own cultural identity. African converts were made to think and worship like the Europeans who had introduced the gospel to them (Isichei 1995:81).

The “Second Wave” or Response was characterised by the African Initiatives in Christianity (Bantu Prophetic churches) that thrived on “communality and incorporation of facets of primal religion and culture” (Kalu 1998:2). This wave of African Christianity is characterised by an attempt by Africans to Africanize the Christian faith through the spirit of Ethiopianism and Zionism. In this context, African Christians took the lead to make the gospel relevant and meaning-full to their socio-cultural and religio-political worldview. This process of promoting local Church leadership as well as local ritual actions in the act of worship has been termed Ethiopianism and or Zionism (Isichei 1995:313ff). In church circles, Ethiopianism was a religious protest movement against the structural challenges associated with a socio – political context which reduced the African preacher and worshiper to an inferior player in the story of salvation history. The choice of the name Ethiopianism evoked political sentiments since the Kingdom of Ethiopia was a symbol of inspiration to many Africans because of the fact that Ethiopia was never subjugated to Western colonialism. What is also interesting with the Name Ethiopia is the Biblical reference to the return to God “Ethiopia shall lift up her hands to the Lord (Maxwell 2006:67).

The name Zionism has always been associated with spiritual activities and realities which were now an inspiration to the desire for religious and cultural stature. Ethiopianism and Zionism are 20<sup>th</sup> century movements with a deep African spiritual flavor. The choice of the name Zionism also evokes a spiritual

desire which seeks to make worship authentic, relevant and dynamic to the believers. Zionism seeks to rediscover and restore the glory of Zion which is associated with God's divine revelation for the redemption of all humanity in their search for religious peace and healing in the context of the Church's mission ((Isichei 1995: 314ff). Ethiopianism and Zionism reflects African initiatives at play in the growth of Christianity in Africa. In his delineation on African Christianity, Professor Allan H. Anderson argues that this initiative was "unprecedented in the history of Christianity" (Anderson 2001:250). The phenomenon of the "African Initiatives in Christianity" in the advance of the Christian gospel in Africa has been aptly described as "African Reformation" (Anderson 2001:253 – 254). Such a huge impact by the African worshippers on the growth of African Christianity has been historically recognized as the Second Wave in the growth trends of Christianity.

The 'Third Wave' gave birth to the 'charismatic Christianity'. The TWC calls itself a 'movement of revival and renewal'. It is understood to be a third-response to white cultural domination and power in the church (Anderson 2001:167). The key premise of departure within the TWC is the 'vision of what God wills for a society hence the fellowship is "a collection of World-changers, visionaries dedicated to combating enemies of God's will" (Hill & Owen 1982:18). This belief system has been portrayed as complete confidence in God and his revealed will – the Bible. The TWC shows a sophisticated life where

human beings are Christianized in all aspects of their entire life i.e. politically, socially, religiously and economically.

What makes the TWM in Zimbabwe complex is the nature of the gospel proclamation, which is both “utopian and ideological” (Gifford 1998:83). The ideological aspect normally “legitimizes the existing social order, defends dominant values, enhances the authority of the dominant group, and is calculated to preserve the existing society (while the utopian religion) reveals the limitations of the existing social order, questions the dominant values of society, challenges the authority of the dominant group and seeks to improve the current social order” (Gifford 1998:83).

### 2.3.2 “Third Wave” Religious Right Movement and its Charismatic Forerunners.

The modern day understanding of Pentecost is “taken from the Day of Pentecost experience of the second Chapter of Acts ... and its emphasis is on the centrality of the Holy Spirit in faith and practice” (Anderson 2001:18) Pentecost is a historical Jewish Harvest feast celebrated fifty days after the Jewish Passover celebrations. In its sociological nature Pentecost was a thanksgiving festival. The present day meaning of Pentecost within the Christian Church implies the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the believers.

The roots of prophetic ministry can be traced to the Pentecostal Theology which is about the search for authentic Biblical spirituality and a mixture of varied Christian traditions within the history of Christianity. It has been inferred that Pentecostalism originates from Christian asceticism which tended to be a clear demonstration of a deep bond of faith expression which is also a fundamental trait of the charismatic movement. A good example is that of Tertullian who valued a high spiritual life in his expression of Christian values (Hoornaet 1988:78). In this context it can be inferred that the charismatic spirit has always lived on in the mission of the Church without taking a denominational slant but at work in the ministries of many Christian heroes and heroines.

A clear distinction has to be made between the TWRRM and Pentecostal churches. The Pentecostal churches as a Christian movement became popular by the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The birth of this movement was within the great renewal movement of the spirit, which manifested itself between 1901 and 1906 in the United States of America. The year 1901 is with reference of the Topeka experience while 1906 is with reference to the Azusa Street Holy Spirit experience (Burgess *et al* 1988:1). The central theme of the Pentecostal movement is the rediscovering of “the spiritual power of the first-century Church” (Burgess, *et al* 1988:1). Because of an interest in the immediate coming of the Kingdom of God, its main ecclesiology is to see a new godly commonwealth based on the principles of the Word of God and the character of the Early Church, which was led by the Holy Spirit as noted in Acts 2.

Pentecostalism puts a lot of emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit who gives believers many gifts, the key of which are good health and wealth since God is the God of life and blessing. The emphasis on what God can do and what he does for a believer tends to ignore other rich aspects of the Christian faith like humility, pain and suffering, endurance and the reality of persecution and tribulations (John 16:33). A believer is now seen as a child of God who lives beyond sin and suffering. Such an emphasis resembles the individuals and groups who were condemned as heretical by the Church in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. Examples of such can be found in Marcion and the Montanists who have been described by E. E. Cairns (1998:69) as “the radical dualists and millenarians” whose understanding of the Bible is shallow and at times vague.

The Social Gospel Movement and its effects on American society also helped to foster the growth of the Pentecostal spirit in the religious realm by the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. People were left scared by the evils of war and now sought after a higher spirituality that would restore self-confidence and peace of mind. In the context of the Social Gospel Movement, the Industrial Revolution reached its zenith. Sadly, for the poor innocent Christian, the age of the Industrial Revolution came with higher forms of Biblical criticism which were viewed as too negative by conservative religious leaders. A search for a new spirituality was in-evitable in this mix because when societies become highly secularised, religion is bound to be less appealing to urbanised communities.

The threats of Industrialisation saw a new wave of spirituality emerging as from the mid 1960's; this was a vibrant charismatic Christianity which caught the attention of many people with its call for constant prayer in the midst of the challenges of urbanisation.

The Pentecostal Christianity is very much typified by the first Christian Pentecost when the Holy Spirit “transformed the Apostles into bold, ardent and convincing evangelists” (Richardson et al 1983:437). The first of such a claim was made in “Topeka, Kansas on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1901, when a Sunday School Teacher, Agnes Ozman after being prayed with for the ‘Baptism in the Holy Spirit’, experienced a powerful interior renewal and began to praise God in an unknown tongue, later identified as Bohemian” (Richardson, et al 1983:437). This perspective reflects well on the religious aspect of this movement.

Pentecostalism puts a lot of emphasis on the “re-appearances of *charisms*, of *glossolalia*, healing, miracles” (Richardson, et’ al 1983:223). The Movement says that a believer has to prayerfully and faithfully claim God’s promises for good health, wealth and success in life because; they argue that, the above virtues are marks of being a genuine Christian. Pentecostals subscribe to “a work of grace subsequent to conversion in which spirit baptism is evidenced by *glossolalia* (speaking in tongues)” (Burgess, et al 1988:1). For the Pentecostals speaking in tongues is the evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and a mark of being a genuine Christian. This movement relates very well with the



gift of the Holy Spirit at Azuza Street Mission that was experienced in 1906 (Kalu 2008:6-8).

The new Charismatic prophetic movements sought to determine life-style choices based on religious discourses as propagated by the founder leader. In other words, the spiritual life of this New Religious Right Movement (hereinafter called NRRM) was determined by the leader whose voice and message was understood to be the voice and message of God respectively. A call to a new form of Christian spirituality that rejected public life in preference to a mythical and secretive lifestyle which was not fully based on authentic Biblical values but rather on social independent prophetic teaching emerged with the call to reject 'powerless Christianity'. Throughout the sermonization process, the prophetic message becomes the prima of salvation. A new identity emerged as to what it meant to be a blessed child of God in the context of life's experiences of pain, poverty and suffering. This new Christian movement with a deeper appreciation of the need to economically prosper the believers proclaimed itself as the preserver of true Christian fundamentals in a world that was fast losing its religious identity in the context of economic deprivation. In this new religious identity, conversion becomes a process of economic empowerment.

In its language about God the charismatic movement made "God into an image of their liking: a) one who protects and blesses them over and above others: b) one with whom they have a private relationship; c) one they know completely

and correctly (thus they have the only true way to God)” (*Congregational Chronicle* Vol. 8 2003:3). Such an attitude created a “self-righteous Christian fundamentalism ... with claims of ultimate truth and little tolerance for diverse opinions” (*Congregational Chronicle* Vol. 8 2003:3). This new religious claim attracted the attention of many people who felt weakened by the challenges of life which present depression and varied spiritual warfare. Many people who have fears about certain political ideologies of their time, some with a sense of frustration, many with a sense of foreboding; “found a sense of relief in the new spirit of self-righteousness” as promoted by the NRRM (Hill & Owen 1982:23).

In the fear of many social and economic challenges a new religions tend to find a welcoming audience. This audience will easily welcome any talk about a new order which is soon to be born and whose thrust seeks to restore the ‘true values of Biblical Christianity’. The NRRM is thus “a collection of World changers, visionaries dedicated to combating ... enemies of the gospel truth (hence they) ... pronounce judgment on the present drift of affairs” (Hill & Owen 1982:22). In their attempt to change society they claim that they have the vision of God for all humanity. As such they call people to be ‘Born Again’, to be redeemed, purged, and redirected toward a new life or lifestyle. Such a new life is considered to be a light to all humanity who is caught up in the context of sin and social – evil which leads to satanic wars and destruction.

Because there is a 'New Right' it becomes clear that there is also an 'Old Right'. The Old Right is a conservative religious attitude which maintains a pacifist attitude and stays away from any political involvement in bringing about the Kingdom of God. It is a simple pious Christian life that leads to asceticism which poses no political danger or challenges to certain traditions. The Old Right has no interest in earthly things as it awaits the consummation of the Kingdom of God on earth. But it has to be noted that the Old Right was never the mind and heart of Orthodox Christianity, it is a product of a deep pious commitment in the monastic houses.

In its present context, the TWRRM was born from the Religious Right Spirit. The phrase 'Religious Right' refers to the far right extremism or fundamentalism found in a religious faith. This is feasible in Christianity in terms of the meaning and usage of the Holy Scriptures through one's expression of faith. Kevin Phillips coined the term, Religious Right, "in 1975 in reference to the new Right Complex" (Hill & Owen 1982:23). Its founders are "generally charismatic and younger men and women ... respected for their preaching and leadership abilities, and ... are relatively well educated, though not necessarily in theology" (Hill & Owen 1982:17). The Prophetic movement has a moral quality of righteousness which is based on a new sense of victory that a believer now enjoys as a child of God. It understands the importance of mass organising, sloganeering, press conferences, media manipulation, and

public relations. Its key premise is to win souls for Jesus Christ by fighting all forms of sin and evil in defence of the Bible and God.

However, it must be known that the prophetic movements tend to employ a powerful political stance which is consistent with the Worldview and needs of the society they find themselves in. In its political position capitalism is promoted by a constant proclamation of such phrases: 'My God is rich'; 'every blessed man must be rich'; 'God blesses us with abundant Riches'; and 'I worship the God of Abundant wealth: In this context they oppose social service, and advocate capitalism" (Gifford 1988:2). The key foundations of Pentecostalism are Christian morality, good health, wealth, power, and education:

God is identified with those who are healthy and wealthy. Such are the saved, the blessed, God's true children, and the chosen ones, the New Israel, the Saints and Victors. Because of its promotion of Health and Wealth Pentecostals draw their membership "from the ranks of the working class – people who are not removed from economic and political marginality, but who enjoy reasonable standards of living ... (Hill & Owen 1982:16).

Because of their hatred of poverty the prophetic movements have attracted financial support from rich white supremacists that are keen to assert their material dominance over communism and big governments. The financial support comes through partnerships that reflect some form of ecumenical and or international ties. For the TWRRM wealth is a sign of faith, sincerity, honesty, and being blessed by God.

The sign of being blessed imbues the believer with the power for witness and service with a new vigour that expresses a passionate faith and confidence in God's victories and goodness. Such an experience is referred to as a 'higher life', a 'blessed life' a 'true Christian life' (Pastor Ogden: Sermon 23/10/2012). The ideal of a new life ushers in a new and extreme confidence that enables a believer to declare victory over sin and poverty as a way of showing one's trust and confidence in God. In its historical development the prophetic movements have been given various names at any locality. The names normally relate to the key focus of the main player in terms of the preaching ethics of the movement. The following names will be explained and used in this piece of work in a complimentary manner: Fundamentalist; Charismatic; Fanatics; Born Again.

The Word Fundamentalist denotes a specific "attitude whose major tenet is that the Bible is inerrant ... and the literal interpretation of the scriptures in their daily use" (Law 1920:834). The origins of the word fundamentalist can be traced to 1920 when Curtis Laws wrote; "we here and now move that a New Word be adopted to describe the men among us who insist that the landmarks shall not be removed .... We suggest that those who still cling to the fundamentals and who mean to do battle for the fundamentals shall be called 'Fundamentalists'" (Burgess 1988:3). As a movement Fundamentalism strives on the conservative theological assertion which tends to reject aspect of making

worship modern in its outlook. The fundamentalists build their theology on the weaknesses observed from the existing older denominations. It capitalises on the concerns and needs of practicing Christians. Its key focus is to bring hope and comfort to the minds and hearts of worried Christians in the context of their fears which have not been allayed in the older church groups.

A charismatic is a Christian who identifies who identifies dynamism and exuberance associated with “healing tongues and prophecy” (Hexham 1993:48). It then follows that the Charismatic movement is associated with a deep desire for spiritual renewal and nourishment. The desire for such a renewal comes with the “gifts of the spirit called *charisma*” (Richardson et al 1983:91). In general, the term charismatic refers to the “grace dimension of Christianity and of the church as distinguished from the institutional or hierarchical dimension of faith in God” (Richardson et al 1983:91). As a movement the charismatic dimension of the Christian faith is also to be found in Old Traditional churches i.e. the so-called mainline churches or historic churches. In such churches as the Methodists and the Congregationalist; believers want to experience peace hence the need for spiritual healing and gifts. The roots of the charismatic movement are associated with the ministry of Dennis Bennet; an Episcopal Rector in Van Nuys, California in 1960 (Burgess 1988:1). Prophetic pastors tend to be charismatic in nature, they do not have respect for a particular order of worship or tradition or liturgy. Their popular claim is that they follow

the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the exercise of spiritual gifts as and when the Spirit leads.

The word fanatic can be derogatory in its English usage. It normally is used to imply a crazy follower, someone who puts little reason to what he/she believes in. In its theological sense fanaticism comes from the Latin word “*fanaticus*” – meaning inspired by a deity” (Richardson et al 1983:209). In this context fanaticism denotes a state of affairs whereby a believer or believers are enthusiastic or excited as they are ‘moved’ by the power of their religious faith. Another popular title which has been coined by Pentecostals is ‘Born Again’. This title for a believer is derived from John 3:1-21 where Jesus tells Nicodemus: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:5). It is thus argued that those who have the experience of spiritual renewal through the miraculous presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives will live by the grace of God and will never lack anything in this world.

The characteristics of newer charismatic prophetic movements are based on a quest for a new identity. The group employs “religious and political ideologies that provide a rationale for their beliefs and religious practices as well as their very existence” (Pavlos 1982:4). The TWRRM is highly organised, spiritually disciplined and maintains a strict respect and devotion to their leaders. The

movement promises its followers everlasting blessing and happiness while still in this world because God is able to take care of God's children. The movement promises its followers not to worry about their past and their future since God has already taken care of their worries. The movement assures its adherents that it is the only true Church, the only focus of salvation hence those who are outside the fellowship are lost sinners who need to be brought to the true Church. Love and acceptance of one another within the fold is overemphasised and the convert is assured of a "promise of personal transformation" (Pavlos 1982:49). Born again conversion is stressed as the only sign of true religion. A repentant sinner must experience a miracle as a mark of salvation. Salvation leads to many blessings hence a believer is set free from the curse of poverty and ill-health.

## 2.4 The Protestant Reformation and the "Third Wave" Religious Right Movement

The roots of the charismatic movements can easily be traced back to the Early Church across a mixture of varied Christian traditions within the history of Christianity. It has been inferred that the TWRRM movements may have benefited from charismatic ascetic tendencies which were associated with the spirit of Biblical Christianity in their outlook. A good example is that of Tertullian who was a charismatic Christian whose radical ideas encouraged him to declare that: Christians were "competitors for salvation in earning the favour of God" (Walker 1970:65). From this context, it can be inferred that the



charismatic spirit has always lived on in the mission of the Church without taking a denominational form but at work in the ministries of many Christian heroes. Church historians have observed that back in the Early Church experience:

The Church was a community of the Holy Spirit and the freedom of expression and spontaneity of its worship may not have been very different from that of many Pentecostals and Charismatic churches today (Anderson 2004:19).

Some key aspects of worship which were central to the Early Church are clearly visible in the worship context of the charismatic prophetic movements today. Some of these fundamental features include prophecy, healing, and speaking in ‘unintelligible’ tongues. These trends are in line with the New Testament testimony to the reality of “unusual manifestations of the Spirit” (Anderson 2004:19). It is out of this context that in the letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul had to issue directions on how believers must use the varied gifts of the Holy Spirit which were causing some divisions to their place and efficacy in the life and work of the Church (1Corinthians 12 & 14). Even though there are historical periods whereby there are no pronounced manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit and their usage, there has always been cases of the sprouting of the charismatic gifts in the life and work of the Christian Church across many generations.

Around the middle of the 2nd Century of Christendom, a man from Phrygia called Montanus “proclaimed himself the passive instrument through whom

the Holy Spirit spoke” (Walker 1970:56). The oracles of Montanus were combined with a fresh and vivid outburst of the early prophetic enthusiasm. Montanus’ beliefs gave birth to a movement which has been called Montanism. This movement ‘believed in progressive revelation’ “believing that the gifts of the Spirit had been restored to their former importance in their movement. Speaking in tongues and prophecy were common among Montanus and his disciples” (Anderson 2004:19). Tertullian, the celebrated African theologian was to embrace Montanism, believing that the teaching enhanced the spirituality of the believer. Most of their ideas were to find room for growth within the monastic traditions (Walker 1970:56). Just like the tension caused by the TWRRM in the unity of Christendom today, the Montanists’ teachings were distasteful and destabilising for the Church which needed all its energy to deal with the heresies of Gnosticism.

During the Middle-Ages, some individuals and local churches in the East continued to affirm the charismatic spirituality in their worship settings particularly within Monastic movements. Within the monasteries, there was baptism in the Holy Ghost as a separate experience from water baptism. A good example is that of Gregory of Palamas (1296 -1350) who wrote:

Experiencing the transcendent God through the Spirit, and of receiving the charismata through the laying on of hands, including healing, miracles, tongues and interpretation of tongues (Burgess 2002:751)

However, in the western Church, religious leaders continued to deny the possibility of spiritual gifts as expressed in the radical monastic tendencies. Some form of liturgy was put in place to help priests deal with certain cases whereby it became necessary to perform rites of exorcism. Such a ritual stipulated the following form of action:

Signs of possession are the following: ability to speak with some facility in a strange tongue or to understand it when spoken by another; the faculty of divulging future and hidden events; display of powers which are beyond the subject's age and natural condition; and various other indications which, when taken together as a whole pile up the evidence (Kelsey 1981:46).

This condition, noted above, is testimony to the continued manifestation of the charismatic gifts in the life and work of the Christian Church across the Middle-Ages even though there was an attempt to ignore and even deny the functionality of such. The reality of the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit across generations and Ages of Christendom amply testifies to the fact that there are certain things that remain a hidden mystery in the story of faith.

Prior to the age of the 16th Century Reformation era, gifts of the Spirit seem to have died from the worship context of the Church. The going concern was 'how to buy God's grace' (the case of Indulgences). As the reform movement got into motion, a new wave of spirituality emerged cutting across varied religious groups with many spiritual groups such as the Anabaptists, and the Society of Friends (Quakers) founded by George Fox (1624-1690) coming into the centre. These Quakers were fired up by a belief in the Inner-light which came to the

believer through the power of the Holy Spirit in a mysterious way and manner which simply required passive obedience on the part of the recipient.

The Anabaptists, who in 1525 led prayer meetings in private houses where many experienced regeneration (Walker 1970:327) may have laid a solid foundation for the ultimate rise of the charismatic movement. The only sad thing is that many of those who were eager to advance a charismatic faith i.e. Thomas Muntzer, were known for “alleged excesses and immoralities” (Comby et al 1989:20) in their private lives. But this may actually be the trend with many charismatic leaders most of whom tend to indulge and are very rich and live in castles while their followers barely put food on their tables even though in public they claim that they are not poor because their God is rich.

The Quakers exhibited strong mystic tendencies which they claimed to be transforming and renewing. George Fox in 1646 experienced a transforming act of God which convinced him that everyman receives from the Lord, a measure of light which leads to the Light of Life and to divine spiritual truth and brought with it:

All kinds of manifestations of the Spirit's work were evident: trembling (hence the name Quakers), jerking spasms, weeping, visions, prophecy, and faints and speaking in tongues (Anderson 2004:23-4).

The Quakers believed that revelation is not confined to the Scriptures, though they are a true Word of God: The “Inner-Light” enlightens all men who are true

disciples” (Walker 1970:420). The element of mysticism in the Quaker movement portrays the same trends which are characteristic of the TWRRM today. Is this a mere coincidence or there are surely lessons from the past which are a fact of the subject of history? In the setting of the Quakers one can locate the roots of the TWRRM from a reasonable deduction.

Puritanism was a 16th Century holiness movement born in England out of the Anglican Church’s failure to embrace spiritual reformation. This movement wanted to purge the Church from what they called the remnants of Roman superstition and help to make the priests spiritual-minded ministers of the gospel. According to Walker W, the Puritans fell in love with the doctrine of the priesthood for all believers and called for a simple and prayerful Church which accepted the total authority and supremacy of the Holy Scriptures (1970:403). Comby and MacCulloch argue that the Puritan movement was a spiritual enterprise whose goal was to make Christianity meaningful and relevant to the people of its day and age. Many puritans felt that it was a grace insult to God to pretend to worship Him while there were heavy doctrinal restrictions which constrained the freedom of worship and made the worshipper a mere actor (Comby & MacCulloch 1989:52–53). The movers of the Puritan movement saw this as a divine call to reform the environment of worship and to help create an environment through which mankind would experience God during the act of worship and prayer.

In their worship meetings, the Puritans prayed, preached, prophesied and experienced spiritual renewal. They rejoiced at what God was doing to prepare them for his eternal glory (Walker 1970:404–405). The Puritans never saw themselves as a separate Church but a renewal movement within the Anglican Church denomination. The Puritans called for discipline in the Church in total obedience to the Holy Scriptures. They learnt a lot from the writings of the Swiss Reformer, John Calvin, on the issues of Church governance (Walker 1970:403). The term Puritan has the connotations of purity as defined in Early Church traditions. The spirit of holiness had surely not died with the dark Ages and Scholasticism. The Church was on the mend as it sought after the will of God whenever it found itself in the doldrums.

The 18th century saw the birth of Pietism within the Lutheran family in the context of the Christian zeal for spiritual revivalism amidst too much formalism and rigidity in the established Lutheran church denomination which had, by now, assumed the form of a fixed dogmatic interpretation of Scripture and demanding intellectual conformity by laying emphasis on dogma and sacraments as the only means of grace (Walker 1970:444-445). The birth of Pietism greatly complimented English spiritual reform efforts that arose through Puritanism and Methodism. Methodism surfaced in England through the teachings of John Wesley (1703–1791). The German pietistic movement stressed the importance of a personal experience of God or “new birth” by the Holy Spirit above and over knowledge (Anderson 2004:25).

When one looks at the charismatic prophetic movement from the lenses of Pietism, there is an element which makes their proclamation not exactly divorced from the historical experiences of the Christian Church. The TWRRM's argument that their faith is biblically centred as believers seeks to become faithful to the will and plan of God for their lives present a theological challenge to the "Main-line" church denominations whose preaching has, in many cases become rigid and too formal, lacking in vividness and charisma. It can be observed that the proclamations of the charismatic preachers are actually based on some biblical traditions and values such as Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a *hope*." 3John 2 "Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul", and Psalms 1:3 "In all that he does, he prospers." The charismatic players tend to argue for "a personal and individual experience of conversion and the moral perfection of the Christian individual" (Anderson 2008:27). It is important to realise that the phenomenon of the spirit movements is actually not a new development in the history of Christianity; rather, it is the manifestation of the need for a spiritual revival in the "mother churches".

## 2.5 The Roots of the "Third Wave" Movement in Zimbabwe

The first Pentecostal Church came to Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) in 1908. It made its first appearance in the Gwanda District in Matabeleland

South near the border with South Africa where the first Pentecostal missionaries from Seymour's Apostolic Faith Mission in the United States of America had landed in 1906. By the 1920s many Pentecostal Churches were to be found in major cities such as Harare and Bulawayo. These included: Assemblies of God, Full Gospel Church of South Africa (Maxwell 2000:6) However these early Pentecostal charismatic churches made no major impact in their communities because of the restrictive laws which curtailed religious expression in the then Rhodesia (Hallencruetz, et al 1998:131).

In terms of the newer charismatic movements, the first of such churches in Zimbabwe was the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God in Africa (hereinafter called ZAOGA) founded by Apostle Ezekiel Guti after his expulsion from the Apostolic Faith Ministries in 1959 (Kalu, 2008:63). Anderson observes that Ezekiel Guti's theological mindset was a result of his training at Christ for Nations Institute in 1971 (Anderson, 2001:179). In the 1980s, Ezekiel Guti proclaimed himself both a Prophet and an Apostle as a way of exerting his powers and influence across the Church landscape. Apostle Guti believed that his Church movement is the African home of the Holy Spirit and needed no foreign support even though he himself had originally received funding from the USA (Anderson, 2011:179). To the ordinary followers of Apostle Ezekiel Guti, the man was revered as the 'son of God' in an Christological stature. The emphasis on the cultic leader has seen the ZAOGA Church become more of a one-man-band whose leader is glorified to the level of a demi-god. However, too much power



for one person has led to many splits within the ZAOGA movement giving birth to many ministries such Prophet Eubert Angel of the Spirit Embassy Ministries. These “Third Wave” ministries are mainly motivated by political and social needs whose ideals give birth to a cultic leader that is viewed in redemptive ways as inspired by God to liberate the believer from socio-political and economic challenges.

In the 1970s during the pick of Zimbabwe’s war of liberation a New Wave of Pentecostalism and charismatic movements hit the country like a strong cyclone. Kalu views this “historic, socio-economic and reconstructive perspective in terms of social change in pursuit of virtues, morally just lives” (1998:1). A critical analysis of Kalu’s description of the TWC shows that this religious movement gives great weight to socio-economic stability and confers a superior status on the masses whose social condition is threatened by the conditions of poverty. This aspect of the TWRRM becomes the key factor in appealing to masses of people who are all in search of meaning and a better living. The question that then follows is: Is it faith response at play or the discovery of economic prospects (an attempt to escape the fear of poverty)?

From its historical growth, the TWRRM altered the basic course of the religious landscape and society’s life because it drew heavily from the ranks of the working class “people who are not removed from economic and political marginality, but who enjoy reasonable standards of living” (Anderson

2001:171). In this context the third response has become a big challenge to the mainline churches and traditional religious values. The emphasis on the prophetic oracles which are said to be the work of the Holy Spirit without following any foreign or colonial approach of preaching has become a major appealing mark in the development of Zimbabwean Christianity today. The theology of this movement focuses on real and practical issues of life such as healing and material prosperity of believers. Such a theology gives people a new face, dignity and an image in their social status and political standard. In a practical response to people's needs, the TWRRM have been able to "fund, feed, nurture, nourish, legitimate and authorise a counter-imagination in the World" (Kalu 1998:7). This is what is being proclaimed as the Full-Gospel of Jesus Christ; the gospel that heals and restores life to those who live in despair and on the verge of death. Such a social friendly framework of the TWC makes the movement a social transforming wave in Africa just like Black Theology did in the Americas in the 1960s.

In its development the TWRRM became a reconstruction paradigm through the prophetic imagination which performed two very clear tasks: "the first is to mine the memory of the people and to educate them to use 'the tools of hope' The second is recognising 'how singularly words, speech, language, and phrases shape consciousness and defy reality' ..." (Kalu 1998:4). The 'tools of hope' help people to focus on what they possibly can do and hence they become prepared to explore new avenues of life because the prophetic word will never

fail. The idea of being a victor in Christ creates, in a believer, the “...‘imaginable transformation’ ... a creative re-organisation of the imagination (self) and emergence of a new gestalt” (Kalu 1998:4). This attitude sustains a believer in his zeal to make a piece of history through faith in God. To enable this thinking to sink in people’s minds a language of transformation is employed through the use of rich and positive biographical testimonies of faith.

It has been noted that the development of an attitude, which is positive, is true to the growth of the TWRRM in Zimbabwe. The rich images that characterise the message of the TWRRM are used to promote a heroic identity around dominant authoritative figures that are the pillars of the movements. This is a counter to “the low intensity and fatigue of missionary evangelical theology” (Kalu 1998:21). In this context, the growth of TWC in Zimbabwe has been aided by the ‘so-called mainline churches’ failure to tap on African spirituality and their failure to make the gospel message practical and relevant to an African child. In this perspective it can be concluded that TWC promotes a dynamic redemptive and empowering theology for the African soul.

In the context of the above argument, it can be noted that TWC like all mature religions provides a sociological perspective that acts as a “social organization for universe maintenance” (Gifford 1988:84). The spirit of TWRRM provides a solid foundation in which certain economic, political, social and moral values are used to neutralise negative forces that affect personal and social growth

and confidence thereby leading to total disintegration of beings and societies. From such a perception, one may conclude that the growth of the TWRRM can be understood from its ability to make practical declarations of God's blessing not only from a spiritual perspective but also from a socio-economic reality. This teleological declaration enables the poor to love the Church while on the other hand it helps the rich never to feel guilty about amassing more wealth. From this analysis, it is certain that the TWRRM employs an imperialistic view of Christian history. Christian history is seen to be explicitly revealing God's purpose which is working towards his ultimate triumph (MacCulloch 1987:3). What the 'Man of God' does is to simply witness and relate this history to the believing community. For believers everything centres on the will of God whose desire is to bless all the faithful hence the expectations of an imminent end to all the negative experiences that one would have gone through before his/her conversion.

## 2.6 A Critical Evaluation of the Third Wave Religious Right Movement

A critical analysis of the NRRM cum TWRRM shows that this movement is centred on a socio-political zeal that employs salient religious values in order to bring about fear to the hearts of the people in order to change their socio-political thinking and behaviour. Its major focus is to create "a democratic Christendom ... the Christian theocracy, ... a heaven on earth, a society lovely beyond compare, because it would reflect the Lord's will" (Hill & Owen 1982:23). As such the "Third Right" maintains the following principles; a) an

opposition to governmental financial support for and general social tolerance of abortion; b) a determination to restore the right of public schools to hold concerted moments of prayer on a voluntary basis; c) hostility to pornography – actually, to any and all flagrant exhibitions of sex; d) an advocacy for strong families, a powerful nation, healthy public schools, and traditional gender roles (Hill & Owen 1982:18). Such a religious attitude has a high political undertone which serves as a stimulus for action.

The TWRRM has no interests on issues of family cohesion and unity since its interests are only for the group (sect) members. A believer is discouraged to disassociate him/her – self from kith and kin unless they are part of the movement. Any association with the ‘unsaved persons’ is tantamount to an association with the devil. A believer is made to see no value in pre-modial family relations because one is now a new-person, born-again, not of this world but a member of the heavenly team. This particular perspective is not only a dangerous assertion but it is also unbiblical theology if one looks at the fifth Commandment “Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you” (Exodus 20:12). One may want to know why a believer must pretend that he/she has no moral and social responsibility that links him/her with their biological family. The God of the Bible has been viewed as the best literature in terms of the promotion of family bonds and any attempt to portray the Christian God as a God who has no love of family unity is on its own a shameful lie if not sin.

The TWRRM's emphasis on being a 'new being' has also led to family conflicts and disharmony since those who believe in the easy and quick fix claim that they have nothing to do with those kith and kin that still live in sin. Such extreme actions and pronouncements tend to strain family relations. The non-believers are called names i.e. children of the devil, heathens, damned sinners. Only those who go to the same fellowship are viewed as brothers and sisters. Such statements are a problem for the African model and understanding of family. The rejection of one's family based on religious ideals is on its own extreme religious fundamentalism which has the potential of causing disunity and war – the very things that Jesus Christ's gospel has always fought against. Whilst the theology of the TWRRM has the potential to empower believers with the positive image of self-reconstruction, it also has the potential to perpetuate conflict and social disharmony amongst family members of different religious persuasions – something that is not common with mainstream Christianity which tends to be pragmatic and tolerant.

Another concern about the thrust of the TWRRM arises regarding the focus on materialistic things over and above spiritual and moral matters which have always been the first priority of the gospel. From the message of Jesus the Christ himself, we are told to "Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you" (Luke 12:31). Too much emphasis on the greater love for wealth than for God and neighbour as expounded by the TWRRM tends to depart from the spirit of seeking the Kingdom of God first as declared by Jesus

in Luke 12:31 which I have referenced in my earlier comment above and will also be fully discussed in Chapter four of this paper. The essence of Christianity is the love for God and neighbour and never the love for money and self. And yet in the theology of the TWRRM, it seems that a believer must not be content with what he/she has, one must make progress and aspire for material prosperity hence the claim “my journey of success is in one direction: upward and forward” (Oyakhilome 2012:32).

The TWRRM has a strong tendency to want to celebrate the prophet’s miracles rather than to know Jesus Christ who is the Lord of life. Many followers of the TWRRM tend to forget to speak of their relationship with Jesus the Christ but will gladly and with passion speak elaborately about the prophetic powers of their “cultic-leader”, the prophet. This is a dangerous thrust that points to mere man as an end, while Christianity points to Jesus as the end while humans are only a means toward the end. From this perspective, many followers do not seem to belong to the movement on the basis of some religious conversion and values but are likely introduced to the movement by friends and family in search for “relief from poverty, sickness or family problems” (Maxwell 2006:185).

The charismatic prophetic preachers of the TWRRM ably demythologises issues of poverty associated with the ‘Third World Mentality’ – “an attitude of mind which assumes that blacks are morally and intellectually inferior to whites,

and are incapable of prospering ..." (Maxwell 2006:195). The TWRRM has a high theme of discontinuity with all the evils of the past. This theme is centred on the image of a complete rapture from the past experiences of sin and suffering. The power toward a break with the past is marked by "crusades, events explicitly aimed at winning the heathen" (Maxwell 2006: 185). Preaching is not only about calling the audience to the Kingdom of God; rather it is about destroying the works and tricks of the devil; the demons are cast out in Jesus' name while "Beads, cloth, knobkerries and pouches filled with magical substances" are burnt in public as a way of demonstrating the power of faith over the devil's schemes (Maxwell 2006:185). But do all believers get abundant of life in these newer church movements? The Nigerian academic A.O. Dada notes that although many believers were attracted to the movement by the gospel of prosperity, their economic status has not changed rather it is their churches that have become rich, some to the extent of establishing universities (Dada 2004:95-105). In a very depressing rebuke, those who fail to prosper are told that they lack genuine faith, that they still continue to live in sin and are accused of failure to 'sow the seeds of prosperity'. Is this not ridiculous in the context of faith expression? People need deliverance from such insults of the preacher's imagination.

Observably, these movements tend to forget the existence of social vices, because in their language a believer is above all forms of sin and evil. There is no desire to address the social conditions that manifests in and through social-



evil; their interest is the quick benefits of a materialistic nature without fixing the socio-economic structures that give birth to all the maladies of a corrupt and collapsed social systems. This tendency of spiritualising everything is, to me, not the way of God and not a way out of our social misery. I believe that God has an interest in our world just as he created it good and beautiful (Gen 1:31b) before people messed it through their selfish actions and means which are still at play today, even in the same movements that claims that believers must be rich because their God is rich and yet the prophet – pastor becomes the richest person in the fold and the rest can only marvel at him/her.

Today, in the Zimbabwean context, the TWRRM has become the major attraction and focal point for young men and women both in colleges and in the post college life. The major factor for attraction in the modern day charismatic movement is the emphasis on results: prosperity and health. This should not be a surprise for the ordinary person in the streets of Zimbabwean towns as there is general belief that the charismatic religion alters the scale of economic empowerment for the benefit of the faithful believer. The gospel of prosperity emphasises “prosperity as a fruit of faith” (Togarasei 201:339). In his book, *African Christianity*, Paul Gifford observes that:

God has met all the needs of human beings in the suffering and death of Christ and every Christian should now share the victory of Christ over sin, sickness and poverty. A believer has a right to the blessings of health and wealth won by Christ and he/she can obtain these blessings merely by a positive confession of faith. (Gifford, 1998:32)

With a new found status, believers are more than conquerors. 1 John 4:4 is used to justify this new status of power and authority “greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.” Such proclamation challenges attitudes that have long disempowered generations of young people in the sub-Saharan continent. Believers are, through active and creative sermons, assisted to rise from poverty and self-pity since they are now the children of a loving God. Who else would not want to be part of such a rich and resourceful God? It indeed is amazing to note how charismatic preachers have made the gospel message resonate with modernity towards addressing some of the challenges that have failed politicians and economists in Africa. Accordingly, the charismatic gospel declares that getting rich is every believer’s right because God wills that every believer should share in the blessings and glory of his son Jesus Christ. Such a doctrine is duly perpetuated by the followers of Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa who believe that everything (assets and jobs) is a result of their faith to the prophetic oracles hence the stickers in their cars, houses and bags: ‘This is the result – I am the prophets’ child’.

Certain Biblical texts are manipulated to justify the belief that the God of Jesus is a wealthy Being who also wants his children to be rich and powerful just like him. Such Biblical texts include passages like:

- a) Deuteronomy 8:18 where God seems to give wealth to his people
- b) Malachi 3:10 where God opens the gates of blessings to his people
- c) John 10:10 where God promises abundant life to his children.

Therefore, it is no wonder that the proclamation of wealth, power and health should be the soul and heart of the sermon(s). Any form of poverty and disease are the works of the devil that must be fought with vigorously so that believers enjoy their rights in the family (fellowship). In helping to deliver people from sin and evil, the preacher's message descends like a ball-of-fire exhibiting a high degree of spiritual ecstasy. The energy exhibited by the preacher makes the audience sit on the edge of their chairs. Those who respond to the altar call are "encouraged to focus on their problems and the miracles they want through Jesus Christ" (Maxwell 2006:186).

But moving from poverty to prosperity is no mean job; one has to experience divine intervention through a spiritual re-birth. This is the Act of deliverance. Interestingly the Act of deliverance can only be found in the 'right fellowship' not the so-called mainline churches because it is argued that such churches (mainline denominations) do not have a Holy Spirit. The theology of deliverance also includes being delivered from witchcraft, laziness, inferiority complex and lack of wisdom. One who is delivered is therefore empowered economically, spiritually and intellectually so that one is able to make the right decisions and sound judgments for the attainment of quality life here in this world before he or she thinks about heavenly things.

The theology of prosperity is also advanced from the concept of well-being in both psychological and biological terms. A believer's mind must be as wise as

the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5) while the body must also be healthy in order to carry out one's task. Therefore, being ill is seen as a sign of being afflicted by demons; hence the need for healing through the life of faith in God's promises. Because of the need for a holistic life; healing sessions occupy a pivotal place in the Worship Service of the charismatic TWRRM. But very interestingly, believers are encouraged to seed so that they can receive more as is implied in 1 Corinthians 9:6-11. It is argued that the measure one gives is the measure one will get back. But is this not buying God's grace? What a new form of indulgences! Indeed we need a new twenty-first century reformer to restore Christianity to its genuine pre-modial values and spirituality if we were to have an authentic religion that promotes the simple but honest faith in Jesus Christ the Lord of the Church.

What is seemingly true is that the wealth brought to the church by way of seeding benefits one person, the Pastor. If this is true then one would wonder as to whether this practice follows the ministry practice of Jesus in his life and work on the streets of Palestine. One may also pose some rhetoric questions: Is this what Jesus would do in our streets today? Would Jesus not simply lay his hands on the weak and simply proclaim a new life? Would he not proclaim a new beginning by word of faith for no fee? I think Jesus would not ask people to seed because those who are poor and ill have no source of income hence they cannot even afford even basic hospital fees. Likely, Jesus would tell those who come to him in need of healing and restoration "... your faith has healed

you” as he said to blind beggar on the Streets of Jericho (Luke 18:42). Indeed the Jesus of the Bible would not ask people to first put some value into their need for healing. That any good gift from God must be complemented and be motivated by some form of money is not only bad theology but is also extortion at its best. There is no monetary value to what God is able to do for a sinner. If God put a value on people’s salvation then, none of us would be able to pay for our salvation. What is theologically acceptable in explaining the mystery of salvation is that God operates from the realm of grace and not economic value. That the prosperity gospel grows in the context of economic deprivation of the majority (those who freely donate their wealth to the pastor) for the benefit of the few is a complex puzzle.

As a Christian in an African Church, I know the depth and impact of economic deprivation amongst African Christians and communities; I know of men and women of faith who live in abject poverty despite the proclamations of health and wealth every Sunday in their fellowship. I know of children who have to do with one meal a day at college in order to save money for a Sunday offering and tithe. I know of workers whose salaries are below the poverty datum-line but will seed their whole salary before they even think of paying school fees for their children. I know of families that have broken down because the mother had no money to buy the basic groceries but had money to pay a tithe and place something in the offertory basket every Sunday. I know of children who have never been taken on a holiday because their parents have no money and

yet the same parents would contribute immensely to the holiday basket of the prophet/leader. Is this not a paradox? I doubt if this is the act of faith, a brave and courageous sign of being godly. On the contrary, I think that this is cognitive dissonance at its highest level. Such behaviour calls for genuine deliverance because it is a manifestation of a sick mind; an oppressed and colonised mentality that needs freedom of being and of will.

I have observed that the TWRRM has a lot of mystery and aura which is deeper than the general acts of worship. The near worship of the founder or main player is a cause for concern in the whole act of worship. The glorification of the prophet to the near act of worship has clearly departed from the traditional values of respect and honour. The titles that are given to the prophet/leader are inclined toward equating the prophet/leader to the Son of God Himself. Most of the titles employed carry Christological efficacy in their face value i.e. 'The man of God', 'Apostle of God', 'The Anointed One', 'The holy man'. The theological thrust or teachings has shifted from the doctrinal issues of spiritual and moral uprightness to an extreme right of prosperity and health in a way that has never been seen in the history of Christianity.

## **Chapter Three**

### **The Characteristics of “Third Wave” Christianity in Africa**

#### **3.1 Introductory Background**

The NRRM’s thrust which ‘stimulates faith’ (appeals to the masses) is centred mainly in the founder and not in God. The founders and their spouses become the centre of attention instead of God. Such religious values and/or traditions can be traced back to the “religious antecedents such as the holiness movements” (Kalu, 2008:13). The movement has a localized spiritual dimension which is a product of “a rapid adoption and adaptation of Pentecostal spirituality and practice far beyond Azuza Street” (Kalu, 2008:13). The element of a global or an ecumenical thrust in the TWRRM is to be found in “the traditions that reach across national boundaries, take local colour” (Kalu 2008:13-14). This characteristic of the TWRRM clearly glorifies the process of indigeneity. The movement, because of its nature, attracts among their converts a higher status for younger adults, manifests social movement characteristics and may present an anomalous profile with due respect to traditional mainstream religious organisation and belief and proclaim themselves to be in search of spiritual enlightenment, personal development or in contact with transcendent forces, entities or knowledge.

The reading of the New Testament clearly shows that there are factors from the Early Church that have likely influenced the confidence and theological growth

of the TWRRM. It is theologically sound to argue that the “Early Church was a community of the Holy Spirit, and the freedom worship and its spontaneity may not have been very different from that of many Pentecostals and charismatic churches today” (Anderson 2004:19). Just like the early Church worship’s environment speaking in tongues, prophecy and miraculous healing featured prominently in the worship tradition of the Church.

The second century Church, once again, had to deal with the challenges of order and charisma in the Church when it seemed that the Church had moved toward a defined order of worship. The Montanist Movement of the second century was “a charismatic movement that reacted to what seemed to be cold orthodoxy” (Anderson 2004:19). Other major personalities that challenged defined orthodoxy were people like Tertullian (154-220), an African Church father who became a devoted Montanist would argue, “visions ecstasy and interpretations of tongues were forth coming... that healing revelation and exorcism were among the joys available to Christians” (Kelsey 1998:37-8)

The factor of the Puritan movement in Roman North Africa (the Donatists) is a clear sign of the nature and depth of African Christianity. Such spirituality laid a solid ground for charismatic renewal in the African Church scene. The decline of a puritan and devotional piety was not natural; rather it was because of the repudiation and use of the sword by Bishop Augustine of Hippo. By the Dark Ages the Western Church had almost ceased to function as a spiritual



machine driven by divine powers of healing and exorcism of demons; it had become too worldly. Modern medicine and hospitals had taken that role. But for the African charismatic churches, charisma and spiritual renewal have always remained eternal tools of salvation. Interestingly, the Orthodox churches “have always recognized the charismata, including speaking in tongues which has been a continuing experience throughout all the ages among them, though confined mainly to the monasteries” (Anderson 2004:21).

In the African Church many local charismatic prophets do not have a clue about the Azuza Street experience and yet their prophetic functions follow the same trends that are central to the Azuza Street experience. Interestingly, the newer African charismatic movements do not necessarily refer to themselves as Pentecostals but as “Charismatic churches, Born Again Christians, etc.” (Kalu 2008:4-5). The naming or identity of the movement is centred on the origin of the religious phenomena which is central to the group’s experience. The component of charisma relates to the thrust of worship experience: “many are so electric in their doctrinal emphases” (Kalu 2008:15) to such an extent that you will think that there is a disco gig if you were hearing the noise from afar. Because of their frenzy religious character, this movement has been referred as the “Third Wave”, Ogbu Kalu (1988). The character of the movement has, as its basis of faith, an extreme religious perspective of life in general and God in particular. From a Biblical perspective, the TWRRM in general has developed its theology around the Pentecostal experience of the Apostles in the Upper

Room as they nervously gathered in bewilderment after the events of the crucifixion and resurrection stories of Jesus Christ their hero. These events are aptly captured in the book of Acts Chapter Two (Acts 2). This narrative is generally referred to as the greatest religious awakening of Christian theology. It is the epicentre of Christianity. In the passage, the apostles/disciples experienced the phenomenal outpouring of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The believers arose from this experience filled with the Holy Spirit and full of courage, divine wisdom and a sense of urgency in their proclamation of the post Easter events about their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Indeed, this experience is one of the most amazing narratives which, theologically illustrates the mission thrust of the Church and not its worship nature as others would want to argue.

In Zimbabwe, the roots of the newer charismatic movements can be associated with the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God in Africa (hereinafter called ZAOGA) founded by Apostle Ezekiel Guti after his expulsion from the Apostolic Faith Ministries in 1959 (Kalu, 2008:63). Anderson observes that Ezekiel Guti's theological mind was a result of his training at Christ for Nations Institute in 1971 (Anderson, 2001:179). In the 1980s, Ezekiel Guti proclaimed himself both a Prophet and an Apostle as a way of exerting his powers and influence across the Church landscape. Apostle Guti believed that his Church movement is the African home of the Holy Spirit and needed no foreign support even though he himself had originally received funding from the USA (Anderson, 2011:179).

The emphasis on the cultic leader has seen the ZAOGA Church become more of a one-man-band whose leader is glorified to the level of a demi-god (sub – title 3.2 will discuss this subject further). However, too much power for one person has led to many splits within the ZAOGA movement giving birth to many ministries such Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa's United Family International Church (hereinafter called UFIC). What is clear is that the "Third Wave" ministries or movements are mainly motivated by political and social needs which ideals give birth to a cultic leader that is viewed in redemptive ways as inspired by God to liberate the believer from socio-political and economic challenges.

The aspect of innovativeness has also led to practical challenges in the nature and outlook of the TWRRM as there is, at times, very little that will portray the movement as Christian when it comes to the meeting point/place and the style or forms of worship. The meeting place is, in many instances an expensive Conference Centre, a Sports Stadium and even a public Cinema. Such places like Cinema venues, Conference Centres and Sports Stadiums are generally associated with worldliness and or secularism. The identified venues are traditionally viewed as centres for vice and ungodliness. So why would the TWRRM choose to associate itself with such places that may not help to portray a Christian image for the whole purpose of the movement. Why spent thousands of dollars a week in a luxurious place when many in the community would have benefited from the same resources that fund luxury? This life-style

is actually true to the concept and spirit of reckless living as projected by the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11 - 24). It is to be observed that Christianity has always presented itself as a simple and non-rigid religion of the heart therefore the use of very expensive conference centres is contradictory the simple faith of Jesus the Christ. The whole business of conferencing departs both from the language and spirit of Christianity. The focus on modernity and glamour does not project the true spirit of the Christian faith which has always embraced the poor and humble. The call to material prosperity is thus a total departure from the spirit and essence of Christianity.

One cannot avoid observing a form of religious syncretism at play in the worship trends of the TWRRM. The element of religious innovation is slated in “the tenuousness of relations between religion and social organization ... since a change in religious ideas does not necessarily threaten the established social order” (Horton, 1971:86). There is a desire for a deeper and more-fulfilling spirituality hence the emotional outlet through song and prayer which is based on the belief that a successful prayer must be also “correctly specify and take account of the various visible and invisible forces at work in any given situation” (Horton, 1971:88). It is crystal clear in the worship context of the TWRRM that the beliefs and values expressed during worship are meaningful only when they happen to coincide with the responses of traditional cosmology. Worship becomes a translational merger of the New and Old thereby allowing for a dramatic expression of faith which occurs as soon as the needs and

features of modernity are brought into the religious mix. This adaptation clearly shows how the TWRRM has been conditioned by its social environment.

### 3.2 The General Fundamental Traits of the “Third Wave” Christianity

The movement is polycentric in nature. It has multiple sources of growth in its missionary and indigenous dynamics, and the dynamic social, political and economic environment that tends to contribute to the rapid acceptance and growth of the movement. The movement is basically complex in terms of its “variety, flexibility, and an expanding continuum of adaptive social inventions traceable in its ministerial formation, liturgy” (Kalu 2008:21). One of the evident characteristics of these NRRM is ‘belief’ in modern scientific instruments more than biblical texts as they tend to make worship a fiesta of modern music gala.

It is historically true that the African cosmology has always exhibited a vibrant spirituality that amazes an observer. The spiritual environment and worship in particular is scintillating. The worshipper’s prayers are poems of praise and celebration which flow from the heart of the worshipper in a spontaneous manner. Songs and choruses are circular and their theme is vibrantly repeated to stimulate the faith of the worshipper. Sermons are spiritualised and based on the preacher’s own religious experience which becomes the model for

believers to follow. All that the prophet/leader does is to point to self and not God. There is too much of 'I will' and not 'God will'. One such prophet/leader is Emmanuel Makandiwa, Zimbabwe's firebrand prophet who has captured the news-headlines of late. The prophet/leader is all knowing and all powerful and he or she is the centre of worship as they perform miracles. Says Makandiwa: "I see people going on for months with their groceries resurfacing and some fuel gauges increasing while you drive" ([www.prophetmakandiwa](http://www.prophetmakandiwa): accessed on 15/02/2013). This message stunned his followers too. He argued that his miracles were signs and wonders which were done to prove a point to his critics which he then challenged to a miracle contest.

The act of worship is usually highly emotional, sentimentally charged with enthusiasm and very entertaining and therapeutic. These are musical instruments and some kind of ecstatic dancing while singing. This draws the attention of many people who originally "came to see" before they are "captured" by the fire and spirit of the movement. Everything during the worship service is vibrant "in a jazz like manner" (Mukwakwami 2010:11). There is too much that is worldly in the way worship proceeds; the 'noise' that accompanies the style and forms of worship are, in many instances unpalatable to the simplicity of orthodox Christianity. There is too much of ecstatic ululation and spontaneity of unintelligible sound that will never make sense to somebody listening from outside. The dancing that accompanies some form of song and music is at times no different from pop-music, jazz music,

reggae music and the Congolese 'Kwasa Kwasa' dance – music styles that have been associated with certain cultic values that are divorced from the spirit of Christianity. One then starts to ask the question of the roots and values of the TWRRM. My first observation of worship in the movement almost made me conclude that the whole act of worship was a good way of fund-raising and entertainment. There was little reference to the bible but everything was money and dancing in styles similar to secular gigs.

The Churches of the TWRRM have been “transformed into corporations to an extent that they now have their own broadcasting facilities, TV stations and public relationship machines” ([www.prophetmakandiwa](http://www.prophetmakandiwa) accessed on 15/02/13). The whole aspect of civilisation and enculturation is to be found in the parameters of worship. What this implies is that the movement has become a world within the world. In this new phenomenon, the prophet/leader becomes the cultic figures in the 'Act' of worship; they are also highly revered by their followers. They also become the chief executive officers (CEOs) who issue out critical instructions to all in the pack of things. Indeed, the prophet becomes the ideal child of God who must be respected and adored by all hence the varied near Christological titles such as 'Man of God', 'Holy Man', 'The Apostle' and 'The Spiritual father'.

Another central act of worship for these newer charismatics is the healing ministry of the movement. This is considered to be the central act of worship in

the life of the Church since believers must enjoy good health and must be freed from the power of sin and disease. The gospel message brings about this healing. Asamoah – Gyadu (in Kalu 2005:398) observes that the newer charismatic movements practice healing and deliverance toward promoting quality health and peace of mind. The pastor is likened to a medical doctor i.e. “I visit the hospital with a conviction that I too belong there; I could wear my Geneva gown in an effort to compete with the doctor’s white coat” (Lynch 20:10 8) The pastor’s prescription is actually superior to the medical doctor’s because his word is an instruction from the heavens (divine power).

Miracle working is one of the fundamental characteristics in the life and work of the TWRRM. The worship service is a platform for performing miracles. Worshippers are actually in attendance to witness miracles and be treated by the prophet who is also a miracle worker. There is very little attention to spiritual things as all things rotate around the working of miracles. The miracles, which are understood to be ‘acts and wonders’ tend to border on magic and superstition. For example, Prophet Manjoro of Faith Ministries once declared during an act of worship: “Even if your intestines have all been destroyed with cancer or by cancer, today God is going to give you brand-new intestines” (Lynch 20:10 8). This is too good to be true! One wonders whether this is not a mere hypothetical generalisation. The allusion to mysterious healing tends to promote superstition as it points to certain acts that are beyond the realm of science and knowledge. On the other hand such



proclamation tends to present themselves as acts of black magic. Magic works with one but not with all. Where it is at work it draws the attention of many. If indeed the prophets of our day were endowed with such miraculous powers to heal and restore life then we would not need the collapsing medical services, we would not need to waste money on Medical Aid Services; we would not need to go to hospital for our ailments. Yet, we still need these services. The miracles which are the major drama of worship services has made the whole act of worship a drama of public attention and self-glory by the prophet figure. Everyone struggles to see and be touched by the prophet. It is a stampede for attention and not worship.

A posting on You Tube video by the prophet, Emmanuel Makandiwa's UFI Ministries on February shows the charismatic preacher praying for women who jump for joy as their skirts drop to the floor - it is claimed due to massive weight loss in thirty-seconds. This miracle is said to have taken place on 23/01/2013 where Prophet Makandiwa claimed that "a revival is starting today. God will begin to do what we have never seen before; if you are overweight ... what the Holy Spirit is doing is instant weight loss". He goes "I command every fat to burn; fat burn, fat burn, and fat burn! I command your body to shrink, shrink, and shrink! Receive a miracle now!" ([www.prophetmakandiwa](http://www.prophetmakandiwa) accessed on 15/02/2013). At the end of the miracle session, some converts claimed that they lost up to 30 kg of weight in thirty-seconds: Margaret Scubu claimed that from her weight of 110 kg she weighed

80 kg by the end of the prayer. The woman was made to stand on the scale for all to see the miracle results and everyone present saw the weight drop in thirty-seconds of divine drama.

The prosperity theme is high in the movement's proclamation; it is the chief weapon toward attracting attention of many who live in abject poverty. The prophet strives to demonstrate the power of God that conquers poverty and transforms individuals toward becoming rich children. Believers are encouraged to have faith so that they can experience deliverance from poverty, sickness and all the curses and works of the evil demonic forces. It is argued that poverty and sickness are signs of being cursed hence the need for Christians to be delivered so that they can repossess the world and take charge of the land. However, there is catch to being blessed! You must first learn how to give so that you can, in return receive double-fold. It is argued that the less you give the more you are under God's curse. What? This sounds like buying God's Grace: Can a man buy God's favour and then call that a blessing? Chris Oyakhilome, founder of Christ Embassy and key figure of the NRRM argues that "givers are very special to the Lord and they rule the world as you can never be the less than you give; for the more you give the more you receive" (Oyakhilome 2012:30). This is totally outside the nature and sphere of orthodox Christianity.

Viewed from another dimension, it can also be argued that the NRRM has a potential corrective function which represents a restoration of the experiential dimension of the Christian faith in the wake of its scholastic reduction. This movement has a great capacity for removing unwanted accretions and correcting western distortions of the spirit of Jesus' faith. This form of indigenous Christianity is fast emerging as 'force' in world Christianity whose theology and witness respond to issues outside the scope of traditional western civilisation and Christianity. Given the strong indigenous principles at play in the NRRM, it cannot be doubted that the impact of this form of Christianity will be with us for a little longer. The movement has proven that it is capable of sustaining pressure in the light of skepticism and attacks from the 'so-called Main-line' churches. The NRRM in some settings has the backing of prominent politicians and business people who wield substantial socio-economic power. It is argued in dark-corners of the streets that the politics associated with big-players in political circles involves 'dirty-financial associations/transactions'. Such allegations project a crucial political aspect of the NRRM. Whether this political element is merely for financial gain or for patronage and patriotism does not belong to this research scope because it constitutes a big subject on its own.

Nevertheless, the tendencies of the NRRM are counter-productive for authentic Christian witness in a complex society seeking unity in the midst of diversity. The theology of the NRRM is given to being divisive and exclusive in its thrust

which is an impediment to World witness. This is painfully illustrated through the movement's usage of derogatory remarks directed toward other Christian denominations, particularly the Roman Catholic Church and the 'so-called Mainline' churches which are a product of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation movement. Some of the derogatory messages are exemplified by a sermon from the Celebration Centre in Harare, "God can only touch lives when people are in the right fellowship and not these different clubs that are called churches! It's a waste of time to go these churches without the spirit and power to bring about deliverance to souls in bondage" (Bonnie, Sermon: 15/04/2012). Clearly, the NRRM has the propensity of destroying the image of other Christian denominations rather than making new believers and growing the Kingdom of God on earth.

The modern-day prophetic figures of the TWRRM are radically different from the biblical prophets in that they want to divorce religion from public politics. This is a sad and fallacious endeavour. The TWRRM's prophets tend to emphasise a myth that believers should never indulge in politics because politics is a dirty game of crooks who are the children of darkness.

Interestingly, it is also observed that on the other hand the same prophets want believers to repossess and rule the world by taking charge of its economy and social sectors so that they bring peace and justice to the world. The TWRRM has a weak social construction theology as it is merely interested in personal gain (prosperity gospel) for those already in the fold. The movement's

mission is perceived solely as evangelistic preaching and soul-enriching ministries. Believers are not encouraged to engage in social action. This presents an interesting dichotomy? Every mature being knows that politics is about the issues of life and death and it impinges on us each and every day of our existence. There is no way that one can safely say that because he or she is a Christian, therefore he or she has nothing to do with issues of existence.

Theologically, every mature religious movement has to fight for justice and peace in the land toward the promotion of righteousness in the land. On this matter the bible is very clear on the need for justice and peace in the land:

“Thus says the LORD: “For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals — those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted; a man and his father go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned; they lay themselves down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined” (Amos 2:6-8).

This is a political clarion from the prophets of Israel who stood for justice in the land against bad politicians of their day. That believers must have nothing to do with the politics of their day is a dangerously naïve teaching which seeks to limit the influence of citizens on the issues that have to do with how they are governed. In fact, these politicians tend to be political advisors for the secular/political leaders as they pamper them with political oracles that suite their taste. The case of deposed former Anglican Bishop, Nolbert Kunonga is a good example. Former Bishop Kunonga, on Independence Day eve of 2011,

claimed that “those who fight against President R. G. Mugabe were not going to win because Mugabe was appointed by God to rule Zimbabwe in perpetuity” (Kunonga, Sermon: 17/04/2011).

It is utterly naïve to view politics as a dirty game whose interest is not for the greater good of the people but are for the handful to satisfy their pleasures hence believers should not be concerned about a game of pleasure for a few. On a practical context, people live and talk politics! Jesus lived and preached a political message (the case of his rebuke of the Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees who were political players in the history of Israel is clearly noted in Matthew 23: 1 – 39). Interestingly, Jesus also died a political death as recorded in the Holy Scriptures:

“Behold your King!” 15 They cried out, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” 16 So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus” (John 19:14-16)

Another very significant characteristic is a tendency never to change leadership because the founder is God’s anointed who receives direct oracles from the divine. Leadership renewal is unheard of in the movement. The case of Apostle Ezekiel Guti who has been at the helm of the ZAOGA movement is a clear case of ‘permanent divine designation’ philosophy. The refusal to change or renew leadership has resulted in many breakaway movements which are a result of a need for recognition and authentication of one’s gifts. The history of the charismatic movement is filled with vibrant and powerful personalities who left

their mother fellowship in order to start their independent ministries because there was no room for growth in the mother fellowship. The case of Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa is a good example of this struggle. Prophet Makandiwa left the Apostolic Faith Mission (hereinafter called AFM) to start his own United Family International Ministries (hereinafter called UFIM) because he felt that his gifts were not being recognised in the AFM. The failure to develop and empower new leaders might be a result of limited Pastoral training and a case of inferiority complex. Proper professional pastoral training tends to be action oriented and empowers the trainee to appreciate the need for team work and to allow others room to show-case their talents and gifts. It is dangerous proclamation to think that the founder has the right to lead the Church in perpetuity because the prophet founder is not God but a mere leader.

The TWRRM are characterized by a glaring lack of adequate training in biblical exegesis and hermeneutics which exposes sections of the charismatic movement vulnerable to aberrations. The TWRRM in Zimbabwe has caused lots of tension in the Church-fold and promoted scandalous teaching because of their weird biblical expositions which are a clear indication of lack of proper homiletical guidance in terms of their sermons. What is actually dangerously disturbing is a tendency to develop peculiar teachings derived, not from the Holy Scriptures, but some extra-biblical texts. For prophet any statement that crosses their mind is thrown into the fray without any critical thinking of its likely implications. What is clear is the fact that the TWRRM base their faith

experience and thrust on the person of the prophet and his personal experiences rather than the eternal word of God. This way of preaching has a challenge in that a miracle-centred Christianity has the tendency of leading towards extremism which may actually cause heresy and hero worship.

The charismatic's ability to acculturate their message easily makes the essence of Christianity vulnerable for local aberrations. An example is prophetess Kimpa Vita's argument that Jesus was born of Kongo parents in Nzundu, Kongo and that the New Jerusalem will descend in the Kongo Kingdom (Anderson 2001: 48 – 51). One wonders whether this is unfortunate syncretism or the myth of an indigenisation of Christianity. The tendency to endorse whatever crosses the mind of the prophet without careful reflection and evaluation has its own challenges. This can easily result in contradictory practices and statements which later have to be corrected or rescinded in the next sermon to the utter dismay of genuine Christians.

### 3.3 A Construction of the Third Wave Religious Right Movement's Identity

The authentic outlook and theology of the TWRRM can be reconstructed from four discourses which are significant in the manner and way in which this movement has taken shape and attracted multitudes. These dimensions are:

1. Historical
2. Cultural
3. Cosmological
4. Instrumental



### 3.3.1 Historical Dimension

This dimension learns from many movements whose thrust is inclined to promote holiness and purity. Though there is always a global outlook to charismatic movements, many have “seized upon Christian beliefs and practices in response to locally specific conditions, and in the process have transformed their own pre-existing religious systems” (Maxwell, 1995:310). This is to the credit to the TWRRM as they are able to seize the opportunity and make an impact by way of exploiting the limitations of the so-called mainline church denominations. The zeal is coupled with an attempt to contextualize Christianity to the recipients of the gospel message.

This dimension of the TWRRM is central to its appeal to masses in its locality. It embraces a component of religious translation (the ability to make the religious truth or declaration relevant and contextual to the recipients). This thrust makes the gospel message audible and visible in the sensory nervous system of the believer. It appeals to the emotions and senses of the hearer as it is coined in his/her worldview. Its dimensions reaches back to “the past of the community, and then forward to the encounter with the change agents (Kalu 2008:15).

### 3.3.2 Cultural Dimension

Kalu observes that the “cultural dynamics and worldview determines the vertical and horizontal patterns of expansion” (Kalu 2008:15). In the growth of a religious faith, the cultural value provides for suspicion to believe.

Acceptance starts from the people’s identity with the message because people “respond to change agents based on where they are, how they live and how they organise themselves” (Kalu 2008:16). The religious message is accepted and understood through the prism of people’s worldview(s). Therefore the growth of the religious belief systems is based on the ability of the gospel message to marry people’s mental and material cultures toward attending to questions and fears of life within the interiors of those cultures and the varied challenges of daily life (Kalu 2008:16).

As the gospel is proclaimed in the local language and idioms of the people; “new forms of religious expressions emerge in the multi- layered (cultural) encounters” (Kalu 2008:16). These experiences are influenced by the people’s experience of God as they turn to the new religion. This new religious experience has very interesting dynamics as articulated by Robin Horton in his Thesis on African Conversion.

### 3.3.3 The Cosmological Dimension

The subject of conversion is the theme and process of rebirth which is heavily influenced by one’s cosmology as he or she encounters the Higher Spirits

which are more superior to the Lesser Spirits that one would have known in one's old religious faith (Horton 1971:101). The argument of Horton that African Charismatic movements thrive on what he calls 'typical traditional cosmology' is quite interesting when examined in the context of the desire for economic enrichment which draws many people to Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa's UFIM. It is not mere adaptation; rather it is both a spiritual and social transformation process that deals with the full-faculty of being.

The argument propagated by Horton states that "the spiritual beings of African cosmologies can only be understood if they are seen as symbols" (Horton 1971:93). The resultant faith is a unique self expression before the object of worship. The outlook of the religious discourse of the TWRRM has a dualistic structure which is friendly to the African cosmology. God is visible in and through the ministry of the pastor prophet just as he was traditionally known to be visible through the *Sangoma*/Healer processes. Such a religious outlook results in what can be defined as "explanation-prediction-control and communion" (Horton 1971:96). In this context, new features of worship emerge but what remains the same is the theme of salvation and how salvation transforms a person as it is understood in his/ her cultural context. What is clear from this theological perspective is that the TWRRM have maintained an authentic thrust that one's culture has the capacity to inform the process of conversion just as culture has a religious dimension in its expression.

### 3.3.4 Instrumentalist Dimensions

The question as to how the story of Christ should be told is critical in the theology of the TWRRM. The work of the Holy Spirit, in the contexts of varied worldviews where there are many spirits at work, is critical in the proclamation or telling of the message of the gospel. The centrality of the Holy Spirit in the charismatic movement is crucial in raising the bar of faith which in turn draws the attention of the masses. The theology of the TWRRM emphasises the immediate presence of the Holy Spirit giving power for witness and service. The charismatic affirmations are translated into a language that is best understood by the masses within their own sociological dimensions. In the TWRRM it is commonly believed that every statement delivered by the prophet is understood to be divinely inspired and fit for instructing and equipping the faithful. The prophet's words stand on a par with the Holy Scriptures, in the view of the ordinary believer. There is no reason in the mind and heart of the believer to doubt what has been said by the prophet. Ogbu Kalu (2008:5) observes that the movement's worship environment tends to become a polycentric one: there are multiple factors and sources of growth with varied missional and indigenous dynamics which contribute to the rapid acceptance by different people from different backgrounds.

There is very little attempt, if any, to project the Godhead in the context of teaching and or 'sermonising'. The prophet seems to play the role of Jesus and at the end of the day the incarnation event/mystery is totally forgotten and the

prophet becomes the incarnate being himself. The believing faithful never remember the centrality of Jesus Christ in the story of salvation; they just celebrate the wonders and miracles that are performed by the prophet. The prophet seems to be the way, the life and the truth that takes people to God hence the declarations by prophet Makandiwa's followers through stickers in the bonnets and boots of their cars: "This is the result! I am the prophet's child". In the proper Christian perspective one would have said: "I am the child of God". So why glorify Makandiwa the man if he is not a demi-god? This is the tragedy of African initiated Christianity; that people tend to look at the vessel and marvel and totally forget about the maker of the vessel.

Biblical Christianity is centred on the Triune God whose revelation in history has been made whole and this is consolidated through the acts of the Creator God; the Saviour God incarnate through the person of Jesus the Christ and the Renewal that comes through the continued presence of God in the person of the Holy Spirit. The three entities of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are the totality of God's revelation and any subtraction or addition is heresy (contrary) to the authentic teachings of the Christian Church.

### 3.4 The Biblical Characteristics of the "Third Wave" Christianity

For any movement that claims to be a Christian Church, it is important for that group to build their teaching around a solid and orthodox theological

foundation. One must, therefore look at the fundamental Biblical and or theological characteristics of the TWRRM as a way of doing justice to the historiography of this religious faith. Theologically, the TWRRM's claims and worship traits rotate around the power of the Holy Spirit which every believer must experience to be truly a child of God. Those who have experienced the power of God reflect this by their ability to speak in tongues, to prophesy and to cast out demons in the name of Jesus. It is argued that worship is the re-enactment of the Pentecostal event. Of crucial value are the following theological values:

- i.** The concept of being “Born-Again” is central in the religious experience of charismatic movement. This understanding is born out of a desire for a heartfelt religion through faith in Jesus Christ. This experience is theologically understood to be “the ideology and experience of new birth” (Maxwell, 2006:18). Being “Born-Again” is a central theme of salvation which is non-negotiable for charismatics: - everyone just has to be born again. This theme is drawn from John 3:1-17 (the story of a man called Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night and asked: How can a man be born again when he is old?). It is the central theme of Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus a religious teacher of Israel who taught many to know God but he himself never knew what it meant to be “Born Again”.
- ii.** The concept of Baptism in the Holy Ghost is a major ideological and theological premise of the TWM. Baptism with the Holy Spirit is not to be understood as a process of making a behaviour holy, rather it is an

experience of empowering the believer “with the power to serve” (Maxwell 2006:19). In today’s TWM, baptism with the Holy Ghost brings both purity and the power to serve God without fear or failure (Makandiwa: Sermon, Judgment Night; 29/04/2012).

### 3.5 The Historical Characteristics of “Third Wave” Christianity

Historically, the following traits are true to the TWC in its missiological context:

1. The movement always adapts to the native context whenever it crosses borders
  2. The movement expresses folk-religiosity but also ingests it
  3. The class context of its membership is not visible during the act of worship since all believers claim to be rich and powerful as they are God’s faithful children
  4. The movement may be varied but it always retains its family likeness
  5. The movement recovers the word and also transcends it
  6. The movement fuses the modern mode with a primal purity
  7. The movement loves to make use of public space and technology in proclaiming a new socio-economic and political reality
  8. The movement’s leadership loves media airwaves and exploits these to proclaim the gospel in dynamic and melodious trends that attract the young people most. It is believed that “media can bring transformation to the individual, both in salvation and personal growth” (Ahn 2009:135 – 6).
- 6). The media frenzy is a holy noise meant to touch the world.

The case of the Apostle Gift Pardon Mvenge's Christian Healing Ministries clearly justifies the aspect of adaptation to the local context and the expression of the folk-religiosity in terms of Apostle Mvenge's healing sessions. Apostle Mvenge uses rituals of exorcism similar to those used by the traditional healer (*Sangoma*). The Holy water is sprinkled over the believer while the Apostle commands: "Demons and your powers vanish because you are defeated and have no power over this soul" (Mvenge, Sermon: 24/11/2012). This is an interesting element of adaptation. The native worshiper is made to experience the power and wonders of God in his/her own spiritual realm. In this process of doing things, the greatest secret is the emancipation of the mind of the believer towards imbuing and gluing their being "with energies in every area of life: cosmically, emotionally, personally, physically, romantically, and financially" (Mukwakwami 2010: x).

The service of worship is a solid family experience whereby all the faithful ones congregate in unison and act as a team in whatever they do. Clearly, there is no visible social structure during the act of worship as the poor and the rich mingle together under the divine power of the Holy Spirit. On issues of the lack of visibility of class elements during the act of worship, Mr. Ronald Moyo comments: "Because we are one big family, all believers enjoy the same privileges of faith and in faith because there is no distinction of class or gender before our gracious God" (Moyo, Interview: 12/01/2013). The movement may



be varied in terms of the fragmentation of ministries, but it always retains family likeness during the act of worship. A maid may actually be inspired by the power of the Divine and can easily order her boss, during the delivery of the oracle, to ‘shape up or ship out’ and the boss will jump and glorify God for divine counsel. “There is neither young nor old in the context of worship, all are one and family” declared Mr. Ronald Moyo in the same interview. The theme of Royal Priesthood is crucial in creating unity and oneness in the movement. All believers are exhorted to remember that they are a chosen people, a royal priesthood (1. Peter 2:9). As a royal priesthood there is no better or inferior priest, believers are thus equal before God. This is an important element for intimate fellowship in any serious church movement which seeks to grow.

In its radical thrust, the movement recovers the word and also transcends it. Such a theme creates confidence amongst the converts because everyone sees each other as a special child of God who enjoys a higher status and authority. It is claimed that the children of ‘King Jesus’ are more than conquerors, they will inherit the wealth and power of God’s Kingdom. Therefore, “believers must rule the world and take charge of their lives by claiming what rightfully is their” (Makandiwa, Sermon: 31/12/2013). Interestingly, the theme of Priesthood and ‘chosen-ness’ are marks of authority and higher status. Unemployed youth and women are encouraged to engage in self-reliant projects and are promised divine partnership in the process so that they shall not fail. These successes are viewed as identity cards for entry into the Kingdom of God.

In a very dynamic style, the movement fuses modern challenges with a primal purity and makes worship attractive to the mind that is searching for meaning and material needs. This comes against the rise in income and wealth disparities in the country where scores of people are desperate for get-rich-quick solutions which the newer religious movements seem to provide. It cannot be denied that the gospel of prosperity has led many people to start their own small scale businesses toward having an economic base through which one would stand up and thank God for what God has done for him/her. The final credit goes to God because the business motif was a result of a prophetic oracle or word of encouragement by the prophet. In Zimbabwe there are many examples of successful young business moguls who belong to these newer charismatic movements and argue that their success in business was an act of faith in the power of God and the prophetic oracles. The case of Strive Masiyiwa of Econet Wireless and Nigel Chanakira of Kingdom Bank is testimony to this fact. These two prominent Zimbabwean businessmen have given credit to their pastors for the success in the business sector.

The movement loves to make use of public space and technology in proclaiming a new socio-economic and political reality. It is argued that “God has made all good things for use in building his kingdom” (Moyo, Interview: 12/01/2013). The movement’s leadership loves media airwaves and exploits these to proclaim the gospel in dynamic and melodious trends that attract the young and the

educated alike. It is believed that “media can bring transformation to the individual, both in salvation and personal growth” (Ahn 2009:135 – 136). The media frenzy is a holy noise meant to touch the world. Through their love of technology, churches have “transformed into corporations to an extent that they now have their own broadcasting facilities, TV stations and public relationship machines” (www.prophetmakandiwa: accessed 15/02/13). The movement, even though it is self-reliant, loves to exploit the resources of externality and network patterns

### 3.6 The Common Strands of the “Third Wave” Christianity

The TWC in Zimbabwe is the fastest growing religious movement with a huge following from the young and educated classes. Because of the nature of its following, this movement has a huge impact on the socio-economic and political environment. The key to the rapid growth and impact of the TWC is imbedded in its theological proclamations in the context of certain socio-economic challenges. This deduction arises from the fact that religion has everything to do with our values needs and aspirations. The proclamations of power, health and wealth have indeed become pillars that draw the attention of the young and desperate entrepreneurs. Some of the fastest growing TWM in Zimbabwe include the following ministries:

- a. United Family International Ministries
- b. Celebration Centre/Hear the Word ministries
- c. Souls for Christ Ministries

Conference Crusades, Campus Crusades and Lunch Hour fellowships are the key forums for a conversion experience within the framework of TWC. Seminars commonly called 'Holy Conferencing' takes place in expensive Conference Centres. This appetite for making use of modern and expensive facilities is deliberately meant to attract business executives by portraying a Church which is modern and rich; one whose God is rich and powerful that God will not fail to bless his children. The purpose of such 'holy conferencing' is "to galvanize Christians into staging their own revolution, to win the whole World 'for Christ', by beating the communists at their own game" (Gifford 1988:50). Holy Conferencing is a platform for both spiritual revivalism and economic emancipation for the children of God who are willing to take the right direction as they discover God's purpose for them in their lives.

The approach toward winning souls in Tertiary Institutions of higher learning is modelled under Campus Crusades. Campus crusades are aimed at 'winning them young' – this is a philosophy of imparting the gospel message to the young and educated while they are still free of the corruption of the world systems and structures of evil. The young intellectuals are viewed as the key to World leadership and World revival hence the need to capture the future leaders young before 'the world corrupts them'. Business people and university students are viewed as the centre for productive minds and carry the potential for a better world hence the need to harvest from this segment or sector of the

population. The movement promises to provide believers with answers to life's most difficult questions some of these questions are: What is the reason for our existence on this earth? What is the purpose of God for his faithful children? What is real success and how do I become successful? These and many other pertinent questions create attention from the audience. The questions form an attractive intellectual aura and create a zeal for attention. The result is the birth of "subtle spirituality that has transformed (lives)" (Mukwakwami 2010:31). The theological dynamics is deeply absorbing and complete and in most cases it is vague and confusing; and yet appealing and motivating to the hearer.

During the 'holy conferences' the prophet who is the 'Anointed man of God' is able to reach the 'unsaved' and thereby populates the Kingdom of God. In advertising these conference, huge billboards are erected on strategic streets and fliers are thrown around in all languages spoken in the city or community inviting people to come for healing, restoration, renewal and great empowerment because God is able to give his children everything they need in order to conquer 'this World'. During the Conferences, the prophet pastor assumes the role of a divine teacher and healer. Deep adoration in music and song is the order of worship during praise and worship sessions. The Jesus films are screened in the process while waiting for the man of God to deliver the divine oracles. There is a deliberate attempt to empower economically the less wealthy enabled believers by declaring egalitarian vows. As a way of making

sure that everyone has somewhere to begin from, the poor are given relief aid “such as the distribution of clothes and maize” (Anderson 2001:50). As new believers are being given relief-aid; words of encouragement are employed such as: “My God is rich; he will never fail you because he knows no failure. Just accept your blessings because God has made you rich” (Bonke, Sermon: 18/04/1986).

From the very onset of the delivery of the holy oracles, believers are warned about the imminent end. They are told that they live in the last dispensation hence the need for them to stay alert since the last dispensation ushers in the total consummation of the Kingdom of God. In making reference to the last dispensation it is noted that the TWM divides “history ... into seven ages or dispensations, each marked by a different relationship to God” (Gifford 1990:3). A brief summary of the seven dispensations normally employs the following list:

- a) Age of Innocence. This one begins at creation and lasts to the fall.
- b) The Age of conscience. This one begins at the fall and lasts to the flood stories.
- c) The Age of human government. This runs between the flood and the call of Abraham.
- d) The Age of promise. This runs between the Call of Abraham to the work of Moses.
- e) The Age of the Law. Begins at Sinai and runs to the Incarnation of Jesus.
- f) The Age of the Church or grace. This runs from the death of Jesus on the Cross to the apostasy of Church.
- g) The millennium Age. This is the last age before the second coming of Jesus Christ to establish his Kingdom on Earth (Gifford 1988:3).

What is amiss about the emphasis on dispensationalism is that it “is not the teaching of the Bible, but Darby’s ideas read back into the Bible ...” (Gifford 1988:3). As the message centres on the last years before Jesus comes again believers are expected to simply respond in faith. There should be no questioning attitude at all. Believers confess their faith in the Word of Wisdom believing that their Pastor has performed and proclaimed a miracle that can only be understood by faith. In this scenario, I observed that the congregants would respond saying ‘Amen, Hallelujah, Tell them Pastor’. Such a response tends not to be an individual’s confession of contentment but rather an act of agreeing with the prophet’s message which is meant for “others” – hence the proclamation “tell them pastor”.

Believers are challenged to divorce themselves from godless religion. But what is godless religion? Godless religion is assumed to be the cold, formal and rigid Christianity associated with the mainline churches such as the Methodists, the Lutherans, etc. Believers are invited to obey the prophetic oracles “even when things don’t make sense” (Ahn 2009:43). The principle of obedience is a non-negotiable tenet of faith. Believers are told:

Many times we make our plans and ask God to bless them. The better way is to find out what his plans are and then align everything else around those plans. This is why those who abide in Jesus bear much fruit. As we wait for him, he reveals his will. When we obey and follow his will, he promises us that we can be assured of bringing forth much fruit (Ahn 2009:43).

Because the Pastor is an inspired man of God the followers never doubt his message; they do not want to offend God by disobeying the prophetic words of the man of God. Because of the almost-divine status of the Pastor, it follows that Pastors are referred to as “Prophets, Men of God, Professors of the Word of God, Messengers of Jesus Christ, and Apostles” (Chuma, Interview: 13/04/2011). The followers of the TWRRM defend the use of the near-Christological titles for their prophets as a necessity and a sign of respect of the holy offices and mandate that these men and women of God occupy.

Millenarianism in Campus Crusades employs empowerment tactics. The secular governments are derided, condemned and scandalised. Believers are challenged to take control of the economic and political reigns for the betterment of all souls. Surely such a gospel is a political ideology that is crystal clear. In Zimbabwe Campus Crusades trade as Abundant Life for All (hereinafter called ALFA) ministries (Gifford 1988:53). The Challenge to the possible converts is that “the Great Commission will be fulfilled in our generation ...” (Gifford 1988:53) hence the need to rise and act wisely in order to save oneself from total damnation.

Poverty is condemned as a sign of lack of faith on the part of the individual concerned. In short one can dictate that poverty is a curse or a result of sin. The poor are thus warned to pray hard and at all-time so that they can experience divine intervention and are on the path toward receiving their own



blessings. Biblical texts such as 1Thess 5:17, (talk about the need for a believer to always be prayerful) are given an economic and political interpretation to raise the bar of faith. The poor are encouraged to attend all-night prayer meetings where they are likely to be filled by the Holy Spirit and be healed from the spirit of poverty. But one may ask: Is this not a sign of trying to please humans? The message of the Apostle Paul to the Galatian Congregation must warn Christians about the dangers of pleasing others instead of worshiping God who is the source of all things visible and invisible:

“As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. For, am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:9-10)

In the teachings of the TWRRM, economic prosperity is seen as a right for every believer because of the victory won by Christ at Calvary; hence believers can “obtain these blessings merely by a positive confession of faith” (Gifford 1990:7). In this context, the claims of prosperity have become a confession of faith. Sadly, such a religious thrust of the Christian gospel tends to ignore the “political and economic reasons for so much poverty in Africa, reasons like dependent economies, fluctuating prices, over-population, overgrazing, corruption, mismanagement, destabilization, mistaken priorities and so on” (Gifford 1990: 7).

Another key strand in the TWC's proclamation is the over-emphasised Gospel of health ideology. What is crucial in the gospel of health theology is the theme of abundant life in Christ. The point of reference is that "Jesus redeemed us from sin, poverty, and sickness: Jesus bore our sicknesses Isa.53:4-5" (Gifford 1988:71). Such a gospel insists that "health and prosperity are the rights of every true Christian, so much so that disease and poverty manifest a deficient Christian life" (Gifford 1988:14). One may ask: Do such teachings imply that believers will never fall sick? If so is this not contrary to the fact of our fallen nature hence humanity's fallibility? This subject of the gospel of health and power will be fully addressed in Chapter 5.2 of this research.

It would be an injustice to the theology of the TWC if I were to ignore the movement's reference to the world. The TWC tends to ignore two crucial Biblical views about the world in preference to one negative thrust. The two views that are ignored are: a) The world as "the earth God created" as noted by Kalu (1988:14) (Acts 17:24) and b) the world as human beings in general (John 3:16). The third view of the term world that is generally employed relates to 1 John 2:15 which says; "Do not love the world or anything that belongs to the World because if you love the world you do not love the Father" (Gifford 1988:13).

For the TWRRM, the world is very evil and only awaits God's final judgment. Such slogans are employed: "The whole world lieth in the evil one" (Light

Ministries Logo). The theology that condemns the world as evil forgets that God so loved the world; it forgets that Jesus came to save the world (John 3:16). Surprisingly, in this evil world, the Religious Right Pastors have great “love for prestige, funds, and access to television, they wear expensive and latest designer clothes. These are symbols of the prosperity international standing ... to arouse local interest” (Kalu 1988:17). But one wonders: Why on earth is there such an appetite for things that belong to the Sinful world? Shouldn’t religion be about moral, ethical and humane standards? These questions will fully be addressed in Chapters six of this research where the dangers associated with the teachings of the TWRRM are fully addressed.

It is noted that the ministry’s cultic leader cum prophet gladly receives all gold and silver which are part of the Sinful world. Clearly the love for power and money within the TWRRM is a huge sign of the characteristic of a cultic movement. In a cultic movement, the beneficiary is the leader who also happens to be the centre of attraction. The rhetoric question noted above is meant to show that the TWRRM employs double-standards in its proclamation of the gospel. They condemn the world as evil and only waiting for God’s judgment and yet, on the other hand, they build ‘eternity-like’ mansions in a temporary world. It is not surprising that many Pastors are very rich and stay in very expensive residential areas while at the same time driving Porsche cars. The monies from the evil and sinful world help the pastor to receive his/her blessings. The argument here is that the Pastor and “all faithful Christians

must inherit this world because God has given them power over all things and evil” (Kalu 1988:14-15). One wonders whether such an attitude towards scripture does not contradict with a theme of simplicity and humility that underlies the Christian Virtues (James 4:8-10). To demonstrate their philosophy that God is rich, the prophet would always want to meet in huge auditoria which has been rented or built at great expense. The prophet has the tendency to live an extra-vagrant life to prove to the world that God takes care of his/her needs hence palaces-like mansions for the Pastors are built in a world that is already condemned to total destruction by the fires of hell. The fact that the prophet wants to enjoy the luxury of the world he or she condemns in all his/her sermons is puzzling. One therefore wonders whether these prophets know of any better world than the one they have already created for themselves on earth. To a critical observer, the poor gullible believer has been made to help prosper the scheming prophet in through the ‘miss-use’ of the Holy Scriptures.

Another observable characteristic of the TWRRM is the radical call to total obedience to authority. In general, the theme of obedience to authority has always been a key value in Christianity – and in African families and society in general. “Christian churches, like all human societies, require authority and obedience, too” (Kalu 1988:14). What, however, is unique about the TWRRM’s attitude toward obedience and authority is the emphasis on a childishly subservient authority to the person of the pastor. This characteristic of TWC

has the danger of creating cultic heroes who ultimately become the end and never the means to an end. The example of such cases is true of the story of Bishop Makhulu whose followers literally kneel before him believing that “the man of God deserves such homage because he is our spiritual father who provides eternal blessings to us” (George, Interview, 23/02/2013). But one may ask: Is honour equal to an act of divine reverence? This subject matter will be fully dealt with in Chapter Six subtitle two.

In the worship setting of the TWRRM it is common that the prophet may make some near impossible demands in the Name of God: “policies can be promoted as the will of God, when the real aim is pursuit of particular human interests” (Adogame 2011:12). There is too much emphasis on the need for disciples to be accountable to their shepherds as if it were to God. Personal opinions start to take authority over Biblical submission of all; to all and to God. The emphasis on ‘cell groups’, tithing, and love for wealth tend to assume too much authoritative models that almost overshadow faith in God through the Holy Scriptures which are the centre for Salvation.

Love of and for power has become an inherent model for the TWRRM’s leaders who are adored at the level of being worshipped. I have observed that leaders in the Souls for Christ Ministries and UFIM are exalted to the status of ‘State presidents or ‘sons’ of God’. Their followers tend to kneel when they meet them i.e. the case of Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa of the United Family Worldwide

International (Newsday, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2012: 3). The Prophet's status also makes them receive such tithes; Man of God and Apostle. Theologically, the titles which are given to the Prophet have deep Christological connotations as they are used of and for Jesus Christ to show his divinity; interestingly the TWRRM uses the titles loosely and in a careless manner. It appears that people have been conditioned to such an attitude and their expressions carry a sense of learned ignorance and innocence.

From its stand point in the Zimbabwean landscape, the TWRRM has employed a declared salient involvement in the political realm. The movement is a disciple of capitalism under the banner of the theology of health, wealth and power. The leaders love the public limelight and are fond of State receptions and are always well informed about high profile conferences, both religious and secular, which they attend for personal glorification. What is however surprising is that in their ministry governance style, there is little democracy visible since the leader always has to declare the will of God for all and at all times.

Such are the varied characteristics of the TWRRM in Zimbabwe that it would be unwise to say that there is a particular pattern they will always follow. For their spiritual, economic and political welfare, human beings would always fall to anything that promises them heaven on earth. The need for good health and

wealth (prosperity) are so crucial that no sane person would refuse a gospel that promises him/her such a healthy and fulfilling life-style.

It is from the context of the glaring crucial need that the TWC has made a huge impact in the Zimbabwean communities. Many worshippers from the so-called main-line churches actually visit the prophetic movements for social and economic needs more than religious needs. This makes the TWRRMs 'clinics', 'banks' and 'economists' in their function. There is less religious and moral growth visible as compared to economic and social success trends. If this deduction be true, then these movements have brought a big challenge to the meaning and nature of Orthodox Christianity. Christianity has always been about morality, discipline and ethical values that are not only to guide the believer but also society. The civilisation of Christianity is the civilisation of both the heart and the mind of the individual and society.

This chapter has discussed the Characteristics of the TWRRM in simple but specific ways that project a theological dilemma in terms of orthodox Christianity. The fundamental traits of the TWRRM have clearly exposed the unique characteristics of this growing Religious movement. It has been demonstrated that the fundamental trends within the traits of the TWRRM show beyond doubt, to any critical thinker that the greater benefits of the movement accrue for the good of the prophet cultic leader and not all the members. The majority of the membership merely exists to help the few to

celebrate their new economic status in a blind act of faith. The historical and theological characteristics of the TWRRM as exposed in this chapter are clearly built on selective and personalised theological texts and assumptions whose agenda is not faithful to the traditional values and principles of Christianity.



## **Chapter Four**

### **Common Factors that promote the growth of “Third Wave” Christianity**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter deals with the common factors that have enabled the TWC to brand itself within the Zimbabwean Church context. As I discuss these factors, I must admit that the same factors are common to the trends related to the growth of the TWC in its generality. I am particularly interested to show how this Wave of Christianity has manifested itself in Zimbabwe even though some examples maybe seen and understood to be general in the growth of this phenomenon. The critical thrust for this chapter focuses on the following specific aspects: a) the Religious Environment, b) the Worship setting, c) the economic environment, and d) the socio – political environment. The religious context of the TWC seeks to show the effects and impact of this type of faith expression in the growth of the TWC in the Zimbabwean landscape. The worship setting of the movement will be looked at as it provides a fundamental platform for membership attraction and or growth. The economic environment which plays a pivotal role in the search for divine answers to life’s challenges will also be looked at in a critical manner. The socio-political environment will also be examined for its contributions towards the growth of the TWC in Zimbabwe. It is interesting to note that the existing political scenario has been exploited in the advance of the TWC.

The factors which are noted in this discourse tend to play a pivotal role in the impact and growth of any new movement in any geographic environment. Of fundamental significance is the link between the religious values in one hand and the economic and political factors or environmental on the other hand. In crop husbandry lecture rooms, it is generally agreed that crops can only grow in a fertile land or else the farmer's hard work of ploughing, planting and weeding is in vain. If the land is too poor to sustain the crops, then it has to be fertilised with the use of fertilisers for real plant growth to take place leading to a bumper harvest. The same principles of crop science apply to Church planting and Church growth. For any religious movement to grow; there are some fundamental factors that must prevail in order for the religion to attract a following. People are looking for a religion that is consonant with their world-view, a religion that promotes their welfare, a religion that respects and understands their socio-economic and political needs. The worship outlook of that religion must be motivated by spiritual realities that are of fundamental value to the recipients of the new faith or else those who preach will be preaching in vain.

In terms of the scope of the belief system, the thing of greater value to the preacher and the target person(s) is the essence of the message. People are looking for a religious message that offers better prospects for a better life than their current circumstances. Any new religion that fails to offer better opportunities will not attract anyone's attention because there is no incentive

for conversion. A new religion must therefore offer new and dynamic values that will enable the ‘would be followers’ to see value in belonging to the new movement. In the following analysis, it is evident that the TWC has indeed dangled a carrot that is attractive and the buy-in is great (the harvest is plentiful). The TWRRM have, in a way, responded to the needs of the people in the context of their need, not merely their spiritual realm but also their economic and psychological challenges. The movements’ theology is vibrant and captivating. It is renewing and fulfilling to a soul that has lived in apprehension, in fear of the unknown and without knowing where one stands in this life and in the here-after.

In the Zimbabwean context, the TWRRM has, in a way, managed to respond to people’s needs ‘here and now’ without offering mere promises of a better life in heaven. This response is visible through the daily testimonies from the generality of the membership as to how God has blessed them in miraculous ways and means. The testimony of Mr. M. George is a helpful example:

“I am happy to tell you that the man of God has enabled me to have a wonderful life through his divine mandate to empower the faithful toward taking control of this world and its economy. My success is a testimony to the fact that I worship a loving, rich and powerful God who never tires in ushering his blessings to those who worship him in spirit and truth. Before I joined Souls for Christ Church I was a nobody in this world but now I am a respected citizen because of what God has done and is still doing to me. The blessings of my God are to be enjoying now and here because God wants us to be happy today” (George, Interview, 23/02/2013).

The focus on the blessing ‘today and now’ is an exciting way of the realised eschatology which was also present in the proclamations of Jesus i.e. ‘The Kingdom of God has come’ (Mark 1:15). Whilst the theological thrust of the TWRRM is appealing in terms addressing issues of our human conditions today, there is also the danger of not dealing with the social structure that promote structural evil hence the critical question to be asked is: “Would humanity’s problems be solved after alleviation of physical suffering and material deprivation? Is putting clothes on man’s back and food in his stomach the way to solve man’s basic needs? History counters any positive answers to these questions.” (Kaito 1985:15-16). A critical look at the events of history will reveal that humanity’s root problem is beyond materialisation; it is the challenge of ‘being’ and our actions.

The ministry of Jesus is critical for our appreciation of the full trust and nature of the liberating gospel, because after an exhaustive ministry to the sick, teaching and healing them of every disease:

Jesus did not cry for more healthy officers and social workers. Rather, he felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd ... In a similar vein the Lord wept for the cities socially and economically well cared for, but still spiritually deprived (Kaito 1985;16-17).

Matthew 9:36-38 & 11:20-21 are Jesus’ responses to such a scary experience of man’s condition which is characterised by sin and evil. Jesus’ answer was a very simple but effective invitation: “Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Indeed the affluent citizens of

Jerusalem broke the heart of the Saviour because of their refusal to 'Come to Jesus' and their spiritual degradation (Luke 19:41) even though they were clearly economically blessed and had no need for material support: But the same people lived in 'economic bondage', hence Jesus declared to them: "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). This is a very interesting thrust if it is to be understood in the context of the account of the fall of mankind as noted in Genesis chapter three which clearly shows that the roots of humankind's alienation from God is related to humanity's economic pride, self-assertion and the pleasures that wage war within the individual being (James 4:1). This observation clearly shows that humankind's greatest crisis or dilemma is the lack of a relationship with the divine and not the lack of food. It is, therefore, naïve on the part of an economic gospel preacher to think that human salvation equates with mankind's economic prosperity. The crucial historical lessons help us to realise that aspects of economic prosperity are merely part of humanity's needs but it does not, on its own, constitute total salvation. It is true that the worship context, the economic needs and the socio-political environment has a huge impact in the growth of any religious movement, but what humanity needs for a genuine religious conversion is not the materialistic needs but God at the centre of their lives and then all other things will fall into place.

#### 4.2 The Religious Context of “Third Wave” Christianity

The deep religious proclamations and confessions that take place in the newer charismatic movements offers a young believer the privilege and space to reconstruct the world that God wants him/her to possess. The prospect of realising and defining one's world of success comes about after a believer makes a public declaration of faith and takes four fundamental steps of faith toward success. These steps are:

- a. Acceptance that God has granted him/her a new life in Christ.
- b. Affirmation of God's goodness for the gift of the new life to a sinner
- c. Embracing the opportunities that this new life brings about.
- d. Adding value to what one already knows in terms of good morals.

The four-fold economic development plan noted above is a clear testimony of the new religious values which sustain one's Christian experience as the believer, seeks to, through the ladder like steps, grow toward the fullness of Christ. The four-fold steps are “a sign of one's growth and maturity in faith” (Kalu 1998:26). In the process of growth, in this newly found religious experience, each believer is encouraged to realise that God has a plan for his/her life (Jeremiah 29:11). In this context a personal religious experience is emphasised as the only way of living an honest and true life here and now. In this regard Mr. Gumede concurs: “I go to a Church where there is a living fellowship with the living God because I want results for my faith because life

in Zimbabwe is unbearable” (Gumede, Interview, 23/08/2012). This kind of heartfelt religious zeal appeals very much to an African spirituality hence it becomes attractive to many converts and would be converts.

The charismatic religious appeal of the TWRRM is consistent with the African world view. This is very significant for the growth of charismatic Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe because it embraces the translation model and not the diffusion missionary model. The TWRRM constantly holds whole night prayer sessions characterised by the exorcism of demons and other spiritual enemies and diseases. The exorcism is declared in and through the name of Jesus Christ. The emphasis on the power of the Gospel to cast-out demons tends to become an alternative rather than going to a traditional Healer with spiritual problems seeking for answers. In the process of worship there is great emphasis on the notion of rapture and an “appeal to the time as Epistemological category” (Meyer 1998:317) hence the gap between the saved and the unsaved widens. In the context of such religious zeal, divine spiritual warfare is declared against all the forces of Satan (the enemies of the Jesus Christ).

Every believer is promised deliverance from the spirit of failure and poverty; deliverance from the spirit of ill-health and disease. The aspect of deliverance is crucial in the African worldview because of the general perception that every aspect of life is potentially under attack from the evil forces of our carnal life. My observation revealed that those who become tense and stiff when they are

being prayed for are assumed to be showing signs of demons while those who remain calm during the deliverance ritual are said to be free from Satan's bondage. Long hours are spent on deliverance services with action moving from one corner to the other. The prophet identifies individuals who need deliverance and commands them to come forward for healing sessions. As these individuals come forward, demons or negative spiritual forces that bound the individual start to manifest with loud acclamations in words that are in many cases unintelligible. The prophet immediately starts to declare "power and victory over the powers of darkness" (Mvenge, Sermon: 13/09/2012). Ululations and shouts of victory follow from the supporting teams and the environment because electric with sighs of joy and relief.

In the charismatic spiritual world view, religious claims must be uttered by a believer in all activities that one is engaged in. Such statements are positive confessions that open up the way toward success. Religious declarations become a kind of a magical wand for those who are sanctified (set-apart) since reference to the name of God never escapes their language in respect of their testimony of faith. Central to the celebrated religious confessional statements is the theme of sanctification. Sanctification is believed to be the second blessing, the first being a conversion experience that every believer has to experience (Hollenweger 1972:322). Those that are sanctified are set apart as a special people who are blessed by God in all facets of life; and the powers of darkness have no share in their wellbeing and welfare. Such a theology creates a high



religious zeal that appeals to the young and insecure and provides answers to the many challenging questions of life in the context of people's existential fears. In this context people are religious out of desperation and fears of life.

Workplaces tend to become semi-cell groups as believers seek to assert their authority by daily witness, testimony and prayer directed to those who are still lost in sin (those outside their fellowship even if they may be Christians from other Christian denominations). There is no respect or toleration of any other Christian fellowship let alone religious affiliation. The followers of the TWRRM always think of themselves as the right ones while the rest of the Christian communities are lost sinners who must be helped to join the right fellowship or else they are eternally doomed. The language used by the disciples of the TWRRM, in whatever circumstances, is coloured by such religious phrases as 'Yes Lord', 'Thank You King of Kings', 'Prosper me Lord' and 'Am a child of the Lord'.

That the history of Zimbabwean people is coloured with varied religious expressions is true, but one also observes that the extreme use of religious expressions even in circumstances where it is not called for can, on its own, turn out to be an abuse of the divine (using God's name in vain). Yet such careless appeal to religious norms is common within Zimbabwe's TWRRM. But surely, one's sneezing or coughing cannot be associated with an act of divine grace or holy action by employment of such statements of faith in some

miraculous power at work: 'Yes, heal me God'. When one loses a job because of inefficiency there is always a religious explanation for it e.g. 'This was not my job, God will give me something better'. And yet these are some of the circumstances whereby you find the heavy abuse of the word of God as a way of showing one's religious zeal. Such attitudes and declarations, to me, are indicative of the traits of some infantile religious confessions.

#### 4.3 The Worship Setting of "Third Wave Christianity"

One of the most dynamic and exhilarating forms of worship is to be found within the TWRRM in Zimbabwe. The worship service is not only a time of praise and prayer; it is also a time to dance and celebrate life in joyous and jovial spontaneity. The prophet would normally invite believers to present themselves to God in joyous celebration since they (believers) are children of God who is creator and redeemer of the world. The house of worship truly becomes the holy theatre; the cinema of God's divine revelation hence those who encounter God burst into music, ululation and joyous celebrations.

Amidst the highly charged worship setting, the theological premise of the TWRRM cannot be classified as religious fundamentalism as such; this is so because the theology of the TWRRM represents:

A unique form of Christianity whose paradigm shift unshackles traditional theology by expanding the spiritual dimensions of reality and the operations of the invisible world beyond any rationale scope that

science always demand as proof for certain actions and behaviour. It posits that there are three different ways of knowing - intellectual, observational, and experiential - and accords new emphasis to the realm of human experience. It says that the power of the Scriptures does not reside in the letter; rather, God is behind the law (Kalu 2008:250).

As the prophet ascends to the podium (they don't call it pulpit) there are wild celebrations as if God himself has manifested himself on earth. The hallelujahs and Amen(s) become the only audible sound in the context of wild and illogical celebrations. As the prophet declares his presence, his word becomes, truly, the word of the master (God). Believers are urged to honour and respect the prophet since it is him/her (prophet) that God has ordained to declare holy oracles for the welfare of humanity. The prophet is believed to be the prophet who delivers divine oracles thereby making the whole worship service a divine experience where "... answers to all social and economic problems are provided" (Hollenweger 1972:50). Such assumptions make the worship service electric. Every word uttered by the prophet is received and celebrated with passion, at times without even an idea of what the prophet would have said. The celebrations are a conditioned spontaneity. In the process of the worship service some go as far as pronouncing "solutions and answers to all our thorny quests and situations" (Mukwakwami 2010: xvi).

An honest observation of the worship trends and movements has also revealed that at the centre of the movement's worship expression are some forms of the Zulu (the biggest South African tribe which extends across its northern borders into Zimbabwe) war dance to the kings/gods for ritual purposes. In

this perspective, God is a theoretic entity while prophetic rituals become a set of patterns which are meant to help apply theory to people's context(s). The whole act of worship is a big drama centred on visions, dreams and other prophetic utterances which rhyme very well with the African worldview. The believer's spirituality is titillated by the vibrant nature of worship in a way that raises the spiritual bar and places the believer in a world of the divine. The Africanness of worship makes the whole service of worship dramatic and fulfilling to the African worshipper who normally finds the nature of worship in the so-called mainline church denominations rigid and 'spiritually dry' because of the lack of a vibrant act of worship through too much formalism and doctrinal allusions.

The same style of worship employed by the TWRRM, even though stimulating to the worshipper, can also be seen to be heavily associated with ancient Baalism as noted in the Book of the Kings of Israel:

... 'O Baal, answer us!' they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the Altar they had made. ... So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention" (1 Kings 18:26 – 29).

The trends that are related to Baalism can easily be seen in the ecstatic forms of worship within the movement. The worshipper can easily jump up and down and throw self to the floor shouting for divine intervention. The lack of polite and respectful ways and means in approaching the Divine can easily violate the Second Commandment:

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:4-6).

There is also an element of jazz and pop music/dance in the style of worship employed by the TWRRM. What is fundamental in any religious expression is not the mere drama of what people see from afar but the essence of what hold the hearts of man and women who gather together in worship. One wonders whether such acts may actually not border on religious syncretism of some sort. Some varied and rich style of worship can only indicate the fact of both innovation and religious syncretism at play in the worship trends of the TWRRM. Whilst there is an exciting dramatic worship style in the TWRRM, it has to be noted that a wrong theology “necessarily ends up with a wrong concept of salvation” (Kaito 1985:15). What is critical is that a genuine Christian faith must help humanity to deal with “utter discontentment, and the emptiness prevalent in our post-modern societies because man’s life does not consist in what he has but in what he needs” (Kaito 1985:16).

As the worship environment is enriched by a variety of activities, there is a visible lack of a formal order which is deliberate because there is a general belief that worship is an experience of divine presence hence it is “emotional and enthusiastic” (Anderson 2001:171). Throughout the worship service each

and every believer experiences a sense of being 'Born Again', a vibrant and vivid occurrence of rebirth in terms of one's spiritual experience. In such an environment of worship there is "The longing for the supernatural and for the healing of sickness and poverty" (Hollenweger 1972:353). The believing community is therefore enabled to receive their blessings which they can claim "according to the Holy scriptures" (Hollenweger 1972:353). The fact that a believer must claim his/her blessing is testimony to the power of God at work of the evil powers of the evil world which tends to leave the individual helpless and without God's blessings.

Hymns and Choruses during the worship session employ a circular theme or point hence stanzas "are punctuated with loud shouts of 'Hallelujah' Thank you Jesus', 'Glory' and the rhythmic clapping of hands and tapping of feet" (Hollenweger 1972:353). In this experience of the divine mystery at work, believers are encouraged to look to God. In this context Ezekiel Guti's creedal words are crucial, "I say let's start with God" (Maxwell 1998:316). Believers are also encouraged to: "make a complete break with the past" (Meyer 1998:316). The past includes certain cultural traditions, fears and the spirit of failure and poverty. The past is never thought of in the positive, it is always a negative and disempowering experience which needs to be buried and replaced by a new experience of being 'Born Again, being 'a new person'. Such affirmations are in line with 2 Corinthian 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2Corinthians

5:17). The use of the Biblical text to validate the prophetic declarations make the movement more appealing and its message more respectable in Zimbabwe because many people love to identify themselves with the Christian church. There is always fear that anything which is not Christian can lead one into isolation by friends and relatives as there is resistance to any other religion but Christianity.

The above noted scenario is confirmed by my own experience of the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2012 when I went to attend a service at the United Family International, one of Harare's vibrant and charismatic Church movements which attracts thousands of middle-class and energetic people. As I sat in the auditorium at the Harare International Conference Centre, I observed a sensational reading of the Holy Scriptures and the long winding emotional preaching of the Word of God which was punctuated by continuous 'AMEN' and at times a loud acclamations of 'Preach Brother' or 'Go right into the message Prophet' and 'Tell them Prophet' (Makandiwa, Sermon: 27/05/2012). I also observed that after the preaching of the word and final prayers the congregation worship and fellowship continued outside the conference centre. Believers filled out and gave each other 'holy kisses and hugs' as they bid each other farewell saying 'God bless you brother/sister.' This kind of open and spontaneous fellowship creates an environment of brotherhood and sisterhood in a way that leaves every believer feeling that he or she is an important member of the fold.

As I sat in the auditorium, I heard the prophet's voice thundering like a thunderstorm, the audio system was deliberately set to vibrate his voice so that it brings about a sense of fear to the audience. The sermon is not a piece of artistic oracle delivered homiletically, rather is a composite of personal experiences coupled with selected verses woven together with a limited commentary and application. There is little interest in focusing in one particular clear theme; the sermon delivery is coupled with ululations and loud music which vibrates across the meeting room. The stimuli are not exactly the message but the noise and the excitement or call it the charisma that exudes through the prophet. As I analysed the whole service of worship I was left in no doubt that the healing part of the service was the space for emotional outlet which is created through encouragement from the prophet who continuously shouts: 'Come on, talk to your God'; 'yes you are on the right track, keep on going'. This is an innovative style of liberating the mind from lots of emotional and psychological burdens. From this vantage point, the TWRRM has indeed come of age in terms of making itself a relevant institution in the context of liberating the people by way of religious declarations.

In its proclamations and pronouncements about God, the TWC creates a personal God in a manner that enables the worshipper to feel and sense divine mystery all round him/her; it projects a God who protects and blesses the believer over and above anything, a God with whom a believer has a private relationship; a God who knows, completely and correctly all the needs of his



child and is willing and ready to prosper his/her child. Such an attitude creates a “self-righteous Christian fundamentalism ... with claims of ultimate truth and little tolerance for diverse opinions” (Congregational Chronicle Vol. 8 2003:3). The character of such belief systems and language or talk about God attracts the attention of many people who feel helpless in the context of a ‘cold and formal religion’ which does not stimulate the heart and mind into action. Those who feel uncertain, some with a sense of frustration, many with a sense of foreboding about their own security and sense of belonging find a sigh of relief in the new environment which also brings a sense of liberty and self-contentment.

The believers’ value of worship comes from the belief that the Church is the “Property of the word of faith movement in the world of sin” (Gifford 1988:71). This ideology is consistent with the teachings of Prophet Makandiwa of the United Family International whose declarations indicate that believers are a special people who must value and respect the prophetic oracles because they are delivered for a purpose and not by accident hence the need for people to exercise faith and trust as they receive the prophetic oracles ([www.prophetmakandiwa.com](http://www.prophetmakandiwa.com): accessed 23/10/2012). Such religious declarations make believers to adopt “the law of faith when they should have adopted the law of love” (Hollenweger 1972:47). From my observation I noticed that sermons from the TWRRM tend to insist on or rotate on the message of health and wealth because “wealth and health are the right of every true

Christian, so much so that poverty and disease manifest a deficient Christian life” (Gifford 1988:71). This theme is actually the most attractive part of the service because it brings about a sense of value and identity to every member of the fellowship. Sermon delivery is innovative: “Live, repetitive, hypnotic, suggestive phraseology and scripture quoting, all punctuated and seasoned with choral and instrumental music” (Mukwakwami 2010:7) sways the heart of the believer.

From the above analysis of the TWRRM’s worship environment, it becomes apparent that the religious environment is central for the conditioning of a religious experience. It is the captivating and emotional environment that gives birth to the idea of an all powerful and all empowering God. The themes of health and wealth are a reality drawn out of the image of an all powerful and transcending God who would not allow his children to live in pain and poverty. Such an identity of the deity would obviously draw a large following since many Zimbabweans suffer from disease and chronic poverty hence any talk of the all-loving over-powering and Omni-present God would create an extremely conducive environment for attention. But it must be noted that the emphasis on simple personal blessings tends to eliminate “any interest in institutionalized injustice... and distracts attention from the very real contradictions in the lives of so many ...” (Maxwell 1998:65-66) who live in abject poverty.

Robert Moffat, the LMS missionary once declared: “If I had a thousand lives I would give them to the service of Christ in Africa” (Kaito 1985:23). This passionate cry was an expression of a clear need for the evangelisation of Africa. What Moffat wanted to affirm was the great commission’s goal which affirms that “he who has the Son has life” (1 John 5:12). But is this what the TWRRM is achieving in the African Church scene? I see the varied perspectives of how Christ’s gospel is a clarion call for redefining Christian spirituality outside the box. But there is also a danger of corrupting the essence of Christianity in our attempt to make the Gospel’s message contemporary for the African believer. Nevertheless the need for contextualisation of the Christian message in the worship service is a noble and authentic way to make worship productive and empowering. Kaito (1985:23) defines contextualisation as “an effort to express the never changing Word of God in ever changing modes for relevance”. What has to be clear is that contextualisation is not about changing the content of Christianity but simply making the concepts or teaching relevant to the prevailing context or situation. The spirit of contextualisation in worship must result in a broad scope of proclaiming and living the Christian faith without the limitations of one particular culture. Contextualisation is therefore not a form of heresy, but an affirmation of the universal nature of Christianity as proclaimed in Jesus’ message: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). The spirit of contextualisation is aptly summed up in Paul’s hymn on the humility and exaltation of Christ

thereby becoming “all things to all men” (Philippians 2:5-8). Sadly, the newer charismatic evangelist and prophets seem to have a different understanding of contextualisation as they are extremely foreign in their worship language, behaviour and dress but are busy altering the content of Christianity through a selective application and interpretation of biblical text. Some of the endeavours of the charismatic prophets seem to achieve religious syncretism at its highest level. Religious syncretism has been defined by Eric Sharp as “any form of religion in which elements from more than one original religious tradition are combined” (Sharp: 1976:110). It is a fruit cocktail of religious fervour! African conversion centres seem to have shifted back to the period of the Christian Apologists who attempted to define and express Christianity in the context of the varied religious worldviews with a degree of confusion. Contextual worship must practically manifest itself in liturgy and order of service(s). It is visible and audible in language, praise, dress and varied worship tools i.e. musical instruments. Authentic worship should promote the orthodox understanding of the content of God’s word while expression our worship through ways and means that are relevant to our culture.

#### 4.4 The Economic Environment of “Third Wave” Christianity

Zimbabwe’s economy has not been able to provide everyone with a decent job in the last two decades. This has caused the growing fear and anxiety which has led to deep spiritual awareness as people appeal to the divine because of the economic challenges. The search for jobs and fear for abject poverty has

forced many people to turn to God for divine intervention, guidance and sustenance. Many individuals who have become part of the TWC have actually been attracted by a holistic set of transformations that deliver personal security and the opportunity of becoming economically secure. The perception that power and wealth are the real signs of God's blessings creates a new theological framework, not only for the TWC but also for the so-called mainline church denominations. What is clear is that these movements seem to blindly regurgitate the views of the American Religious Political Right Movement (hereinafter called ARPRM); views on "health and wealth movement which promote individualism, nuclear family and urban lifestyles" (Anderson 2001:184). The focus on economic empowerment of believers has enabled the TWC to project a new perspective of Christian spirituality which is vibrant and economically empowering to those who have lived on the margin for generations.

From a laymen's perspective, the economic declarations and claims of the gospel of prosperity clearly imply that faith alone does change the circumstances of history. In order to bring about change believers are taught that "God wants His children to eat the best. He wants them to wear the best clothing; he wants them to drive the best cars and to have the best of everything" (Gifford 1990:2). Emphasising the aspect of a prosperity Gospel, Robert Tilton the Bishop of the Word of Faith Outreach Centre in Dallas once argued, "God has given us power to create wealth and we are really seeing this

thing happen, and I believe that in those last days the believer is not going to be at the back of the bus taking a back seat any longer, we are the righteous of God” (Burgess 1988:719). Such a desire of economic power and prosperity has been acclaimed as a liturgical confession for the TWC. The phrase ‘liturgical confession’ refers literally to bringing into existence what one claims with his/her mouth through an act of faith in Jesus Christ. What becomes a practical challenge about too much emphasis on claiming one’s blessing by faith, as if God blesses laziness, is the fact that faith without works is dead as James’ letter argues; “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead” (James2:26). If indeed there is an economic reward without work and effort then the Biblical teaching of the Apostle Paul would be misleading and meaningless:

“And to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, 12 so that you may live properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one” (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

The religious belief, characteristic of the TWC is not actually unique to the people of Zimbabwe who are by their world view, extremely religious in nature. The Zimbabwean traditional religions, in general, and the Ndebele traditional religion in particular teaches that the Creator God “is the giver of all things and people will always rely on his mercies for total enjoyment” (Bhebhe 1995:17). Such teachings have, in a way, prepared the way for a fundamentalist Christian religious movement. The influx of people to the TWRRM is a true sign for the search of real answers to people’s economic problems because there is

always a belief amongst Zimbabweans that everything begins and ends with God. Therefore, the pronouncements of prosperity and health as declared by the prophetic movements of TWC makes these ministries appealing to a people who are desperately in need for a new and better way of life. When the ‘poor and orphan’ hear the message of hope they feel their prayers are being answered and their prayers are being met. The worship service is a platform to provide wisdom toward realising that God has met both their spiritual needs and economic needs as they look forward for divine providence to sustain them. Some Scriptural verses as Paul wrote to the church in Philippi become motivational even though they may not be interpreted in their proper context: “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). This makes the worshipper feel at peace in taking comfort in the knowledge that God is present in their story. The religious claims of health and wealth have appealed to the low class and middle class alike since these two classes are always seeking for better and greener pastures in life. No wonder that many people in these classes compete for the attention of the prophet so that they can be imparted with divine blessings.

In their war against poverty and a desire to embrace the language of post-modernism; churches like the Souls for Christ (located in Redcliff, Kwekwe, Zimbabwe) have the tendency to declare that their mission in preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to declare war against Satan, poverty and disease. The believers, as God’s children are to be fully empowered because their God is

rich and poverty has no place in the Kingdom of God. The Congregants are told that “poverty is a sign of curse that you must be set free from” (Tom, Sermon: 18/08/2011). This is an empowering theme and it instills zeal and passion for success and hard work for the believer. Such declarations forget that the challenge of poverty is a result of social evil which needs both a political and social will to fix it.

Whilst it is true that God’s purpose in God’s beautiful work of creation is to see every believer living a contented life, it is also true that the way of prosperity demands both hard work and faith on the part of humanity. No one can wait for food and money to fall from heaven whilst refusing to work in order to meet one’s needs. The parable of the growing seed comes in handy in this context:

And he said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. 27 He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. 28 The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come” (Mark 4:26-29).

The moral teaching of the parable of the growing seed is that mankind has to play his part (scattering the seed) and not simply do nothing but pray. There is a hundred percent effort by man before the harvest time comes. God blesses those who work hard to improve their own economic condition. Economic prosperity can, therefore, not be magic as is the case in the Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa’s services. Magic relates to getting rich without lifting a finger to work for it. Such cases of magic are however the norm in Harare’s charismatic



movements. One such case relates to a woman called Tambudzai Precious Chinyaka who went to Prophet Makandiwa's UFI Ministries and had her case of poverty attended to through a prophetic prayer:

After service, Precious went home with US\$1 in her purse, having "seeded" (donated) to the prophet her last US\$50 note with the prophet claiming that her "seeding" will be multiplied ten-fold. On her way home, she remembered that she needed to buy a loaf of bread with her last US\$1 note. She then went into a grocery shop and pulled out her purse to pay for the bread but to her surprise, there was more than US\$1 in her purse! There was a surprising US\$500. Precious was overjoyed and decided to use the money for a year's groceries. According to H-Metro, she "purchased groceries worth US\$415 at Mabvuku Spar and gave money which reportedly changed into avocado leaves once it got into the till operators hands" to the shock of Netsai the till operator. A large crowd gathered to witness this mysterious money/event and police were called in to control the crowd. The woman was rushed by security details to the police station where she also expressed her shock, "I am equally shocked and don't do juju. I go to UFIC and I was shocked to see that the money had turned into leaves. I do not know what happened. (www.prophetmakandiwa accessed on 15/02/2013)

Such stories like Precious's experience cannot be claimed to be a blessing when it is clear that a case of black magic is at play. The God of the Bible does not actually perform magic! Rather, the God of Jesus gives people life. When Jesus worked miracles they were for real not acts of magic, he did not dupe people into temporary joy before they found themselves back to their previous condition of pain and despair. We have also heard of cases whereby prophet Makandiwa has prayed for gold and diamonds to drop from the heavens while also proclaiming that "some people's fuel gauges will not come down as they will continue to rise while driving because God has chosen to bless them"

([www.prophetmakandiwa.com](http://www.prophetmakandiwa.com): accessed on 15/02/2013). Such declarations are surely not the way of God to bless his people because the God of the Bible is not a crook or magician whose works are for temporary and selfish satisfaction. God's blessings are landmarks of spiritual, successful and disciplined life of faith and hard work.

Incisively, Lovemore Togarasei observes that the prosperity gospel has, on the other hand, promoted entrepreneurship amongst believers through contributing toward poverty alleviation (Togarasei 2011:345). Emmanuel Makandiwa of the UFIC believes that the best that Africans can do for themselves is to rise above their fears and set the standard for a blessed life through hard work and commitment to serve God (Makandiwa: Sermon: 17/04/2012). The Prophet believes that God's children should be the masters of their own destiny through hard work and by making wise decisions that will help liberate them from servitude to Kings and Queens of this world. Such teaching is clearly directed towards mental and economic empowerment in a Neo-capitalistic trend. Even though a neo-capitalist market has been viewed negatively by some of the same prophets; it cannot be denied that the varied trends of the prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe are in agreement with economic principles of Neo-capitalism.

Ezekiel Guti the founder of ZAOGA and one of the leading promoters of the TWC delivered an address to his followers; "you have been blessed through

your education and hard work. Now use your skills to develop yourselves because you are not born to be poor. Work hard and come to thank God for your achievements” (Guti, Sermon: 28/04/2011). Looking at the prosperity gospel from another angle, it is clear that there are some good things that can come from the prosperity teachers. A believer is encouraged to take charge of her/his life by hard work and proper vision for a better future. In a way, the prosperity teaching on its own would not demystify poverty without corresponding actions from the believer. Such actions must be complimented by hard work and commitment to achieve the desired goal.

The Economic environment in Zimbabwe, whereby many people are unemployed and those who are employed are struggling to survive, presents a practical problem that the TWC has been able to address through sermons which are motivational and enlightening. A declaration is made “Jesus wants to bless you with all the heavenly riches, just believe his word; follow the knee-route” (Hollenweger 1972:55) or route of prayer. Such an emphasis on being economically blessed as a mark of being ‘Born Again’; with riches being a sign of faith to make those with money feel good while it also challenges the poor to pray and work harder toward being blessed. This is a psychological warfare that is being fought by the TWC.

The prophet’s prayers for those who would want to receive God’s blessings clearly emphasise the logic that ‘God is able’; therefore no believer will suffer

want. The phrase 'God is able' enables the believer to claim his blessings' with confidence and enables him/her to work hard so that he/she has something to show that his/her god is not a failure. As the prophet exhorts those who are in need of God's blessings such creedal statements have become common: "Firm are the promises standing; nor can they ever fail. Sealed with the blood of Jesus; they remain valid for eternity" (Hollenweger 1972:55). In this view-point, an economic theology assumes a priority in matters of faith although without, at times, a clearly affirmed theological justification. The key aspect of the claim to economic empowerment for all believers learns from the phrases: 'My God is rich and able hence I cannot fail' 'My God knows no failure', 'God will supply all your needs according to his riches in Jesus Christ' (Hollenweger 1972:321). Yes, the Biblical text has lots of promises for the children of God, but these promises are never to be manipulated in ways and means that border on magic and not the love and grace of God.

What is clear is that "the health and wealth gospel seems to reproduce some of the worst forms of capitalism in Christian guise" (Kalu 1998:15). There is too much talk about power and money than there is talk about love and justice. Jesus' hallowed beatitudes, "And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh" (Luke 6:20-21) are a reminder to all who care to know the ways of God that the poor we will always have and the needy will

always be part of our skewed social order. What Jesus wanted his disciples to know was that being God's children does not translate into a materialistic lifestyle which is concerned about the things of the temporary life on earth. Actually, being the child of God demands that those who have must share with those who don't have; and those who have should be a disciplined lot and never spoilt brats. The TWC tends to duplicate the spirit of western capitalism whom they accuse of arrogance; and yet these movements also receive and accept financial support from the same capitalists (Anderson 2001:132). Such a scenario, argues Paul Gifford, "Is bent on the Americanization of African Society, a type of neo-colonialism propagated by American prosperity gospel preachers" (Gifford 1988:73). The prosperity gospel enables the born-again believer "to make the best of rapid social change by entertaining western notions of urban lifestyles" (Anderson 2001:185). The dress code tends to be extremely western as is the language of the prophetic oracles even though the prophet and the audience share the same indigenous language.

In an effort to emphasise the economic factor of the gospel, believers are warned against entertaining the spirit of poverty thereby promoting a kind of self-confidence for the new believers when starting a new life on a sound and faithful economic footing. In this context new members would start to think more crucially on "self-reliance, indigenous businesses, and black empowerment" (Anderson 2001:185). These innovative strategies help to appeal to the wider spectrum of the community because the new family of faith

becomes a miracle of success. This transforming experience has, in Zimbabwe, helped many New Charismatic Movements to make an impact in the urban set up: such a scenario clearly shows that the growth of charismatic Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe has been helped by the ethics of power and wealth, “the spirit of capitalism” (Maxwell 1998:350). This development has indeed created a sense of self-worth and respect for many, a Christian disciple of these movements.

#### 4.5 The Socio-political Environment of “Third Wave” Christianity

The Political nature of the TWC moves from “rebuilding the bruised self-perception of the individual to ... empowering him with new hope and confidence ..., assisting him to garner the rich promises of the gospel and enabling him to reclaim” (Kalu 1998:27) his place of value. In this view point religion is seen to employ a political proclamation in its fullest sense hence the claim that Christians must “redeem and liberate the land” (Kalu 1998:27-28). Such religious affirmations create political confidence to the believer. God is at the centre of such a political landscape.

The argument I am raising here is related to the image of power and ownership. In this context the land is central in the gospel message because it caters for the economic, social, and political aspects. Pollution of God’s land results in

curses that lead to “hardship which plague individuals, communities and nations” (Kalu 1998:28). It becomes clear that the TWRRM tend to employ the politics of power that are designed to enable people to return to the Kingdom values because God is always ready to bless the land and hand of believers.

The TWC’s theology gives believers a very high socio-political status in society. The followers are declared to be ‘Kings and Queens’, a special people of God who live “far above the world of sin and failure” (Hollenweger 1972:322). Such a portrait of Christians is very much appealing to the young generation that wants to feel that they make an impact in society and command the respect of their peers. In the testimony I listened too, a young man who had just graduated from the University of Zimbabwe proclaimed “I feel good about my faith. I have power to do what God wants me to do without fear. I am more powerful than any secular leader because I am anointed of God. Praise God” (Zhou, Interview: 06/10/2012). Such a confession is common amongst Christians from the TWM who feel that they live in a new political and economic cradle altogether.

As a way of affirming their faith and identity; the TWC have coined a mindset for the new generation movement based on some form of creedal declaration. The following claims are common creedal promulgations with many believers from the TWC groups:

- a. My Church is the only true Church

- b. Those who worship Jesus Christ shall not be afflicted by disease
- c. Those who continue to sin are not genuinely worshipping Jesus Christ
- d. Those who worship in spirit and truth must claim their blessings and riches
- e. Those who worship God do not waste money on medication have Jesus as the healer.
- f. Those who believe in God must rule this world as children of King Jesus.
- g. Those with problematic children just need to claim their portion for their restoration to godliness.

The above-noted claims employ a socio-political framework that is a bonus for those who have heard certain worries about life in general. If the claims were to be seen from an African world view it is not surprising why many people flock to the TWRRM. This is so because an African world view sees human-beings always under the threat of a spiritual force that disturbs their peace, relations and results in poverty. Such an evil spirit can only be dealt with from a spiritual perspective. It is true to argue that the TWRRM seeks to create a new and real world for believers. Believers must break away from worldly things such as associating with non-believers so that they are not tainted by sin and evil. The new society that is born from the setting of the worship style



of the TWC gives birth to a holiness movement in the same paradigm of fourth century Donatism.

Lovemore Mukwakwami (2010) argues that a gospel of empowerment has enabled the powerless individuals to encounter in their religious faith “a means of altering their situation and even reversing their status in both symbolic and social terms” (2010:187). From this perspective it is also fundamental to recall that African Nationalism was championed from a religious cause. This is testimony to the efficacy of religious declarations. The same is true with the current wave of socio-economic and political change in Zimbabwe. Many of those who are rising stars; both economically and politically relate their success to their religious faith and values i.e. Mr. Isaac Gumede of Smart Trading says “I give credit to God Almighty for all that I have achieved because he has been kind to me” (Gumede, Interview: 23/08/2012). Such declarations have great similarities with ARPRM which claims that the story of America’s success is God’s miracle for the faithful (Anderson 2004:267).

The TWRRM in the form of a Christian Church believes that Christians must control the economy if they were to realise a stable political basis. Their political ideology follows the extreme wing of the American Republics. As a way of fulfilling the vision, there is funding for the innovative and charismatic young people to start business on the basis that God has blessed them. The New businesses owned by Christian individuals are run on Christian ethics so

that Christianity is given the lime-light in society. This is a political message; that the Church is human in its existence. What really is at stake is that “people can reinvent themselves in an atmosphere of fraternal support. Qualities are experienced and learned in Church; from there, when the time is ripe, they may be transferred to the wider society” (Hollenweger 1972:322).

Another aspect of a political inclination of the message of the TWRRM is seen through the proclamation of the imminence of the Parousia hope in a way that demands action today and now or else one would have to face the consequences of eternal damnation. It becomes obvious that the threatening message about the imminent end of the world is meant to solicit for radical conversion in a radical environment that demands radical action. The prophet declares that if people do not turn away from their evil ways and if they continue to tolerate ungodly systems and people then the whole world is doomed. Such a message is extremely political in nature; it campaigns for immediate action and solutions as if the world is ending in the next minute. That people must change their evil ways to godly ways is most welcome but that change must not come under the fear of the unknown but rather it must be a positive change from a penitent heart and not a frightened heart.

Believers are encouraged to make wise and godly choices in life. They are told to give their trust to godly men and women who fear God. But who are these men and women who fear God? Only those who are from within their fold are

assumed to be the right candidates and men and women who fear God. In cases of national elections these movements tend to identify with a particular candidate who seemed to embrace their philosophy and the whole flock is encouraged to vote for the group's candidate. The slogan goes like this: "give a godly vote for a godly man in order to enjoy godliness" (Makandiwa, Sermon: 25/04/2012). Such a political dimension is conservative and modelled on a theocracy (Maxwell 1998:67). On its part the Celebration Centre targets local politicians for fruitful results; they sponsor their birthday celebrations and visit them for prayer saying "we want to leave you with God's blessings come join us in prayer" (Tom, Sermon: 09/11/2011). Those who are won over are highly respected and talked about as examples to the nation of the quality leadership that will carry the country to success. Brochures and fliers about the life stories of the new political associates are produced and placed in strategic places; posters are also coloured with the testimonies of the faithful. This is a style of appealing to the targeted audience to follow suit.

What is crucial about the TWRRM's political image is that of building an economic empire that will fund the government which is run on quasi-religious standard for the good of all mankind. In order to fulfil their objective, the TWRRM's leadership always attends high profile political gatherings and seminars in order to offer divine prayer and divine counsel and guidance so that God's will prevails over man's plans. The most quoted Biblical verse in such contexts is Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you, says the

Lord, plans for your welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope”. Such prophetic proclamations are clearly meant to present God as the centre and depth of the political realm of life. The believing community feels highly honoured and special before God when such proclamations are made by the man of God in their presence. There is a feeling of being privileged to know such things and to be part of the great acts of God in human history.

Certain shortcomings seem inherent in the TWC system as derived from its Holiness roots, e.g. a revivalist formulation of economic salvation, which seems to neglect fundamental theological components of the meaning and totality of salvation. Interestingly, its ability to adapt to people’s needs and make mid-stream adjustments as per the prevailing need is a strength of the TWRRM. Imperfections notwithstanding, the TWC is an innovative and remarkably formative way for Christianity of the new century. The Christian Denominations of the “old order” may need to reconsider their missionary approach in the context of the varied Spiritual warfare terminology and practices perceived as threats by non-Christian populations and governments. Clearly, the opponents of the gospel are quick to seize upon military-sounding language as evidence of religious imperialism and neo-colonialism. But this does not minimize the impact of these movements in our African communities in the Zimbabwean Church geography in particular.

The case of the TWC, as noted in this chapter, indicates that the worldwide charismatic movement is less a product of mission agencies but more the result of local initiatives by enthusiastic indigenous believers. This conclusion is supported by further evidence from the numerous non-western Christian movements in Africa e.g. the AICs. It is an honest reality that the mission understanding of the ‘so-called mainline’ churches has been a total failure in the translation of the gospel into contemporary and authentic human context toward the promotion of genuine and authentic Christian values and ethics. The TWC has capitalised on those failures and have promoted a vision for here and now with their great commitment and power to carry out that commitment from a source other than the traditional model for evangelisation. The result is the creation of an alternative space which has seen the birth of extremely large newer movements; whose worship is extremely dynamic. These movements provide the opportunity for people to feel like “Kings and Queens” in their expression of worship. Their worship is not tied to traditions of the past. These movements seem to have re-discovered the mythical golden age of the Apostolic Age of the New Testament. Neither hierarchy nor clergy nor cathedrals are required; ecclesiastic embellishments are peripheral and not of the essence of the Church.

The depth and width of the mission of the TWRRM is clearly to win lives and restore identities by use of a varied salient features and friendly religio-economic and socio-political ideologies which are being promoted in and

through Biblical language. The ideology is seemingly based on the political ideology and an American political right style of democracy and godliness and not necessarily the Christian doctrine even though the results are associated with the totality of the Christian faith.

I have demonstrated in simple and clear terms the fundamental factors that promote the growth of TWC. I have explored the issues of religious values, spiritual realities, economic environment and socio-political environment as some of the crucial factors that have helped to grow the TWRRM especially in the Zimbabwean society. The fundamental flows associated with the system and style of worship and preaching that are employed by the prophetic figures of the TWC have been discussed by way of measuring them against basic Christian values and the Biblical message as pronounced by Jesus the Christ himself. The discourse has, thus, provided the reader with a basic understanding of Biblical Christianity in the light of the varied religious groups that claim to be authentic Christian churches.

## **Chapter five**

### **The Implications of “Third Wave” Christianity in Salvation History**

#### **5.1. The Biblical Message and Prosperity**

The NRRM in the African continent in general and the Zimbabwean society in particular has found a fertile ground for proclamation and growth in the context of both culturally and Biblically acceptable models and adaptations from the practices of their traditional religions and are thus seeking to provide answers to the varied needs that attend to the African person. It is common knowledge that a new religion must offer attractive benefits compared to the old religion if the new religion is to be relevant and attractive to the local recipients. The NRRM purports to offer more than the ‘traditional churches’ have done in their proclamation of an economic transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Through their proclamations and promises, the NRRM has changed the image and or identity of Christianity in the African Church scene; the new face of Christianity is a result of a materialistic gospel of salvation that is premised on the deliverance of the believer from all forms economic deprivation and of evil spirits. This type of gospel has indeed met the needs of the African worshiper in a realistic way in the context of abject poverty and disease. The charismatic preachers of the NRRM declare that God has come down to meet all the needs of believers within the holistic triangle of life which includes their material needs, physical healing, and their spiritual welfare.

The challenges of economic depression and internal conflicts within the African states have provided a safe environment for the rapid growth of the gospel of prosperity within the societies that are riddled by varied economic and social challenges. Through its declaration of economic prosperity and good health, the NRRM has become more relevant to their cultural and social context, more prepared to serve their communities in a holistic manner. In line with the values of the economic gospel, Robert Tilton, the Bishop of the Word of Faith Outreach Centre in Dallas once argued; “God has given us power to create wealth and we are really seeing this thing happen, and I believe that in those last days the believer is not going to be at the back of the bus taking a back seat any longer; we are the righteous of God” (Burgess 1988:719). Such statements and declarations of economic prosperity have been acclaimed as a confessional creedal theology within the TWC. In the context of faith statements, the phrase ‘Confessional Creed’ refers literally to bringing into existence what one states with his/her mouth through faith in Jesus Christ. The proclamation is driven by a sense of urgency which is moulded in beautiful charismatic language which appeals to people’s emotions and makes the audience feel proud for being part of the fellowship. One such motivational statement which is very popular with the charismatic prophetic figures goes like this: “Give us grace in this church to catch the vision of being the star” (Duin 2009:246). The vision and desire to win souls is imbedded in well thought out strategies and not the spontaneity of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The strategy is born outside the prayer-room but from perfect strategic



planning sessions with the prophet's close associates and in consultation with their god-fathers (normally older or and mature charismatic figures). In these strategic planning sessions, the prophet/cultic leader puts across his work-plan and the team of associates is told that a new thing is about to be born "not by mega-meetings" but through intelligent strategic oracles which exude power and authority (Duin 2009:247). The 'prophetic vision' is not open to criticism because it is a 'divine plan'. The vision demands that men and women must simply give thanks to God and commit themselves to toward fulfilling the demands of the vision. The vision of a quality life is a beautiful idea that sells very fast in a world of economic deprivation.

The underlying assumption of the declarations of power and prosperity implies that history can be changed by mere utterance of a statement of faith regardless of the prevailing economic environment and circumstances. In order to bring about change believers are taught that, "God wants His children to eat the best; He wants them to wear the best clothing; He wants them to drive the best cars and to have the best of everything" (Maxwell 1998:364). These claims are emphasised in every worship service until they literally become a creedal statement for the fellowship. It is assumed that the more the claims are repeated the more powerful they become in the life of the disciples. Believers are taught that what they say with their mouth is what will follow them. Therefore, the more the claims are repeated the higher the chances of positive rewards. The promise of a reward or a positive material blessing to a

believer becomes a motivating factor as one prays and petitions God and works hard towards achieving the desired results. It is clear, therefore, that many followers are attracted by a “holistic set of transformations that deliver(s) personal security and the opportunity of becoming more modern” (Maxwell 2006:185). This observation has been made in chapters two and four hence I will not labour much in explaining it any further.

The charismatic prophetic figure of the NRRM has an attractive package for the poor people who come to the fellowship hoping for a quick economic reward: “Are we the stars that can attract people to us? It won’t start by preaching the gospel to the rich. But it will start when we preach the gospel to the poor. But we will have to embrace them, laugh with them, weep with them ---” in order to win their souls, their trust and make them a part of our ministry (Duin 2009:245 – 6). In this context, the poor feel that they are part of a movement that will help them to prosper as they become part of the family of God’s ‘blessed children’. It is believed that the accumulation of wealth and luxury goods is “a sign of God’s blessing” (Gifford 1990:2).

The claims and declarations of power and wealth as signs of God’s blessings create a new, dynamic but also dangerous theological framework for the African believer and Church. What these movements seem to blindly promote is a form of neo-capitalism whose ideology of health and wealth as values of faith tend to promote individualism, a closed nuclear family and urbanite values

whose thrust is not in line with the fundamental orthodox values of the early Church. The frenzied proclamation of an economic-gospel has enabled the “Third Wave” charismatic movements to appeal to many uncertain individual Christians who have been sitting-on-the-fence within the comfort zones of the older protestant denominations. The swing to the charismatic movements is not motivated by the indelible faith in God through the preaching of the Lordship of Jesus the Christ, rather, the motivating factor is the glaring need for material prosperity. And yet the Bible demands that people must “--- seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).

The theology of the NRRM is framed from the perspective of wealth and health as God’s gifts to God’s children. The blessing and talents that God gives are all understood from an economic perspective. Therefore, materialism is the measurement of being blessed and being a genuine Christian. The motto is: My God is rich; therefore I am also rich! The economic language that is employed entices many to want to be blessed hence people flock to the movement for economic reasons rather than purely spiritual reasons. Those who are blessed with income are encouraged to pay their dues or and offer their tithes because God is viewing as “a good clerk who does not forget the gifts his people offer him” (Anderson 2001:184).

The followers of the NRRM do not struggle with the dichotomy between the spiritual and the material; rather, they “live in awareness of the unity of reality, material and spiritual, and of man’s relationship both to God and to one’s total environment” (Maxwell 1998:359). The integration between the material and the spiritual is seen as a natural phenomenon because God created both material things and the spiritual beings. Philippians 4:19 “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” is used as a yardstick to affirm the economic gospel’s theology. The spiritual aspect actually relates to the health component of life. There is, therefore, an interesting dynamic of interpreting the real meaning of being Christian. For the NRRM, being Christian relates to a perfect future here and now. There is no deliberate desire to deal with issues of a moral-sociological nature.

In the struggle to acquire wealth, there is an interesting dynamic of seeding. One has to first donate to the man-of-God, the prophet, before he or she realises his or her blessings. The seeding concept, as pronounced in UFI’s Emmanuel Makandiwa’s sect has a dangerous connotation of buying grace. This philosophy argues that “the moment you seed your salary you have planted the seed of prosperity and in return you will harvest showers of blessings” (Makandiwa, Sermon: 20/10/12). The desire to be blessed has led many individuals to give away their salaries to the man of God in anticipation of a quick reward of riches. Sadly, not all who have seeded have been so lucky, while there are some testimonies of some individuals having been blessed

‘tenfold’ many have been thrown into debt and poverty after seeding their life savings in anticipation of a tenfold reward. The whole aspect of seeding has the making of a pyramid scheme which enables the first few givers/contributors to reap some quick results while the ‘late comers’ (who are actually in the majority) lose all their investments. The bait is that the positive testimony of one beneficiary is used as a sign of the rewards of faith and such a testimony becomes a call to faith for the rest. The more the testimony is shared, the more people come forward to seed with high expectations.

Lovemore Togarasei (2011:344) observes that even though the charismatic Christianity of the NRRM is now the highest and fastest growing religion amongst poor Africans its central theme of prosperity and health seems not to be bringing relief for many poor African families. Is this a case of lack of faith or there is something seriously wrong with the gospel of prosperity and health? It would seem that the gospel of prosperity is paradoxically contributing to the growing levels of poverty wherein a few in the movement’s hierarchy get rich and powerful while the rest are singing Hallelujahs in abject poverty. A simple reading of the Bible demonstrates that there are many Biblical characters that were mighty men of God who never lived like kings and Lords in terms of their economic status. We know for sure that Paul became ‘poor’ because of his commitment to preach Christ to others as noted by Lovemore Togarasei’s (2011:344) article “Christian life is characterized by carrying the cross as Jesus taught” and not the pride of one’s wealth.

Looking at the prosperity gospel from another angle, it is clear that there are good things that can come from the prosperity teachers. There is a sense through which the gospel of prosperity has helped develop and prosper individuals and groups. Ezekiel Guti the founder of ZAOGA delivered an address to his followers; “you have been blessed through your education and hard work. Now use your skills to develop yourselves because you are not born to be poor. Work hard and come thank God for your achievements” (Guti, Sermon: 28/04/2011). A believer is encouraged to take charge of his/her life by hard work and proper vision for a better future. In a way, the prosperity teaching on its own does not demystify poverty without corresponding actions from the believer. Such actions must be complimented by hard work and commitment to achieve the desired goal.

It cannot be denied that the gospel of prosperity has led many people to start their own business empires from humble beginnings towards having an economic base through which one would stand up and thank God for what God has done for them. In Zimbabwe, for example, many successful young business moguls belong to these newer charismatic movements: The case of Strive Masiyiwa of Econet Wireless and Nigel Chanakira of Kingdom Bank is testimony to this fact. These Christian businessmen argue that their success in business was an act of faith in the power of God which came through the prophetic oracles or word of encouragement by the prophet. The theme of ‘A Royal Priesthood’ ‘A chosen People’ (1 Peter 2:9) is crucial for making converts.

The theme of priesthood and chosen-ness creates confidence amongst would be converts because everyone wants to enjoy better status and authority – part of the chosen people, the royal priests. The economic gospel message points out that the children of ‘King Jesus’ will inherit the wealth and power of God’s Kingdom therefore believers are a rich and blessed lot.

Emmanuel Makandiwa of the UFIM believes that the best that Africans can do for themselves is to rise above their fears and set the standard for a blessed life through hard work and commitment to serve God (Makandiwa, Sermon: 17/04/2012). The charismatic Prophet believes that God’s children should be the masters of their destiny through hard work and making wise decisions that will help liberate them from servitude to Kings and Queens of this World. Such teaching is clearly directed toward mental astuteness and economic empowerment in a Neo-capitalistic trend. Even though a neo-capitalist market has been viewed negatively by some African politicians, it cannot be denied that the varied strands of the charismatic prophetic movements have actually promoted the same ‘imperialistic economic philosophy’ in empowering their flock. The case of gold and diamonds falling from above into the believers’ hands (UFIM, Miracle Service: 24/01/2013) has been widely discussed in Zimbabwe with the Reserve Bank Governor Dr. G. Gono first expressing pessimism before he made a U-turn declaring that the “man of God was just doing his job to promote the ordinary poor people as a way of complementing

the government's economic and indigenization policies" (Star FM Radio News: 11/02/2013).

The materialistic gospel of the TWRRM tends to be urban-centred and target the young and educated group(s). Salvation is reduced to an economic financial promise of success by works of faith. The prosperity gospel promises material benefits to believers as the major sign of God's approval and of salvation. "This is why God is often referred to as the God of Abraham who himself was a very rich person and not the God of Lazarus" (Kalu 1999:73), the poor fellow. The prosperity gospel teaches that faith, positive speech and freewill giving to the ministry will always increase one's opportunities of material prosperity. Critical to the gospel of prosperity is the importance of personal empowerment, proposing that it is God's will for his people to be happy.

What is also unique about how believers must acquire their wealthy is the tendency to view a debt as a sin. Believers, for example, in the ZAOGA are discouraged from buying property on credit terms. They must either pay cash or not make the purchase at all. Debt is like bodily sin. It captures the heart of the born-again ones and takes control of their lives. As way of empowering the followers, believers are encouraged to form business clubs (partnerships) so that they can harness cash and get a project going for the benefit of all. Less educated persons ... are encouraged to engage in self-reliant projects and are promised divine partnership in the process (Maxwell 1998:359). These business



schemes are essential to maintain membership as many “turn up at services, searching for relief from poverty ...” (Maxwell 2006:185). In his book African Gifts of the Spirit, David Maxwell observes that the NRRM has become a popular religion because it is able to:

“Satisfy existential passions and to aid those struggling for survival. In particular, it demonstrates how (the new right) religion addresses the personal sense of abjection created by shattered hopes of independence, and offers security in the face of state retrenchments, the capriciousness of global capitalism and growing levels of violence and crime. Beyond providing them with security, the Pentecostal community capture adherents and offer them stability and hope as they strive toward something better” (Maxwell 2006:185).

Poverty is viewed as a curse hence those who are poor or are financially challenged are told to that they need to be delivered from the spirit of poverty so that they can truly be God’s children and start to enjoy the benefits of the kingdom. The atonement or reconciliation with God is interpreted to mean the alleviation of poverty and sickness which are viewed as curses to be broken by faith. The charismatic preacher declares that “God and his Son, Jesus Christ, never associate with the poor and sick because God is the God of all power and wealth” (Musarurwa, Sermon: 05/08/2012). Wealth and prosperity are taught as the path to Christian dominion over society, arguing that God’s promise of dominion to Israel applies to Christians today. Lynch (2010:80) argues that the prayers for the economic emancipation of the poor become “the *axis mundi* that connects heaven and earth”.

As an attempt to rule the world, Christians are passionately encouraged to permeate and take control of the wider secular industry so that believers can fully promote a qualitative Christian life-style. In-line with the zeal to control the direction of the world, followers are exhorted to get into the entertainment industry so that they can get into the music business and produce songs and music that will promote Gospel values and ethics. The music comes in varied beats and styles. Christian music is the message but the beat and style remain worldly. The style of music and dancing can be extremely “worldly and sexy” and yet the message remains Christian. The message that comes through the music is heavily slanted towards declaring the mighty acts of God and his riches to the faithful children of the prophetic figure. The prophet is adored as the centre of the revelation of God, as a type of a messianic figure.

As a sign that God blesses those who love him; the Zimbabwean charismatic prophetic preachers are among the richest and most influential people in society. The charismatic prophetic preachers tend to wear expensive and flashy suits and drive expensive cars that indeed portray material prosperity to the ‘would be followers’. The charismatic prophetic figure uses self as a model of what God can do to those who join the fold. It is declared that the life of the charismatic leader is a good example of what God can do. The charismatic prophetic preacher is made rich by the followers as believers would freely seed their cars, salaries and houses to the prophet. In this way, the prosperity gospel enriches the leaders while the ordinary person is left to hope and have

faith that his day of blessings is on its way sooner than later. Ministries in which the prosperity gospel flourishes are normally led by individual heroic figures who act as both prophet and treasure general of the movement. There are no church meetings, financial statements, no elected leadership in these movements as the prophet pastor does things through divine revelation.

The reading of the account of the fall in Genesis chapter three clearly shows that the roots of humanity's alienation from God is related to humanity's economic pride, self-assertion and the pleasures that wage war within the individual being (James 4:1). This observation clearly shows that humanity's greatest crisis or dilemma is lack of a genuine relationship with the divine and not lack of economic wealth and power as the Gospel of prosperity tends to imply. It is, therefore, naïve on the part of an economic gospel preacher to think that humanity's salvation equates to humankind's economic prosperity. The crucial historical lessons help us to realise that aspects of economic prosperity are merely part of humanity's needs but it does not, on its own, constitute total salvation. What humanity needs is God at the centre and then all things will fall into place.

A good example of the TWRRM is a brief survey of the Celebration Centre formerly Rhema and at times called 'Hear the Word Ministries'. The brief survey reveals how powerful the gospel of health and prosperity can change the pillars of celebrating Christendom. The name 'Celebration Centre' is a clear sign of the

thrust of worship and the understanding of the gospel of property. The worship service are moments of celebrating success and prosperity through sharing and testimonies of what God would have done for the believers in their material lives. It is in this context that this fellowship or movement has been declared as the 'property of the Word of Faith Movement' seeing that it is the story of faith that shapes its ministry. This Church-movement was founded in Zimbabwe by Pastor Tom Deuschle in April 1982 and for the first few months its membership was about "six people meeting in the pastor's home" (Maxwell 1998:354). Today it is probably one of Zimbabwe's fastest growing ministries with a complicated and expensive church building that accommodates several thousands of worshippers in one of Harare's prime residential suburbs of Borrowdale.

The Celebration Centre draws its membership from young business people, company executives, university students and graduates. Followers are encouraged to be well dressed: "smartness and cleanliness are likened to one's Spiritual life" (Maxwell 1998:355). The central message of materialism is coupled with some teaching on family values. Families are taught how to work hard in order to be successful, how to budget their incomes and how to share their wealth with the church for the promotion of the mission thrust of the movement. Consumption "of tobacco and alcohol is condemned as sinful" (Maxwell 1998:353) hence the resources that were likely to be spent on such

unhealthy endeavours are channelled towards the life and work of the movement.

The Daily News of Friday 30 May 2003 carried an eight page supplement on the official opening of the Hear the Word Ministries' Celebration Centre. The caption words read: "From the beginning we wanted the new building to be a centre for reformation for nations...we had no idea how God was going to do it, but we have seen enough miracles to know that God can do everything" (Daily News: 30/05/2003). The building took seven years to complete. Its seating capacity is 3 500 people. Interestingly, the building does not have a single room or image that identifies it with a Church structure; the many rooms have secular names affixed to them as well as the name of the founder and his family. The super-structure hosts "facilities for the College, bookstore, café, an outdoor amphitheatre and numerous rooms for meetings and classroom instruction" (Daily News: 30/05/2003).

As a sign of glorifying the material gospel, a breakdown of the quantity of material used to build this amazing super-structure shows that the Centre is no ordinary structure as evidenced by the following facts:

- a) Tonnage of Cement used: 3 500 of which 1300 tons are buried underground.
- b) The largest foundation excavation could have held a 40-foot shipping container intact, there is a bible at the base of that foundation (we really are founded on the Word)
- c) In a typical thunderstorm the gutters can drain seven tons of water off the roof per minute.

- d) Total electrical cable installed: 20 kilometres.
- e) Total sound cable installed: 4 kilometres
- f) Total video cable installed: 2 kilometres
- g) Structural steel used: 1000 tones
- h) Framing screws used: more than 2 million; each screw cost 19 cents when the project started and \$39 by the time it finished.
- i) Drywall: 360 000 square metres.
- j) Drywall screws used: 2.250 000” (Daily News: 30/05/2003).

The founder of Celebration Centre (Hear the Word Ministries) in Zimbabwe Pastor Tom Deuschle, an American national of German parentage, is the life-time senior pastor of the Church. He was educated at Christ for the Nations Institute in Dallas, Texas, USA. Pastor Deuschle claims that for such a phenomenal work to come to fruition ‘visionary leadership is required so as to lead people into wise and appropriate actions for a rewarding life” (Celebration Newsletter: May 2003). The climax of a rewarding life is material wealth. The construction of the Celebration Centre super-structure shows the huge achievements made by the Gospel of Prosperity theology as money for the project came from within the movement’s fold although some funding came from well-wishers overseas. The super-structure is a sign that believers have learned that the Church belongs to them hence the need to fund its mission.

From a moral point of view, one wonders whether it is really necessary to invest so much resources on erecting a Church building worth billions of American dollars when a couple of millions of Zimbabweans are threatened by starvation and malnutrition? Such an investment in temporary structures when the same

people that God wants to save are starving is an abomination to the values of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is unthinkable that Jesus would bless some misplaced priorities at the expense of saving lives. Christian love and mission is about serving others and populating the kingdom of God on earth and never about self-centred gain and accumulation of material things. I believe that God will never bless the building of a super-structure amidst dire need for food and moral guidance in a country whose life-span is forty-years. Material wealth is not my perception of God's blessings. My understanding of God's blessings relates to humanity's ability to use the available resources for the welfare of humanity. After all, this very world is condemned as waiting for God's judgment – destruction by the eternal fires. In this context we do not need to invest in material things as if life was about wealth and power. The reality of the kingdom of God is about peace, love, and justice for all and at all times and never about wealth and power as some want to believe.

The TWRRM should learn from the experience of the Jewish people. They invested a lot of money in the building of the Temple in Jerusalem but there came a time when that Temple was destroyed; but the people remained worshiping God without the wonderful and most expensive Temple building. History shows us that many a time, the Jewish people focused a lot on the material life of the Temple and forgot to invest in the spiritual and moral aspect of their religion, and as a result the people would sin and were taken captive in exile and the Temple would remain a white-elephant. The experience of the

Jewish people must surely serve as a warning to theology of the TWRRM that love for material resources and status should not be the priority over and above the worship of God whose unique nature is “Love”.

Whilst Christians must be rich if they have the vision and will power to work hard, I doubt whether one should view wealth and power as the greatest of all the gifts that God enables believers to enjoy. After all, the entire Bible has no direct reference to material wealth as a sign of God’s gifts to all believers. We know that Jesus Christ told the rich man to sell all that he had, acquired and follow him in Spirit and truth (Luke 18:18-25) declaring: “--- How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! ...it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God” (Luke 18:24-25). The Gospel of Jesus also declares that the poor are blessed: “--- Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20). The theological sense of the scriptural references reveals that wealth cannot be the measuring rod for being blessed from a theological and Christian perspective.

The theology of the NRRM hangs on precarious statements since most of their commonly manipulated phrases are barely referenced in the Holy Christian Scriptures and those that are found in the Holy Scriptures tend not to be commonly used i.e. the commonly used phrase by the TWRRM preachers ‘Fruits of the Spirit’, only appears once in the Bible and the way it is used in



the Holy scriptures differs is quite different from its usage in the NRRM: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; against such there is no law” (Gal.5:22-23). What is fundamental is the fact that in the same scripture there is no reference to wealth as a gift or fruit of the Spirit (very different from its usage in the theology of the TWRRM). From a clear theological context, therefore, the fruits of the Spirit as pronounced in Gal. 5:13 – 26 specifically refer to behavioural qualities to be manifested in the Christian treatment of others hence the text concludes: “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25). The Biblical use of this phrase has an ethical instruction (not economic law) which “rises from and is conformed to the sacrificial paradigm of Christ’s own self-sacrifice” (Burgess 1988:313).

In its economic empowerment declaration, the NRRM emphasises the creation of a forum of businessmen under the model of Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship International (FGBFI). The International Christian Businessmen’s forum was founded in Los Angeles (USA) in 1952 with a mission statement that reads:

“We believe that the Bible in its entirety is the inspired Word of God and infallible rule of faith and conduct ... We believe in intensive World Evangelism and missionary work in accordance with the Great Commission, with signs following ...” (Burgess 1988:313).

In their part members of this fellowship help the movement to fulfil its mission by donating financially towards the ministry’s mission programme. The

donations by the business Forums are not a tithe but a gift of love (a way of expressing one's commitment to the Gospel cause and his/her gratitude to God for the success of his/her business). In Zimbabwe, such a Christian Businessmen's fellowship was started in 1983 in Harare with only eleven members. Today such Christian businessmen's fellowships are found in many major cities. The forums normally meet in five-star hotels where non-Christian business people are also invited with the express aim of winning them for Christ. In these forums "a Pastor is normally invited to officially open and close the fellowship with a Word of blessing from the Holy Scriptures" (Gifford 1988:56). The pastor must come from one of the prominent ministries and must also be a prominent charismatic figure that has power to declare miracles so that his presence brings forth the gift of more wealth/riches to the forum's members.

Business people who are members of the Celebration Centre Ministries come together under a body called Victory Business Forum (VBF) "This fellowship of businessmen in the church was born ... to enable businessmen to share their stories of success through God's empowering hand" (Celebration Newsletter: June 2003). The use of the word *Victory* is meant to emphasise the place of a visionary planning and victorious power of prayer in Christian business practices.

The fundamental thrust and objectives of Victory Business Forum are:

- a) To encourage men and women of integrity who choose to live by biblical standards in the business arena and the affairs of life.
- b) To equip today's and tomorrow's business leaders for success.
- c) To help business people understand their role and importance in the local church.
- d) To provide a business forum for ongoing dialogue, learning and world class training.
- e) To establish chapters throughout Africa and other continents" (Celebration Newsletter: June 2003).

Some of the ethical values that guide Victory Business Forum are:

"Ethical Business Practices—living biblical standards in all business cycles ... Personal integrity, keeping promises and maintaining the priorities of family and church in the midst of business pursuits ... Submission, surrendering our business lives and resources to the authority of Jesus Christ and a local church, while advancing the Kingdom of God on earth" (Celebration Newsletter: June 2003).

## 5.2. The Gospel Message and Good Health

The TWRRM have made a mark in the African Church scene through preaching a message that promises solutions to people's immediate challenges and needs such as the fear of evil spirits, demon-possession and sickness. The charismatic preachers of the TWRRM often exude confidence and claim to have power to deal with issues and powers of the evil world and its systems in an uncompromising manner. These movements argue that theirs is a message that seeks to reclaim the ancient Biblical traditions of healing and protection from evil as demonstrated in the Gospels and the Early Church traditions (The Acts of the Apostles). In the Zimbabwean context, these preachers are most

often local people who have first-hand knowledge of the circumstances of life from a cultural and traditional perspective hence their ‘full gospel’ is readily accepted by ordinary people. The claims to possess healing and restorative power over the demonic world and all forms of sickness becomes the most attractive agent for membership. In his lecture; The Pentecostal Gospel and Third World Cultures, A. H. Anderson observes that:

“All the widely differing NRRM have important common features: they proclaim and celebrate a salvation (or “healing”) that encompasses all of life’s experiences and afflictions, and they offer an empowerment which provides a sense of dignity and a coping mechanism for life, and all this drives their messengers forward into a unique mission” (Anderson 1999:6).

The emphasis on faith healing and protection from evil forces are among the most prominent features of the TWRM’s gospel and are probably the most important part of their mission and growth. This belief fits very well in the African worldview where the reality of the problems of disease and evil affect the whole community and are not merely a concerned individual’s private matter. Anderson observes that the African charismatic movements provide a setting in which the “African conviction that spirituality and healing belong together is dramatically enacted” (Anderson 1999:6). This fundamental aspect of TWC rhymes very smoothly with the African indigenous communities’ health-orientated values within their cosmological beliefs systems which are characterised by healing rituals and protective rites of passages. In a very dynamic way, it would seem that the TWRM have responded to the spiritual void which resulted from the pro-scientific thrust of a Euro-American

Christianity which condemned the spiritual and cultural values of the Africans as unacceptable demonic and devilish trends. Thus, the TWRRM have gone “a long way towards meeting the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of people in the Third World, offering solutions to life's problems and ways to cope in a threatening and hostile world” (Anderson & Tumelo 1993:32).

The theology of the TWRRM rhymes very well with the cultural and traditional expectations when it comes to issues of life and death, sickness and pain. In the same article, *The Pentecostal Gospel and Third World Cultures*, A. H. Anderson observes that the worship culture locates itself very well within the worldview of the indigenous cultures resulting in ritual actions of healing that are contextual and relevant to the African worldview (Anderson 1999:2). The context of worship is characterised by spiritual freedom that readily incarnates the traditional worship in a local cultural context. The vibrancy of worship, coupled with a contextualised and indigenised ritual action has made the NRRM the new face of African Christianity. During the worship session(s), the preacher makes claims that the sick will be healed and the demon possessed set free. Those who are sick and troubled are invited to come and receive ‘their healing’. The charismatic prophet boldly declares that ‘God’s children are free from pain and disease.

The amazing thing about too much emphasis on the fact that God does not want to see people suffer from any disease is that such a theology sees all

diseases or illnesses as a result of one's sin. There is no recalling of Jesus' message that the blind man was in that condition so that the glory of God can be seen (John 9:1-4). That our human conditions are also a result of social evil is totally unknown in the mind theology of the TWRRM. In the theology of the TWRRM, individuals have a choice for health or for pain through their personal individual actions. The choice for freedom is the exercise of faith which conquers all forms of pain and disease.

The thinking or belief that sickness has nothing to do with deteriorating health systems, poor performance of African economies to enable people to easily access cash to improve their welfare is too naïve and both unbiblical and unchristian. The teachings on faith healing are noble and plausible when properly directed, but such a notion should not imply that all sicknesses/illnesses are a result of a spiritual condition or problem. It is utterly unbiblical to imply that God has decreed the miseries of the poor because of their belief systems or lack of it. The gospel of Jesus Christ knows no God who stands to curse and punish but rather a God who loves and cares for all and invites them to his kingdom where there is plenty and peace (Matt 11:28ff). Any assumption that one has to see all forms of illness as God's judgment on the individual and World has no Christian basis at all. The Bible is very clear that God never created evil and illness; rather he created "everything good and beautiful" (Gen 1:31).

Poverty and illness must, in the proper Christian context, be seen as a result of structural sin and not God's act of punishing his good creation. The positive teaching about the gospel of health is its ability to denounce bad practices and system that are likely to result in ill-health. In this context, an anti-smoking and alcohol abuse campaign can be credit to the gospel of good-health campaign. This deduction is informed by the fact that substance-abuse and alcoholism causes very clear health hazards. What probably remains a challenge from the context of the gospel of health is the lack of a properly structured health programme besides the mere condemnation of certain social practices and behaviour which is also informed by particular cultural and sociological circumstances.

The glaring danger of the theology of the TRRM is the element of selectivity! The TWRRM preachers are extremely selective in their preaching and theology. There are certain themes that have been used as the 'end and not means to an end'. The selective approach to the Biblical teachings results in a subjective teaching. A subjective theology is not necessarily a correct theology. Put in scale, a subjective theology may ultimately be wrong theology. Sadly, a wrong theology ... "necessarily ends up with a wrong concept of salvation" (Kaito 1985:15). When faced by the gospel of health, the question to be asked is:

"Would humanity's problems be solved after the alleviation of physical suffering and material deprivation? Is putting clothes on man's back and food in his stomach the way to solve man's basic problems" (Kaito 1985:15-16)?

The historical events clearly dispel the idea that the solutions to the problems of humanity can be found through mere enjoyment of good health and wealth. Humanity's root problem is beyond materialism. A genuine Christian faith must help humanity to deal with issues of "utter discontentment and the emptiness prevalent in the industrialized societies because 'man's life does not consist in what he has' ..." (Kaito 1985:16).

The gospel of health must be measured in the light of Jesus' ministry. The actions and deeds of Jesus are critical for our appreciation of the full trust and nature of the nature of the gospel and its liberating thrust. We know that after an exhaustive ministry to the sick, teaching and healing them of every disease:

"Jesus did not cry for more healthy officers and social workers. Rather, 'he felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. ... In a similar vein the Lord wept for the cities socially and economically well cared for, but still spiritually deprived (The events as noted in Matthew 9:36-38 & 11:20-21 are Jesus' responses to such a scaring experience of man's condition)" (Kaito 1985:16-17).

Jesus' answer was a simple but effective invitation: "Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Indeed these affluent citizens of Jerusalem broke the heart of the Saviour because of their spiritual degradation in the context of their enjoyment of health and wealth (Luke 19:41). Even though these people were economically blessed and had no need to worry about tomorrow since their future seemed secure; sadly the same people lived in 'perpetual bondage' hence Jesus declared to them: "So if



the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). This is the thrust that tends to be missing in the prophetic message of the NRRM

What becomes a possibility with the preaching that is solely based on healing and miracles is the likelihood that such a gospel never introduces the Christian faith to a penitent and spiritually hungry heart that responds to Jesus’ exhortation “The time has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15) rather the gospel of prosperity tends to promote the idea of incidental benefits (materialism) more than faith and belief in Jesus who is Lord and Saviour. This results in an unstable membership because “entrance into the Pentecostal community came through a holistic set of transformations that delivered personal security and the opportunity of becoming more modern” (Maxwell 2006:185) than real conversion into the Christian Faith. It has to be noted that Jesus the Christ never went around asking for the sick to be brought to Him; rather, many became his followers after experiencing a personal relationship with him (Luke 8:40 – 56). Jesus never went around calling upon the sick and demon possessed to come to him for healing though he healed them in the process of his holistic ministry. When those who needed healing came to him, Jesus simply told them to have faith in God who alone is the healer and sustainer of life hence his statements: “ ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ ... ‘Rise and walk” (Luke 5:23).

In terms of the relationship between the seen and unseen, the TWRRM are very clear in their belief that the physical and spiritual realms are complimentary in nature and are to be viewed as an inseparable reality. Such a doctrine promotes a positive view of the body and the spirit. In this perspective, there is, seemingly, a relationship with how Jesus the Christ interacted with those afflicted by pain and disease in Palestine. An example of this relationship can be demonstrated by the events around Jesus' healing of the boy afflicted by epilepsy. Jesus began by rebuking the devil before he went on to heal the child (Luke 9:37 – 43). Jesus did not just think of the physical symptoms in healing the boy, he went on to identify the spiritual source and dealt with it because the spiritual and material are integrated entities of life.

From the context of the over-emphasis on selected themes of the gospel; it can be argued that the gospel of health's theological justification has, however, been over-exaggerated to such an extent that it seems as if the pastor carries healing in his own hands. Many a time in the process of testifying, the pastor is likened to a medical doctor i.e. "I visit the hospital with a conviction that I too belong there; I could wear my Geneva gown in an effort to compete with the doctor's white coat" (Lynch 2010:8). In the believer's perception, the pastor's prescription is actually superior to the medical doctor's because his word is an instruction from the divine power. However, such a literal perception of faith healing does not help those who are diagnosed with terminal illnesses because the reality of death is certain even though no one knows the day or hour of

such eventuality. From such a fundamental perspective, it may not be proper to declare that a believer must claim his health because ‘God has granted that his children will enjoy good health’. In the event that one comes forth to claim his or her healing and nothing happens then a crisis emerges; who has failed who? Has the person who has voluntarily stepped forward to claim what the prophet has declared to be his or her rightful gift failed or it is the bestower of such healing who has failed? Since the Bible is clear that God never fails, therefore the prophetic declarations may not have been honest after all.

In my further discussion of the gospel of health movement, I will contextualise it to the Zimbabwean situation with prophet Makandiwa’s UFIM as my main concern as to how the TWRRM has advanced the gospel of health as the *sine qua non* of salvation. In its healing ministry the UFIM sees good health as one of the most fundamental gifts that a Christian receives from God. There is, however, no attempt to promote quality in the current existing Health Centres for the benefit of the communities. The movement itself is seen as the centre of healing and restoration hence there is a salient belief that there is no need for medical institutions and medical aid schemes. Faith acts as the best medical cover while the heroic prophetic figure acts as the best medical doctor available. Those afflicted by sickness and disease must come and kneel before the prophet for miraculous healing which pours out of the hands of the ‘holy man’. Out of the perception of the prophetic power and the prophet’s ability to work miracles, the movement acts both as a spiritual centre and medical

centre. The prophet healer claims that such practices learn from Jesus' healing ministry which was part of Jesus' preaching of the gospel message.

As a way of encouraging the believers to have the right attitude towards the promises of God, the healer (healer in this context) declares the promises of God and the prospect for a new life, a disease free life, a life full of joy and good-health. Believers are told that as they step forward in faith they will soon be kings and queens in the new order. Miracles are then declared to be confirmation of this new life; a new beginning that will alter the paradigm of life. From this point forth worship becomes a stage for miracle working – a plethora of miracles are claimed one after the other to the excitement of the audience. For a while, during the miracle service, the movement becomes a hospital ward where all sorts of diseases and illnesses are declared healed or conquered by the power of faith as the prophetic figure jumps up and down in a state of frenzy.

During the act of worship, what is clearly visible are African traditional characteristics of worship which centre around a kind of “oral liturgy, narrative theology and witness, reconciliatory and participant community, the inclusion of visions and dreams in worship, and understanding the relationship between the body and the mind revealed in healing by prayer and liturgical dance” (Anderson & Hollenweger 1999:16). These features are predominantly cultural in nature hence they are attractive to the African worshipper as they portray

Christianity as an African friendly religion. This form of worship fundamentally departs from traditional western founded denominational worship. The worship drama becomes predominantly culturally sensitive and spiritually enriching to the African worshipper. The worshippers exude a sense of belonging as they shout the ululations and Hallelujahs. The prophet is exalted by emotional means and proclamations which elevates him to the status of a cultic hero. For Hollenweger, the debate about the choice of phrases that best describe the prophet/healer “is not an historical but a theological one” and this worship environment creates “a congregation where everybody is a potential contributor to the liturgy” (Hollenweger 1997:23).

The healing sessions of the TWRRM project an oral missionary movement, with spiritual power to overcome demonic powers, disease and sin. Hollenweger elaborates on this context of liturgy, worship and healing in the charismatic traditions by pointing out that spontaneity and enthusiasm, rather than leading to an absence of liturgy, produce flexible oral liturgies memorised by the audience in an ecstatic frenzy. The most fundamental aspect of this liturgy is the active participation of every member in the congregation (Hollenweger, 1997:269-271). From a socio-political dimension, the NRRM’s liturgy projects very clear implications of a socially friendly and revolutionary active theology which empowers the recipients of the gospel message rather than projecting a cultural identity of the 19<sup>th</sup> century western missionary. The worship environment takes as acceptable what ordinary people have in the worship of

God and thus overcomes “the real barriers of race, social status, and education” (Hollenweger 1997:274-275).

The worship and healing context is truly dynamic and flexible (as the spirit leads) and exhibits a translational model of worship which clearly translates “the Protestant message into the forms of expression of the local popular culture” (Anderson & Hollenweger 1999:27). In his book; *Fire From Heaven*, Harvey Cox observes that the great strength of the charismatic worship lies in “its power to combine, its aptitude for the language, the music, the cultural artefacts, the religious tropes ... of the setting in which it lives” (Harvey Cox 1996:259). This worship context is quite different from the common mission ethos in the older Protestant and Pentecostal churches which tend reflect western contexts and traditions in their liturgies, theologies and patterns of worship structures. This African friendly worship and liturgy becomes the foundation of the growing African spirituality and zeal for God, power and healing as the worship service progresses.

Analysing the TWRRM’s worship and healing context from a theological perspective reveals that faith increases when people are confident and are able to locate themselves in a friendly environment as they worship God. This deduction confirms the fact that within the theologies of the western missionary founded churches there has always been a mentality that this type of Christianity was a ‘foreign religion’ hence worship was a ‘Sunday thing’ and

people never felt attached to the religion on a daily basis. In contrast, the NRRM's emphasis on immediate personal experience of God's power and the wonders of miracles as signs and confirmation was more "intuitive and emotional, and it recognized charismatic leadership and indigenous church patterns wherever they arose" (Anderson 1999:2). The healing service is centred on the message (sermon) that promises solutions for practical and present felt needs like sickness and the fear of evil spirits (a common tragedy in the African worldview which threatens both individuals and social-harmony).

The miracle working prophets are revered and their message is readily accepted by ordinary people because it rotates around the common worldview and its challenges. Worshippers quickly ready themselves for a new wave of religious experience in fear and trembling. In this context, both the religious zeal and the indigenous cultural expectations are met in the realm of the divine revelation and at work in the lives of the masses. The healing context is based on the spiritual freedom of pneumatology that emphasises its ability to "incarnate" the gospel in local cultural forms. Such an environment becomes spiritually rich with high expectations for some form of wonder and signs as the believers claim their rights and portion of blessings in ways that reflect high convictions and expectations.

As the healing service progresses, the environment is characterised by ululations and cries of joy in ecstatic mood. As the miracles are delivered one

after the other, the whole context turns into a hilarious house characterised by loud noises of excitement and confession. There is almost dead silence with regard to singing of worship songs or voices of prayer. A stranger from the older Pentecostal churches would never take the healing session for Christian worship unless he or she was part of the beginning of the 'Day of Worship'. This particular type of healing session is unique to the TWRRM. It clearly sets it apart from the pre-modial norms of worship and healing that have characterised the history of Christendom in its two thousand year history. The actions of the prophet (healer in this context) can easily be interpreted as that of the "*Sangoma*" (a traditional healer in the Zulu culture). The prophet maintains a particular unique catch-word: 'Receive your gifts of the Spirit'. Such declarations are acts of faith which are meant to transform pre-existing fears which still retain a strong grip on the cultural subconscious of the worshippers. The catch-word is also meant to empower people to believe in the transforming power of the spirit.

The healing context of the TWRRM is characterised by elements of religious innovations through "the tenuousness of relations between religion and social integration ... since a change in religious ideas does not necessarily threaten the established social order" (Robin Horton 1971:86). In this context, the worship environment becomes a platform of high expectations for the worshipper who wishes and prays that the divine must address his/her fears and worries through divine explanations, predictions and control of space and



time events. In this particular context, the prophet tends to through self at the centre grappling with the intellectual challenges of a fast changing social order in the context suppressed traditional and cultural fears. Instead of worship following the western trends of intellectual theological analysis and applications, the TWRRM's worship is centred on a cultural *locus mundi*. The patterns of worship revitalise African spirituality thereby making the worship service an attractive platform for experiencing the divine power of God. The worship context clearly offers benefits for healing, renewal and restoration as there is emphasis on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, purporting to offer more than the Western Christianity and traditional religions do.

The TWRRM has changed the face of Christianity in Zimbabwe through its worship thrust and style simply because they argue that they proclaim “a holistic gospel of salvation that includes deliverance from all types of oppression like sickness, sorcery, evil spirits and poverty” (Anderson 1999:5). The movement argues that it has met the needs of Africans more fundamentally than the rather intellectualised traditional denominations which have been criticized as a legacy of European and North American civilization and culture. The value of the gospel message in the preaching of the TWRRM is its interest in the well-being of the worshipper; it views the worshipper as a child in need of redemption ‘here and now’. The interest of the service, therefore, is to bestow life and health in the children of God in a practical way that will enable the believers to know that God loves them hence the

declaration that: 'God wants meet all your needs including your spiritual salvation, physical healing, and other material needs today'. The reception of these gifts results in spiritual security and personal commitment to the cultic leader who is seen to provide protection from the evil powers and sickness.

The TWRRM has becomes a necessary and relevant church since it is culturally and socially friendly in dealing with the humanity's fragility, fears and reality of the people in the wider social and cultural experiences. The movement is both a hospital and a reserve bank of some-sort. The belief that the Church is a healing pool proves why the TWRRM in Zimbabwe is not keen on promoting or even building health centres. Their interest is to make everyone spiritually strong so that they cannot be easily attacked by illnesses and diseases.

The reality of disease and pain cannot be simply wished away in the African continent. Any religious institution that pretends not to see the need to address these social ills and evils will not help itself to grow within the African communities because the urgent need for eternal-life and good health goes hand in glove. In the context of the western missionary founded churches, the institution of the Church was always partnered with a hospital so that the gospel and healing were never separate entities in the proclamation of the Church. In this regard, the TWRRM has made healing and protection from evil among the most prized features of their gospel and probably the most important part of their mission. In the theology of the TWRRM, the problems of

disease and evil affect the whole community and are not simply a private domain relegated to individual pastoral care hence the need for a worship service to be a healing service. While emphasising the centrality of healing within the TWRRM, Harvey Cox observes that African charismatics “provide a setting in which the African conviction that spirituality and healing belong together is dramatically enacted” (Cox 1996:247).

Worship in the TWRRM is, to a large extent, health-orientated in respect of people’s traditional and cultural rituals for healing and protection. What the NRRM have achieved is the need to deal with the fears and needs of the worshipper in ways that will enhance his/her faith in the divine. Anderson observes that the TWRRM have “responded to what they experienced as a void left by a rationalistic western form of Christianity which had unwittingly initiated what was tantamount to the destruction of indigenous spiritual values” (Anderson 1999:6). Despite the challenges associated with too much focus on the physical health aspect of the believer, the gospel of health resonates very well with some ancient Biblical traditions of healing and protection from evil and demonstrates the practical effects of these traditions. In a way, the TWRRM goes a long way “toward meeting the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of people in the Third World, offering solutions to life's problems and ways to cope in a threatening and hostile world” (Anderson & Otwang, Tumelo 1993:32). What may be necessary is the need for a balanced Canon in terms of the wholeness of the gospel message.

In Zimbabwe today, over 70% of the country's 13.4million people have no formal employment and cannot access health care because they have no basic income. Of 70% of the unemployed masses that cannot access health care, over 3million live in urban or at least semi-urban centres where the TWRRM thrive. These are the people who flood to the TWRRM hoping to experience some divine miraculous power that will enable them to get rich over-night. Such an audience tends listen to the prophetic charismatic leaders with zeal hoping for a miracle that will turn around their lives. There is very little focus on the need for God in their lives but the hope of a fairer life in the context of their existential fears. An unpublished article by Bothwell Sibanda, a student at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) observed a clear case of the depth of gullibility of such an audience in the context of the health gospel:

- Over 1.2 million Zimbabweans go to the NRRM in search for health and wealth and when things don't go according to their expectations these seekers tend to return to their traditional church denominations.
- More than 45% of Zimbabwe's Christians from the older protestant churches visit the TWRRM at least once in a while in search for material benefits which include miraculous healing in the context of the varied health challenges amidst a dysfunctional health sector which only benefits those who are financially healthy.
- In Zimbabwe, 67% of the population believes in miracles and/or divine intervention in the context of extreme poverty and poverty induced diseases. (Sibanda, Unpublished Paper: October 2012).

The relationship of the above given statistics to this research is to demonstrate how the fear of destitution and death ultimately lead people to search for means of survival in the charismatic prophetic movements. Good health is a

need in the context of survival as people need energy to exist and try to make ends meet. It is amazing how charismatic Christianity has manipulated these social challenges to advance its ideology (theology) amongst the poor thereby becoming the highest and fastest growing religion in the Zimbabwean Church scene and yet its central theme of prosperity and health seem not to bring relief for millions of disease and hunger-stricken Zimbabweans. Is this a case of lack of faith or is there something seriously wrong with the gospel of health and prosperity? Analysing the gospel of health and prosperity from a scientific perspective will show that not more than 10% of its adherents have actually experienced miraculous healing and prosperity. The other 90% live in hope that one day their time will come. Currently 90% live in anticipation while the charismatic preacher/prophet continues to encourage them to pray harder and exercise more faith for them to receive their healing.

Those who live with HIV/AIDS are told that the good God does not want them to suffer hence the need for them to claim their healing by faith since 'nothing is impossible with God'. What is also a pleasant surprise is the understanding (or lack of it) of HIV and AIDS. The charismatic prophets tend to view HIV and AIDS as a curse that is directed to those whose moral conduct is bad. The theology of the NRRM tends to stigmatise people living with HIV and AIDS while also declaring that God is able to heal them if they act in faith and in the fear of the 'Living God'. In their preaching these charismatic preachers also declare that HIV and AIDS is a sign of the end of times hence the need for all believers

to mind their moral conduct and never to associate with the ‘sinners’. On many occasions it has been claimed that certain individuals have been miraculously cured of HIV without any scientific proof. Sadly all these claims have lured many people to these movements with the hope their health problems will soon be a thing of the past. Many people who have chronic illnesses have also been made to throw away their medication resulting in unnecessary fatalities. My own mother-in-law’s sister who was diabetic was a casualty of the NRRM’s health gospel after she stopped taking her diabetic medication believing that she was healed of this disease. Sadly, after three weeks, my mother-in-law’s sister’s condition suddenly deteriorated and within two days she passed away. Such a death is quickly interpreted as lack of genuine faith by the miracle worker. This is a true account not a story I picked from the street. The case of my mother-in-law’s sister is a single example of the negative consequences of the health gospel.

In my observation, the gospel of health has a fundamental weakness because the preacher comes across many disease stricken people week after week; whose need for healing is obvious and most of these people spend long hours in prayer and meditation pleading with the divine powers for healing and yet their condition never changes. One then wonders why the man of God who has the king Midas’ touch will not willingly and lovingly extend his mercies to these helpless people. Most of these disease stricken people come to these movements week in and week out in search for healing and spend big sums of

money ‘seeding so that they can be rewarded for no result’. The crowds that attend worship service in the TWRRM live in constant fear of death and their presence in these movements is not a case of faith as such; but rather it is an attempt to find solace in the promises of healing, renewal and restoration. This is a case of hope in the context of their daily fears and not faith experience.

Since there is no practical sign that healing is actually experienced by those who need it, one wonders whether the health gospel is genuine and Christian in scope. A long time attendee of the UFIC commented:

“In our church people don’t just get ill because they are protected by the prophetic oracles that the man of God declares for the good of the membership. All the evil forces that cause sickness and pain are repelled by the prophet’s declarations before they can even attack a true believer. So those who are always ill are not genuine and they get what they deserve for not believing in the prophet’s oracles” (Shumba, Interview: 13/09/12).

What this implies is that believers cannot get ill or must never fall sick! From my basic reading and understanding of the Bible, this perspective is unbiblical, naïve and too shallow for mature religion. It is not theologically sound to argue that religion provides protection against all evil forces and illnesses because it is a signature of God’s approval and love. What is theologically correct is that religion brings human-beings closer to God and enables them to live a purpose driven live in the context of the varied challenges of life.

The health gospel as proclaimed by prophet Makandiwa of the UFIC does not seem to entertain the problems associated with natural evil which causes untold suffering to many innocent people. Natural evil is visible through natural disasters such as cyclones, earth-quakes and other forms of natural disasters. Because of the lack of appreciation of the fact that natural evil results in many getting injured while others die, the perspectives of the health gospel result in an unhealthy understanding of disease, illness and pain. Since disease, illness and pain is viewed as a sign of lack of faith there is no teaching or preaching that promotes involvement in social services and social work. Social work is left for the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) while the movement occupies itself with preaching warning people about the consequences of sin and all wrong acts which result in multiple curses which can only be healed through faith in the prophetic oracles (seemingly, not faith in God).

The most important aspect of the gospel of health is that it has a tendency to employ an intellectual and spiritual quality of life. In its intellectual focus believers are encouraged to be sensible and to eat healthy food because the children of a good God cannot be seen to be living a poor man's life. As a way of helping Christians to enjoy a healthy life-style, believers are encouraged to engage in godly business enterprises and avoid spending their God given money of unhelpful things that can easily destroy one's physical and spiritual well-being. Such a focus on good health promotes wealth among the privileged



few while it leaves the unfortunate ones frantically praying and believing that their chance will soon come so that they too can claim their blessings. The reality, however, is that this right time never comes for many followers of the movement. And the answer to the unfortunate ones is that they will not have believed enough because God never fails those who believe in him.

In my understanding of Christianity, I believe that genuine Christians or believers understand that God's time and man's time are not always synonymous and many a time God's plans and purpose for humankind may never be understood. The poetic story of Job as recorded in the Book of Job narrates how an innocent and faithful man called Job suffered without having committed any sin; the story serves as a lesson of how God is at work in the lives of God's children in the midst of many challenges that they experience in the world of real things. The lesson shows the believer that a God-fearing person will not always have things flowing smoothly; there are enemies of righteous who will attack from all angles of life but the faithful children of God will never give up their faith just as Job never failed in the midst of pain in his body and torture across his family. From the lesson of Job, condemning illness as a result of one's sin may not be the right thing to do.

The Biblical lesson from the story of Job is meant to teach believers that ill-health is a challenge and reality to the nature of humanity – characterised by fragility; a sign of the temporary nature of the body (the flesh). Falling ill or sick

is a clear sign of humanity's finitude. The healing of all aspects of ill-health lies in God's hand of glory manifest in both the medical fraternity and the religious institutions and not in the proclamations of a mere mortal being. A believer may pray for healing but the answer will not come at his/her bidding. Everything is dependent on God's grace. Paul speaks of an illness that God allowed in his body as a way to show him that he was mortal (11 Corinthians 12: 7 – 9). From the Apostle Paul's experience of pain and disease there is a need for the wider Church to preach the correct message about the grace of God being sufficient to a believer in the context of some health challenges: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (11 Corinthians 12: 9) hence the need for a re-thinking of the health gospel's understanding of healing and godliness.

### 5.3 The Biblical Doctrine of Salvation

Across many generations, Christians have always affirmed the power of God to heal and to restore life as part of Christ's salvific work. Never has there been a period of history during which the Church has neglected its healing ministry. In essence, the healing ministry of the Church has been understood to be central to salvation history. The preaching of the historical Jesus and the Jesus of faith alike have always emphasised the fact that God is the Healer and that God's healing hand is stretched out to all. The emphasis on salvation as

the beginning of a Christian life is central to the preaching of the gospel and central to the concept of conversion and repentance.

Christianity has been understood to be life, hence the declarations made by Jesus: “--- I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). As a life promoting religion, Christianity promotes quality life and seeks to give this life to all ‘who believe’. But the way through which the principle of ‘giving life’, ‘promoting life’ and ‘enabling believers to enjoy abundant life’ has been understood tends to create ruptures within the corridors of Christianity leading to varied perspectives on the meaning of salvation. The varied interpretations which have been advanced by different denominations have also tended to threaten the concept of salvation as proclaimed by the Christian Church in its two thousand years of existence. As I seek to appreciate the meaning of the gospel of prosperity and good health, it also becomes fundamental to measure the prosperity and health gospel in the context of the meaning of salvation from the origins and roots of the Christian Church.

The Christian Church has always argued that God has provided the solution to getting rid of the barrier between God and mankind. This solution is in making a decision to turn away from sin and evil while on the other hand receiving God’s forgiveness by accepting God’s one and only Son, Jesus Christ, as the sacrificial offering for the redemption of sin. A general perusal and study of the Bible confirms this belief hence salvation has been defined as:

“Deliverance by God from almost any kind of evil, whether temporal and material or spiritual – defeat in battle (Exod. 15:2), trouble (Ps. 34:6), enemies (2 Sam. 3:10), exile (Ps. 106:47), death (Ps. 6:4), sin (Ezek. 36:29).” In ancient Israel, salvation was understood to imply deliverance in a material sense and as a national thing (Douglas 1978:874).

The word Salvation comes from the Greek word *Soteria* denoting “Deliverance; Safety; Preservation; Healing; Soundness. Soundness means whole, complete, entire- lacking nothing that properly belongs to it” ([www.salvation.com](http://www.salvation.com): accessed 22/05/2013). Gradually, the concept of salvation embraced an ethical and moral meaning. During the exilic period, there developed the concept of the messianic era and during this period salvation came to be understood as “deliverance from sin” (Douglas, 874). In this context salvation was also understood to mean “deliverance from some physical danger or distress” (Martin 1964:722). The social conditions of the Jewish people while in exile were characterised by pain, disease, guilt, sin, death, alienation from God necessitating the need for salvation which could not be attained through their own “unaided efforts .... Not through their intellectual, economic, political, social or psychological skills and techniques” (Martin, 722). . From a Jewish perspective “salvation was acquired through a sincere observance of the law, moral and ceremonial” (Douglas 1978:874). During this period, the Law of Moses helped the Israelites to be convicted of their sinfulness thereby “demonstrating the impossibility of salvation apart from the grace of God” (Martin 1964:722)

From Jesus' proclamations, salvation clearly "denotes deliverance from sin, to be experienced now, although its complete fulfilment is eschatological. He taught that salvation is only through, the incarnate Son of God (John 3:16)" (Douglas 1978:874). The climax of salvation history is Jesus Christ's death on the cross. By and through Christ's death on the cross the whole history of humanity is brought before God in Christ's words: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they are doing" (Luke 23:24). This understanding of salvation justifies the assertion that; Jesus Christ came to earth in order to confirm that He was the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world and also to set the perfect example for humanity to follow in His footsteps. Therefore "salvation is a free gift of God granted to lost and undeserving men who trust in the righteousness of Christ and humble themselves in submission to his will" (Martin 1964:722).

What is clear is that during the Apostolic Age the Church understood salvation to be mediated:

"through the death of Christ (Eph. 2:13 – 18) and includes all the redemptive blessings which believers have in Christ, chief of which are conversion, regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification and glorification ... (Salvation brings forth) deliverance not only from the guilt of sin, but also from its power, and ultimately from its presence ... (Salvation is) ... provided through Christ's suffering, death and resurrection ... becomes realizable in experience through the Holy Spirit, on the condition of faith" (Douglas 1978:875).

Theologically, salvation implies “moral, spiritual and physical deliverance which transcends the realm of ordinary human experience” (Martin, 1964:722). Theologians argue that salvation is a condition of man’s total surrender of self and will to God. Salvation, therefore, is man’s absolute submission to God and his total dependence on God’s grace. It is “the act, process or result of deliverance or preservation from danger, bondage, disease, or sin” (Martin 1964:722). The Christian Church has always understood salvation to be God’s solution to the problem of sin because it brings about “deliverance not only from the guilty of sin, but also from its power, and ultimately from its presence ... through Christ’s suffering, death and resurrection and becomes realisable in experience through the Holy Spirit on the condition of faith” (Douglas 1978:875). The reality of sin has separated people from God but salvation restores them back to God. The effects of salvation are directed towards the perfection of God’s creation, the total restoration of good to a hurting and bleeding soul; hence St. Paul says that through salvation the power of sin and the face of evil “will be removed from nature, and all history will find its consummation and completion in Christ (Rom 8:21 – 22)” (Douglas, 875). What God does through salvation is “the complete destruction of evil by the forces of good, the regeneration of heaven and earth, and eternal life ...” (Martin 1964:723).

For one to experience God’s salvific work he or she needs to “realize the need for God's help and make room in one’s heart for God” ([www.salvation.com](http://www.salvation.com)):

accessed 22/05/2013). This results in the need to state the conditions of salvation which are:

- a) Repentance: Repentance is the critical condition for salvation. To repent is to turn away from one's ways; one's evil thoughts and bad character and come to God in humble contrition. Repentance is about a complete change, a turnaround; it is partaking a new life in Jesus Christ (Matt 3:2 and Acts 2:38).
- b) Belief: To believe in God is to put one's faith and trust in God and never to depend on one's own wisdom and/or skills and actions. The gospel of John states that whosoever believes in God is saved (John 3:16). There is no one shut outside; God wants everyone to be saved. But one must first believe in God through Jesus the Christ. Believing results in re-birth (John 3:3). This re-birth is commonly referred to as being 'Born Again' and it means that a person has become a new person, with a new positive attitude as a result of an experience of conversion, a complete change (John 3:3).
- c) Obedience: Obeying is the act of conforming to a command of a superior being out of due respect for his authority. Obedience is a deliberate purpose to listening to God and acting according to God's demands and instructions. Those who are saved are those who turn away from their ways and obey God's will (Matt 19:17 – 19).

The NRRM regards salvation as pneumatological soteriology. The NRRM's understanding of salvation tends to be economic and materialistic to such an extent that there seems to be a total silence on the moral and spiritual dimensions of salvation which are central to the biblical understanding of salvation. The availability of food, money and enjoyment of good health cannot and will never be 'real signs' of salvation. A simple appreciation of the realities around us shows that there are many citizens who have money, good houses, enjoy good health and yet never pray and let alone go to Church – actually they argue that they are atheists! From this perspective the concept of economic success or good health can never be a perfect example of the meaning and nature of Biblical salvation. The concept of economising salvation is patronising and selective to the extent that it fails to capture the notion of the reality of sin and the work of Christ which is central to the doctrine of salvation.

From an orthodox Christian belief system, salvation is not limited to the life hereafter or some form of spiritual regeneration; rather salvation is regarded or understood "in the whole of life's problems as experienced by people in their cities and villages" (Anderson 2001:233). That salvation is the enjoyment of success and good health is a dangerous and misleading misinterpretation of the doctrine of salvation which doctrine is centred on the work of Christ in the redemptive history of humanity's alienation from God and others of his kin and kith. Salvation has to be understood in its context of deliverance which



transcends the 'realm of ordinary human experience.' Salvation is what God does to a penitent sinner who kneels under the banner of Christ's invitation and cries out; "My Lord and my God" just as Thomas did when he encountered the risen Christ (John 20:28). Salvation is not aided by humanity's "intellectual, economic, political, social or psychological skills and techniques" (Martin 1964:722) for survival; rather it is the reception of God's grace in the context of an individual's awareness of divine power at work in one's life.

In the African worldview, salvation has a broad scope hence to speak of salvation is to speak of deliverance "from evil in all its present forms, including evil spirits and sorcery, misfortune, natural disasters, diseases, poverty and socio – economic deprivation and oppression" (Anderson 2001:233). But any reference to salvation that focuses only on economic and intellectual entities while ignoring the moral and spiritual values results in the degradation of the nature and work of Christ achieved on the cross. While material success and good health must be appreciated as the fruits of the spirit it is of critical significance that the notion of salvation must never be ignored in the proclamation of celebration of the wonderful works of the spirit. Human beings must repent, experience regeneration and sanctification for them to be saved. It has been deduced theologically that "all the redemptive blessings which believers have in Christ, chief of which are conversion, regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification and glorification" (Douglas 1978:875) precede all things that a Christian must aspire for.

There is no salvation outside the full package of God's redemptive blessings which must be followed by "the complete destruction of evil by the forces of good, the regeneration of heaven and earth and eternal life" (Martin 1964:723). In the believer's heart and mind salvation must be understood as a result of a believer's actions of penitence which are complimented by God's grace to a sinner who draws near in faith. The proclamation of an economic gospel without a clear and honest call for repentance is as faulty as trying to change the fact of what Christ has done for mankind through his death on the cross. The NRRM's claims that one has to claim his blessings and healing while not emphasising the need for repentance from sin is not theologically proper because when we search the Scriptures we find that physical healing is not central to the gospel's thrust of repentance and the forgiveness of sin as recorded in Mark 1:15.

There is no doubt in my mind that God can heal any and all disease if he chooses to. But the reality is that God has not chosen to heal everybody because some people become sick and die while others become sick and get well again. Even some non-believers, who have no one praying for them are healed if it is God's will to do so. If physical healing was the central theme of atonement then every cemetery we see speaks of the failure of Christ to attain that part of salvation. If physical healing was central to the doctrine of atonement, then Paul would just command the thorn in 'the flesh' to come out (2Corinthians 12:7-9). If sickness was a sign of one's sinfulness, surely God

would not have said to Paul “my grace is made perfect in your weakness” (2Corinthian 12:9). Therefore, physical healing and economic prosperity should never be substitutes of the need for repentance and conversion.

## **Chapter six**

### **The Future of the “Third Wave” Religious Right Movement**

#### **6.1 Whither to Third Wave Christianity?**

The reality of the NRRM in the Zimbabwean Church context in particular and the African Church landscape in general has come as a serious challenge to the older Protestant Denominations’ ministry. The popularity of the prophetic oracles which characterise the ministry of the NRRM has clearly demonstrated that many ordinary Christians have certain needs and hopes which have not been met in the act of worship within the older Protestant Church denominations. The level of the roving membership from the older Protestant Church denominations to the NRRM is testimony enough that there must be something missing in their spiritual lives which motivates them to search for contentment in the NRRM. There can be no doubt that the TWC has happily provided for the needs of the many souls who flood their worship services in search of both material and spiritual values.

The fact that many ordinary Christians tend to maintain dual membership by keeping the doors open in the older Protestant denominations while they regularly attend worship services in the NRRM is indicative of the fact that there is a sense of uncertainty as to the end of the NRRM. Many roving members are not comfortable to cut off ties with their ‘mother church

denominations’ because of the uncertainty that is associated with the newer prophetic movements whose survival tends to be dependent on the charisma of the founder. The NRRM’s membership is therefore fluid and unpredictable as people come and go depending on the satisfaction of their needs or lack of it. The warning of Gamaliel provides us with very clear lessons that a movement that is driven by an individual last as long as that leader lives while a movement that is driven by a clear and godly ideology lives longer:

“But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honour by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” (Acts 5:34-39).

One of the most fundamental factors for the survival of a social movement is the existence of a solid following whose commitment to the agenda or goal of the movement is not based on the leader’s charisma but on the group objectives of the movement. Commenting on the subject of membership and its value for the continued existence of any social movement, Bishop S. M. Dube of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe observed that:

“the NRRM have no authentic membership in the proper sense of the word ‘membership’ as they simple draw their crowds from varied groups

of social malcontents, desperate job seekers, uncommitted opportunists who move from one church denomination to the other in search of social status and such other economic opportunities under the banner of Christianity” (Dube, Interview: 13/03/2013).

The lack of a solid membership base is on its own a big threat to the continued existence of any movement. In any event, the life of any living movement is dependent on the existence of the disciples who are willing to take up the cross and follow the principles and or teachings of their leader. Discipleship is clearly build on total commitment and trust to the teachings of the Teacher/Pastor. It is not based on the temporary needs and benefits of the disciple but rather on the fundamental principles of the teacher. The existence of roving membership within the fold of the NRRM seemingly points to the lack of authentic and genuine discipleship in the system. The dynamics associated with lack of consistent membership base points to the existence of lack of confidence in the movement by those who move in and out as and when it matters. Any serious social movement is built around a strong and solid membership base; this is also true of political movements whose chances of winning an election are dependent on the existence of a solid genuine membership base. The story of Jesus and his disciples is a good lesson in this regard:

“Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to

build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:25-33).

It is interesting that many of these newer modern prophetic movements tend to call themselves Inter-denominational movements. Klassen J. Michael observes that “Churches in which the prosperity is taught are often non-denominational and usually directed by a sole pastor or leader, although some have developed multi-church networks that bear similarities to denominations” (Michael 2009:133). The Inter-denominational outlook is associated with non-permanent membership. People come and go as visitors or supporters and beneficiaries of the movement. In such non-denominational movements, attendees come to give support or to look for certain benefits from the movement. As soon as the attendees feel that the goal for their presence in those movements has been met they move back to their original church denominations. Others simply attend to see if there are any prospects for positions of honour and or opportunities to grasp. Bishop S. M. Dube argues that “no one comes to the movement with the attitude ‘Here I have found a church denomination to belong to’, rather people attend for immediate and practical benefits” (Dube, Interview: 13/03/2013). Those who ultimately stay do so after they have enjoyed certain benefits or rewards for their active participation in the movement’s affairs. The benefits can either be spiritual, economical or even

physical. Lovemore Togarasei (2011:339) notes that the gospel of the NRRM has a dominion theme hence the declaration that “God has met all the needs of human beings in the suffering and death of Christ” hence every Christian should now share the victory of Christ over sin, sickness and poverty.

Elisabeth Isichei (1995:335) observes that most of these NRRM Pastors, “undoubtedly represent, to some extent, an attempt to derive a livelihood in an age of unemployment” from a gullible audience which believes that in the same movement they have found their way to economic prosperity and good health. Most of the attendees are people who are haunted by spiritual fears which are characterised by various forms of social conflicts and spiritual hostility. The fears of the ordinary attendees tend to leave many frustrated, rootless and hopeless in the context of their religious worldview. In the context of their varied degrees of spiritual vacuum, such persons move to the NRRM because they feel that they do not belong to a living organism that assist them to grow their faith in the context of their experiences of helplessness. There is a general tendency that the older Protestant Church denominations have misunderstood, betrayed, deceived, and not taken seriously the religious needs of the worshippers hence the search for healing and renewal in the NRRM (Calif 1978:96-97).

It is apparent that the growth of the NRRM is factored around the glaring spiritual void and economic vacuum which is part of a broken society with a



dysfunctional economy. In Zimbabwe, to be particular, the mushrooming of the prosperity churches boasting of their ability to address the socio-political and economic challenges in superficial and magical manner has been helped by a dysfunctional economy with unemployment hovering around 75%. A case in point is the emergence of a prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa's UFI, a charismatic movement which erupted amid Zimbabwe's darkest period of socio-political and economic collapse in 2008. In the midst of such an alarming crisis, prophet Makandiwa emerged claiming that "the poor will soon be blessed through an act of miracles and the sick healed because my God was a God of power and provider of all good things" ([www.prophetmakandiwa.com](http://www.prophetmakandiwa.com): accessed 13/06/12). The message of prophet Makandiwa found a ready audience; it caught the attention of a nation in despondence. Perhaps this goes to prove Karl Max's courageous assertion that "religion is the opium of the people" (Dudley 1978:97).

The dangers associated with the movements which are built around temporary socio-economic and political phases is that when the crisis is over and the playing field is level then that movement loses its relevance. A movement that thrives on the people's emotions does not live beyond the crisis. This is true from the varied lessons from history as is clear with the case of Nazism (Germany) and Fascism (Italy). Both movements were a product of World depression in the context of political subjugation and economic deprivation. From the Inter-Testamental period the crisis that threatened the survival of the

Jewish nation gave rise to the Maccabean revolt but the revolt did not last long because it was born out of a crisis. The post-crisis period so the restoration of the old order that was in place before the crisis.

## 6.2 Dangers and Challenges of “Third Wave” Christianity’s Economic Theology

It is critically relevant to note that the history of Christianity has unfolded in many different faces in the course of human – development and world events. The fact of this matter is amply exemplified by the varied categories associated with Christianity i.e. The Early Church, The Roman Church, The Medieval Church, The Reformation Church, The Enlightenment Church, The Modern Church, The Post-Modern Church, etc. These varied trajectories of Christianity have always manifested themselves with varied spiritual trends as well as astounding theological declarations and faith affirmations. In the context of the NRRM, there are spiritual exhilarating trends as well as theologically astounding affirmations and declarations which can either build the Church of Jesus Christ or destroy its credibility altogether. In this context, it is necessary to theologically explore the theological declarations and affirmations associated with the TWRRM as a way of arriving at a fair conclusion in regard to the authenticity of these newer Christian movements.

The followers of the NRRM will generally refuse to appreciate any form of Biblical encouragement and or instruction from any Christian who is not part

of the group regardless of the authenticity of the evidence of their testimony. If one was to locate any evidence which is Biblically sound but contradicts the declarations; vision or prophecy, which supposedly came from the man of God, that evidence would be completely ignored because the word of their prophet is seen as infallible and eternally faithful. From this view – point, the presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Zimbabwe, Right Rev. Dr. S. M. Dube, observes that “there is no greater threat to the authentic relevancy of the Christian Church’s mission in Zimbabwe today than the invasion of the new style Charismatic movement into the life – stream of Church” (Dube, Interview: 13/03/2013). Bishop Dube’s argument is informed by the varied complaints that have been made against the varied charismatic prophetic movements whose agenda seems to be that of making money through the preaching of the prosperity gospel more than the love and saving grace of God. In line with Bishop Dube’s analysis, Ken Matto also observes that:

“All one needs to do to see how evil this movement is, is to look at the TV ministries such as TBN or Inspiration Network and then listen for a few moments to the lies and false teachings being spewed with impunity. If you listen to a Charismatic preacher and compare their teachings to the Bible, you will see how subtle this movement is. According to the Bible, we are never to expect more from God than He is willing to give us. This includes health, material goods, even spiritual illumination. God gives to us according to His will. He may choose to give one believer a million dollars while another may not even be able to make it from paycheck to paycheck. He may allow one believer to have excellent health while another one may be in chronic pain for years. He may choose to grant massive material goods to one believer while another may live in a small studio apartment. No matter what the situation is, the Charismatic teachers tell you that you can have more. They build false hope and when their false prophecies do not come to pass, then people become depressed and blame God that He is not true to his word while all along they have been horribly deceived by the "Pentecostal Prognosticator." When you experience no healing or wealth, they say that you didn’t have

enough faith. The danger is that they deceive people and then blame them for their lies, and their hearers accept it ([http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charismatic\\_Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charismatic_Movement) accessed 22/04/2013)

My theological analysis informs me that it is a false and dangerous declaration to say that the thrust of Christianity is about the creation of wealth for the sect membership. My deduction is informed by Jesus Christ's proclamation which shows that the essence of Christianity is the salvation of all people; and salvation, in Jesus' mind, "denotes deliverance from sin, to be experienced now, although its complete fulfilment is eschatological. Salvation is acquired through a sincere observance of the law, moral and ceremonial" (Douglas 1978:874) and not some mere prophetic declarations made by a mere human being. The NRRM, therefore tend to promote a non-biblical concept of salvation by focusing on the material benefits of this life and ignoring the essential moral and spiritual aspect of deliverance and salvation.

In the worship setting of the NRRM, it is common to hear a Pastor introducing a sermon by declaring that: "Come let us rejoice as we worship a rich God" (Tom, Sermon: 09/11/2011). The whole sermon development argues that materialism is the core of Christian salvation. If this is authentic Christianity then one wonders why Jesus had to say: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20) while also condemning those who loved money more than life in saying: "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation" (Luke 6:24). The sayings of Jesus Christ reveal that any

teaching which purports that God wants everybody rich is fundamentally flawed because “it causes a person to keep their eyes on the physical things of the world and they never look beyond their lust for material gain. It also reeks with the works salvation plan” argues Ken Matto:

([http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charismatic Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charismatic_Movement): accessed 22/04/2013)

If, as claimed by the NRRM’s prophets/preachers, material riches are an essential part of salvation, then why are so many Christians in the same movements still struggling to make a decent living when God can richly bless them whenever they come before him in prayer? Another serious danger with the prosperity gospel is that it connotes material well – being as the essence of salvation and its adherents likely never come to experience the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the freedom from sin in their lives. The doctrine which teaches that God wants everybody rich has no biblical basis because; actually, it causes believers to keep their eyes on the physical things of the world and they never look beyond their lust for material gain. The materialistic gospel involves works initiated by man. If it were true that riches are a part of our salvation, then Christianity becomes a religion based on material benefits and humanity is not saved from the damning nature of sin and people still live in their sins.

A charismatic materialistic religion is indeed not holistic as it leaves people vulnerable to the realities of sin because their main focus is on getting material wealth and there is no concern about the moral ethical being of life. Biblically, salvation is God's solution to the problem of sin. Salvation brings "deliverance not only from the guilty of sin, but also from its power, and ultimately from its presence" (Douglas, 875) toward the total redemption from all that is worldly. The condition of salvation is simply; one has to turn away from their ways and obey God's will and follow the simple life of Jesus who is humble and meek hence the Apostle Paul says: "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus," (Philippians 2:5).

What is amiss in the TWRRM's character is that those who preach the gospel are extremely rich; proud and pompous of the material wealth. Is this true to the ethics of Jesus who spent his life calling for repentance and promotion the promotion of moral and ethical good of all creation? On the contrary, many prophets/preachers of the TWC have become richer than their movements as observed by Ken Matto:

"They get a six figure salary and drive around in a Mercedes and the ones in the pews can hardly make it financially and drive a 10 year old car. How does this great inequity of finances equate to the teaching that God wants everybody wealthy and healthy? The only ones getting wealthy are the pastors and TV evangelists while the pew warmers sit there and give their last amount of money for the pastor's next Mercedes or summer home? Sounds to me like the only one getting financially blessed is the pastor and you have been his chump for 20 years. He has a million dollar home and you have a small apartment. He has a Mercedes and you have a 10 year old car"  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charismatic\\_Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charismatic_Movement):  
accessed 22/04/2013

One then wonders: Where are the blessings for the poor person in the pew? The prophet proudly claims and brags of how God has blessed him/her while the pewees help the same prophet to celebrate the newly found material status. Most of the oracles prophesied are about a wave of economic prosperity based on one's faithful seeding to the ministry. There is no interest in the moral and ethical conduct of believers. From a critical perspective, it looks like the theology of prosperity only benefits the pastor and the rest are conditioned to believe that their chance will come at the right time (they just have to keep the faith). From a theological and sociological perspective, every serious Christian must think about the long – term effects of this teaching in the life and work of the Christian Church.

Another dangerous premise of the NRRM is that it is centred on doomsday theology. The leaders of this movement are always eager to proclaim the 'Judgment Day'. In Zimbabwe, the prophet, Emmanuel Makandiwa's Judgment night brought fear and despondency to many people hence thousands flocked to his crusade in search for spiritual protection ([www.prophetmakandiwa.com](http://www.prophetmakandiwa.com): accessed 15/02/2013). The declaration of the 'Judgment Day' by Makandiwa also attracted particular attention linked to the political situation in Zimbabwe. Such prophetic declarations have the ability to portray an immediate end and the unfolding of a new era hence they bring about enormous tension and anticipation, fear and not faith to many people. What is of particular interest is

that such prophetic declarations have never been linked with the apostasy of the Church as the key to end time prophecy but rather they are based on political and economic realities.

My understanding of these prophetic movements is that they are subtle and tend to declare empty promises which are meant to keep the critical masses on the right mood for giving or seeding. Isichei (1995:335) observes that “the Gospel of Prosperity teaches that God intends his followers to prosper, and that the way to riches is by giving (more specifically, seeding) to the pastor”. In this context, it is clear that the so – called prophesies are conditioned and well thought statements which are meant to keep the ‘faith alive’ and dispel the fears of the followers of the movement. The Media Ministries is used “to push a palatable gospel so the money continues to flow in”

([http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charismatic Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charismatic_Movement): accessed 22/04/2013).

But what does the prosperity discourse of these movements have to do with the image and integrity of the Christian Church today? It is very clear that the Christian Church has been and is being torn apart by the theology of the NRRM. There is not one Church Denomination which has not been affected by the teachings of this movement. The theology of the NRRM has drawn many ordinary Christians into conflict with the clergy. Many ordinary people in the traditional churches feel that their Church denominations have not been



helpful in preaching about things that matter (wealth and health). Others have taken it upon themselves to openly challenge the denominational polity and to preach the charismatic ideology openly. This has resulted in battle – lines being drawn and swords pulled out either in defence of traditional Christianity or support of charismatic Christianity. One is forced to ask a question: What then is the result of this confusion in the preaching of the Kingdom of God? The answer is obvious; the works and schemes of the devil are the obvious winners while the ordinary persons are confused.

The miracle crusades associated with the healing ministry of the prophet is another fundamental centre of the NRRM which also tends to create an idol out of the prophetic figure. The prophetic claims to perform wonderful miracles make an ordinary Christian feel that the prophet/healer is a true incarnation of Jesus Christ on earth. It is claimed that the prophet of God has power to deliver healing because he is the true child of God. Texts like Isa 53:5 “But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed” are used to justify the healing power of the prophet not Christ. The prophet/healer thus becomes a cultic figure who is placed at the same level with Jesus the Christ. It is crucial to state that in the ministry of Jesus Christ, signs and wonders were part of God’s divine presence (God himself at work in the life of Christ) hence Jesus never claimed any credit for the miracles which were part of his daily mission. But the prophets of our day claim to have power

to “deliver miracles” as a sign to prove their worth. These prophets seem to be the ends and not the means to the end. I have never come across a Biblical verse where Jesus claims to be a hero as do the prophets of our day in their miracles crusades.

Miraculous healing is the second most important element of the NRRM after the glorious prosperity declarations. This is no accident at all since healing resonates with the current and real needs of the poor masses in the context of the varied challenges of so many terminal illnesses. It is declared that God uses his faithful servants to administer miraculous healing instantaneously according to the promises in the Holy Scriptures. Believers are thus encouraged to exercise faith and claim their healing by continuously reciting Isaiah 53:5 “and with his stripes we are healed” and 1 Peter 2:24 “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed”. What is not projected correctly, however is the reality that the same text is talking of spiritual healing and not physical healing when it says: “might die to sin and live to righteousness”. Ken Matto observes that:

“We have been healed from Spiritual death and resurrected to newness of life. There is no doubt in my mind that God can heal any and all disease if he chooses to. He has chosen not to. Some people become sick and die, others become sick and get well again. Even unbelievers, who have no one praying for them, will become healed if it is God’s will to do so” If physical healing was part of the atonement then every cemetery speaks of the failure of Christ to attain that part of the atonement”  
([http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charismatic Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charismatic_Movement)  
accessed 22/04/2013)

The glorification of the person of the prophet dangerously portrays the prophet as a divine being. The worshippers have a tendency to kneel and prostrate before the prophet even in public places. I observed the followers of the prophet, Emmanuel Makandiwa kneeling before him in the airport lounge at Harare International Airport. Sibongile, a member of the UFIC also confirmed that they “kneel and prostrate before the prophet; a sign of homage to the man of God” (Sibongile, Interview: 21/02/2013). In this context of worship, the vividness of the gospel is overshadowed by the continuous ululations which divinise the prophet through such terms as: "Yes Anointed" when referring to a Charismatic preacher or some message which was preached. The danger is that it assumed that only the prophet enjoys a divine status of anointment which other believers do not enjoy. That all believers have an anointing from God is totally forgotten: “And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us,” (2Corinthians 1:21). The Biblical use of the word "anointed" in this verse carries with it the meaning of to appoint with the idea of assigning a task as alluded to in Ephesians 2:10 "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them". There is nothing mysterious meaning in the term as is portrayed in the naming of the prophetic figure within the NRRM. All Christians are called to be part of the advancement of the Great Commission; and it is unbiblical to divinise one individual as if that being was Christ himself.

If there is one thing which raises many questions in NRRM it is the subject of signs, dreams and visions which have become the Sunday gospel in the charismatic prophetic movements. The talk of dreams and visions seem to have substituted the reading and interpretation of the Holy Scripture. There is a religious frenzy when the prophet declares that God showed him ‘this or that’. The problem is that these visions and dreams become a substitute for Holy Scripture. In a good Sunday, Emmanuel Makandiwa can spend two hours talking about dreams and visions which he has for the individuals. In the process of delivering these dream and visions he always says “I can see a woman sitting in the crowd who has no husband to fend for her. God is saying to you rise and receive your blessings” (Sibongile, Interview: 21/02/2013). One wonders why the vision is so general to the extent that it deals with a common and ordinary situation in the context of a society where there are many widows and widowers who are poor because of the scourge of HIV and AIDS in a non performing economy.

With a straight face, the prophet can declare that he was in heaven in spirit and he brought the good news to all those who doubt his ability to perform miracles. The prophet then declares that a wave of blessings is coming “believers must rise in faith and claim their share of the blessings that are abundantly available to the faithful.” Such declarations are very common with UFIC led by prophet Makandiwa, who is well known for his powerful sermons, miracles and prophecies that have been confirmed throughout the Country of

Zimbabwe ([www.thezimbabwemail.com/](http://www.thezimbabwemail.com/): accessed 23/03/2013). What must be remembered alongside such claims is that the devil has the ability to give exciting visions and thereby deceive many. The case of Jesus' temptation by the devil must be a reminder of Satan's schemes of deception: "And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time," (Luke 4:5). Every statement suggesting to be prophetic and from God must never be taken for granted because the devil has ways of deception to lead astray the faithful into worldly things. Moreover this is critical in the context of some prophetic visions and declarations which promote mammon when Jesus refused to accept the same when the devil tempted him: "--- the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, 'To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours' " (Luke 4:5 – 7). The lesson here is that the love of wealth and power may actually be the devil's scheme to divert people away from the real worship of God in spirit and truth.

Another dangerous teaching of the charismatic movement is the over-stating of the power of Satan as if he (Satan) is the subject of the gospel. This comes out clearly in prayers and choruses which literally make Satan a celebrity of some sort. One of such choruses goes like this:

*Satane Awusumnganomuhle  
Hamba, Hamba Satane  
Angikufuni, Hamba Satane  
Awulamandla Phezukwami*

*Hamba Satane  
Uyabhayizela,  
Hamba Satane,*

A literal translation of the chorus will read like this:

Satan you are not a good friend  
Go Satan go!  
I don't need you Satan  
You have no power over me  
Go Satan go!  
You are restless, Go Satan

Many prayers rotate around one's fear of the devil and the many curses directed to the same. There is almost near silence when it comes to prayers of thanks giving and adoration. The lack of prayers of adoration and thanksgiving is a glaring departure from both the Disciples' Prayer (Matthew 6:5 – 13) and the Lord's Prayer (John 17:1 – 5).

While attending the crusade organised by the Spirit Embassy I heard and observed a general trend which was being repeated over and over again during prayer session: "I bind you Satan. Yes I reject you Satan." This dangerously naïve statement fails to appreciate the fact that the salvific death of Christ on the cross bound Satan once and for all and Satan has no authority over the believer. When Christ went to the cross, Satan was Satan in the manner that the devil cannot prevent any of God's elect from being saved. The argument of Matto is critical in understanding the theological perception of the TWRRM on the issues related to salvation and Christ's death on the cross:

Satan is helpless against God's salvation plan. God has spoiled the house of Satan as He takes His elect from the kingdom of darkness to His kingdom. Too many ignorant tongues speakers think that demons can

indwell a believer; while it is the Holy Spirit which indwells the true believer and since the Holy Spirit is eternal God, no one or nothing can remove Him from His children and He doesn't share an apartment either ([http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charismatic\\_Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charismatic_Movement) accessed 22/04/2013).

Since Satan has no authority over the believer, the children of God should now focus on the commission that they toward making this world a better place for all and not waste their energy focusing on Satan who has already been defeated by Christ.

The style and character of music associated with the NRRM is totally divorced from traditional gospel music; its lyrics and sound rhymes resonate well with the worldly rumba and rock music. If one was to hear the sound but not the message one would be forgiven for thinking that it was music from the pub or bar. There is no reverence in the type of music associated with the NRRM. The music is deliberately formulated to appeal to the young and energetic so that they can express their secular and worldly emotions within an acceptable platform. There is lots of jumping and body 'twisting and turning' in response to the music beat. This type of music merely appeals to people's emotions and causes people to lose sight of the one they are supposed to be worshipping within the spiritual realm. Such type of music does not make worship dignified and honourable as per the exhortation of the Bible: "God is a Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Some scholars have argued that the music taste associated with the TWRRM is devoid of the traditional character of gospel music and the conclude that such

music “does not minister to the spirit rather it is a sensual music which ministers to the flesh and that is not worshipping God in spirit”

([http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charismatic\\_Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charismatic_Movement) accessed 22/04/2013).

In the worship life of the TWM, there exists a spirit of fear and timidity. Believers are bound to obey and protect the teaching of the movement in a religious frenzy. The believers are locked into accepting almost anything, because to question or disagree with the group's doctrine, is tantamount to questioning God. For example, when I asked one of my interviewees whether she believed that her pastor was also capable of sinning, she shockingly rebuked me declaring: “God is surely angry with you and you will soon receive a curse for undermining his chosen prophet by attempting to associate him with sin” (Richard, Interview: 14/01/2013). When I sought to understand the fears of Richard further, I was then told by Richard: “My pastor told us that if we question anything going on in his church, we must just watch out!” (Richard, Interview: 14/01/2013). This fear-inducing admonition has the capacity to silence the congregation into passive belief. It is noted that the fear, which is engendered by such religious manipulation “often locks people into a mindset that disregards common logic and even bypasses a simple heartfelt faith in the God of the bible”

([http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charismatic\\_Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charismatic_Movement) accessed 22/04/2013). I do have many friends caught up within such ideological snares



and entwined these NRRM but it is never easy to help them out because they have a fear of negative repercussions if they were to leave the movement. Indeed it is not the faith that makes them to stick around.

The teachings of the NRRM are not only dangerous but they are also unbiblical and fail to represent the mission of God towards salvation for all. The prophecy centred theology is dangerous because it subordinates the faithful community to the whims of an individual under the guise of prophetic oracles. From an orthodox Christian view, salvation is understood in the context of “all the redemptive blessings which believers have in Christ, chief of which are conversion, regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification and glorification” (Douglas 1978:875). To me, it seems that the NRRM’s concept of salvation is patronising and selective to an extent that it fails to capture the notion of sin and the work of Christ which is central to Jesus salvific work. The proclamation of an economic gospel without a clear and honest call for repentance is as faulty as trying to change the fact of what Christ has done through his death on the cross. A sinner must be sorry, turn to God and confess the Lordship of Jesus in his life and then one will experience the love of God (total salvation).

### 6.3 The Need for Holistic Approach to the Biblical Values

One of the most fundamental values of Christianity is the emphasis on the Biblical idea of the Church as the community of God’s people who live,

worship, and witness as a family. Christians are called to live together and care for one another in a holistic way. Such an understanding of the Church creates a kind of Christian communism centred on the faith which teaches that those who believe in Christ must share all things in common so that there is no one who lives on the extremes of life (Acts 2: 43-47).

Biblical Christianity by its nature creates a corporate community as believers share, witness and fellowship together in building the Church. Every believer seeks to live not only for oneself but for the common good of the whole community resulting in a corporate demonstration of God's love to the world. The community approach to the expression of the Christian faith demonstrates the meaning and fulfilment of Jesus' prayer when he prayed; "that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21). The Christian community in its sociological and theological nature is called to be an open letter so that those who do not have access to the Bible are able to "read in the community of God's people, and from seeing that, be drawn to the Lord" (Osei-Mensah 1990:64).

One of the fundamental characteristics of Christianity is that it promotes the sense of belonging hence it is unthinkable for a believer to stand completely outside the society in which he is involved and brag about his material wealth as if that was the mark of re-birth (Rogers 1964:112). In this context, a believer

must incarnate the truth which is the content of the faith and not pride themselves about issues that do not project one's spiritual growth in Christ. Such a humble attitude will be a reflection of an appreciation of Paul's call to the Church in Philippi: "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus," (Philippians 2:5). The mark of humility shows that a believer has an intrinsic dignity which relates him or her to the '*Imago Dei*' (Image of God). An image of humility makes the believer to vibrate a new life, something that those who come across him/her feel they can emulate and identify with because there is a sense in which the presence and peace of God is felt. But where pride and bragging is the norm there is no way that a stranger would come to know the love and presence of God in a fulfilling manner as the believer gives a testimony of God's grace at work in his or her life.

Another central theme of the Christian faith is its declaration that human-beings are created in the image of God (*Imago Dei*). Through this central theme of Christianity it is expected that believers should reflect that godly image in its real and true sense in all what they say and do as they declare their faith to the world. But what image is this? The Apostle Paul sees it as an attitude hence he says of Jesus;

"Though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the

earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:6-11).

An honest reading of the Bible indicates that the Prosperity gospel impacts negatively on the pre-modial values of Christianity as it tends to promote a wealth centred theme and completely ignores the moral standard of the same faith. Adherents to the prosperity gospel are only concerned about their material wellbeing and have a carefree attitude towards Christian ethics and values. For Dudley (1978:97), the prosperity movements dangerously precipitate significant changes in societal norms which if not properly addressed has the capacity of breaking the social fabric. In essence, prosperity movements have no interests in the person outside the realm of the fellowship; this subsequently ignores the nurturing of pastoral standards expected of every believer. The dangers of celebrating material prosperity in a deeply religious tone by the NRRM may imply that economic benefits are the standard for passing the test of faith yet this is not what Jesus taught when he declared:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. But; woe to you when all people speak well of you for so their fathers did to the false prophets” (Luke 6:20-26).

It is of great significance that Jesus prophesied doom on those who relied on material benefits when they prided their wealth in the synagogues and Temple as if that was the religion and righteousness: “Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. But; woe to you when all people speak well of you for so their fathers did to the false prophets” (Luke 6:24 – 25). From the position of Jesus’ message it is clear that believers must demonstrate their love for God and their neighbour as signs of their salvation and faith. People’s excitement about their material benefits should, in the Christian perspective, not be a substitute for divine love and selfless service to the world of pain and suffering. A religious crusade that glorifies material benefits has been questioned on the basis of the Church’s mission hence Rogers says: “Is a crusade for higher living standards really the business of the Church ... or something better left to the economist, the nutritional scientists, and the social engineer” (Rogers 1964:112)?

That Christians must work hard and be successful is desirable but materialism must never be confused with the central theme of salvation as proclaimed by Jesus the Christ. The Church must have business people, medical doctors, and economists in its membership role but their identity must not be the barometer for a Christian identity. Peace, Love and righteousness must always be the guiding principles of the Church’s mission and meaning in its proclamation of salvation for all and to all. Church historians and theologians alike, argue that

the Christian Church must always maintain its solid foundation so that it retains its “sense of security in a firm relationship to a social group” (Rogers 1964:112). The book of Revelation is very clear that before God, no believer would be judged solely on the level of materialism:

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:11-15).

Church historians are in general agreement that material benefits do not count as a sign of the standard of faith and will never qualify individuals as better believers than others hence the argument that; “no member is too insignificant to count in the body. Every member is equally important and needed in the Church to bless others (with his God given ministry)” (Osei-Mensah 1990:40). In my perspective, it is wrong to misuse the gospel to achieve some form of heroic status that does not necessarily and theologically have anything to do with the mission of the Church. It is imperative that honest Christian leaders should not fumble with issues that are not exactly in their calling and competency. From this context, the preaching of the gospel of prosperity must be seen as an emergence of “yet one more of the attempts to snatch easily and without pain the things of the Kingdom of God” (Rogers 1964:113).

The existence of the gifts of the spirit in the ministry of the Church is real but emphasis on the gifts of the spirit must not single out one out of many and use that element to purport that the nature and image of the Christian Church rests on that particular element without doing justice to a cocktail of gifts of the spirit which are of critical value to the gospel message. From a Christian perspective, it is true that the Spiritual gifts are signs of the power of the Spirit of God which is actively at work in the mission of the Christian community. That there are fruits of the Holy Spirit is true but one has to remember that materialism is not one of the many gifts that God bestows on a believer. Materialism was actually condemned as a sin by Jesus Christ when he taught about the case of a rich fool who loved his wealth more than he loved God:

“Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?” And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:12-21)."

It is, therefore, a grave act of omission to neglect “the proper use and development of a spiritual gift while on the other hand exploiting an idea of God’s gifts for selfish purposes” (Osei-Mensah 1990:40). That a Christian should work hard and prosper is good but to vigorously and religiously preach

on wealth and prosperity as the essence and centre of what it means to be a Christian is on its own unbiblical. Material prosperity is a proven scientific achievement which is imbedded on the reality of hard-work and strategic thinking and management. Material prosperity is not based on any religious conditions but some religious principles can of course add value in how to manage one's business in a principled and moral acceptable manner. It is a fact that non – Christians also enjoy material prosperity and some of them tend to be very successful in their business enterprises. Scientifically, the conditions and needs of a successful business enterprise cannot and will never be fulfilled through a day's experience of a religious confession. The Bible itself teaches that God rewards those who work for their living and never the lazy-bones that want to harvest where they did not sow:

“Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labour we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living” (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12).

In this perspective, it is unthinkable that money can be miraculously created in order to benefit the financially needy worshippers and yet the NRRM teachers seem to be creating instant wealth for a passive audience. The case of prophet



Uebert Angel's miracle money crusade in South Africa where it is claimed that "congregates received miracle money while dysfunctional gadgets allegedly started working" ([www.miraclemoneyinsouthafrica.news.org/htm](http://www.miraclemoneyinsouthafrica.news.org/htm): accessed 01/03/2013) is of great interest to the nature and theology of the NRRM in the light of the values and teachings of the Bible. In his New Year miracle crusade in Harare, Emmanuel Makandiwa of the UFIC also created instant millionaires through his miracle money as diamonds deposits raining from heaven into the hands of the worshippers as they lifted their hands to receive God's blessings ([www.miraclediamondinharare.news.co.zw/htm](http://www.miraclediamondinharare.news.co.zw/htm): accessed 18/03/2013).

In my academic and theological understanding of the Christian religion, I am convinced that the heart of Christianity is to be located in a personal conversion – which is a faithful response by a sinner to Jesus Christ who is Lord and Saviour. It is, therefore, not theologically and reasonably sound to argue that God's redemptive plan always connotes material blessings to all those who believe. On the other hand I am also aware that economic success is not outside God's redemptive plan for humanity. However, the logical reality of prosperity has to do with one's background, his/her upbringing, education, commitment, strategic visioning and the prevailing socio-economic environment. In this context it is unthinkable to believe that the proclamation of any religious statement can simply result in the sudden and or miraculous change of one's economic status: from rags to riches at the expense of a holistic approach to the meaning and nature of Christianity.

It is amazing how the NRRM have tended to glorify one small aspect of life, which is not even the core of a religious condition, more than the real issues that makes a believer Christian. This type of selective teaching/preaching is fast changing the nature and meaning of Christianity and a naïve and poor audience is easily swayed by the positive statements of the prophet who speaks with charisma and authority that leaves them convinced that there is hope and a future in these movements. But in the context of such things happening, I am reminded of the fourth commandment: “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7). Any idea that only those who belong to the NRRM are going to be blessed with material health and health is a fallacy that should not be believed unless of course it is a magical wand that is believed by the gullible and not students of the Bible.

A cursory reading of the Bible shows that it is God’s goodwill that “all human beings should have the right to some form of work, an adequate wage, some form of social security and protection against unemployment, and the benefits of holiday rest” (Congregational Handbook, 2001:7). This means that Christians, like any other people, should work to earn a living and live a reasonable life without waiting for miracle (magic) money. One thing is certain; magic is not faith in God and must not be viewed as the blessing from God. Theologically, it is true that a good preacher would not deny “the service to mankind which can abide should be rendered by the economist, the scientist,

and the sociologist” (Congregational Handbook, 2001:7). In this context the preacher should allow professionals in the economic sector, the Medical sector, and other life-sustaining fields to help in the education of the Church membership for its general good and welfare. All that the Church has to do is to “look for the way of immediate progress that is according to the will of God” (Rogers 1964:115).

Lessons from Church history show that the gospel of prosperity and health should not separate people from their identity and values (issues of Christian morality). Any attempt to commercialise the Christian faith is bound to create a moral crisis that is similar to the case of Ananias and Sapphira whose love for money and not genuine Christian fellowship led to their death;

“But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him” (Acts 5:1-6).

Many charismatic NRRM preachers religiously argue that as believers discover a new prospect, a new life, and a new beginning, they need to make a complete break with the past! While a new break is what conversion to Christianity brings about, it is not true that this new life is an economic life-style which is

based on a materialistic foundation. Therefore, a complete break is not and must not be based on anything less but the salvific power of God which sets individuals free from sin and all its attendant wicked ways. It is fundamental that a Christian's identity is based on nothing else but his/her relationship with God, not the amount of his/her material resources which do not constitute a true Christian identity. It is also noted that an emphasis on the gospel prosperity portrays Christians as capitalists thereby losing their identity with Jesus Christ who is man for others and not a businessman.

The hero worship of the prophetic figure is one such frightening character of the charismatic movements. Generally, the prophet/pastor is presumed to be the fountain of Holy Oracles and power to perform miracles hence the near divination of the prophet/pastor in prayer. In the worship service of the UFIM which I attended, I observed and heard worshippers praying through the name of the prophet and not Jesus Christ: "O God of the prophet, Emmanuel Makandiwa, I demand from you to reward me as per your promises through the prophet's mouth. I know that the man of God's word will not fail to come to pass and in his name I pray ..." (UFIM, Worship Service: 11/11/2012).

Theologically, a prophetic sermon is not unbiblical in its scope, but what becomes unchristian is for the prophetic figure to be divinised as if he/she were God. In most cases the pastor's words can be strongly prophetic for the

congregation but that should not make the pastor a kind of a messiah to the Church. And when the pastor has preached an intelligent sermon there is no need to treat his sermon as if it were the divine "word of the Lord," even if it does not match up with the Holy Scriptures. Any attempt to equate the pastor to the Christ Himself is a grave act of idolatry which puts the generality of worshippers into a "frightening position of having to obey the prophecy, or consider ourselves as "opposing God" ([www.charismaticmovement.com](http://www.charismaticmovement.com): 23/04/2013).

There is room to think differently or suggest otherwise in the theology of the NRRM. Throughout their history, the NRRM have maintained theological extremism which leaves no room for independent thinking. This is caused by the fact that the leader is viewed as a type of a Christ and his message portrayed as inerrant in both its phrases and logic (Richardson 1983:111-119). The most dangerous component of their message is the literal interpretation of scriptures and the tendency to spiritualise and politicise every verse in the Bible, for the benefit of their audience. While noting the fundamental flaws and dangers associated with the NRRMs' teachings, Rick Ross wrote:

"Being a committed Christian and having spent nearly all of my Christian life within the Charismatic movement, I now recognise that some leaders within the movement have the propensity to overextend their authority. And as an elder under such authority for five years, I was once bound by fear. It seemed that if I didn't participate in a variety of "prophetic manifestations," which regularly happened within our church, I was somehow missing "God's best." However, when I objectively investigated my church's methods and beliefs, I saw its error and regained my personal freedom. Specifically I began to read the bible without the aid of

any church interpretive material" After more than a year of intensive research, from a variety of independent sources, my family and I were brought to a point of decision, which resulted in our "leaving the fold." The pain of that process was tremendous. After we left, not one person from our church visited us. The fear, which is engendered by the kind of manipulation we experienced, often locks people into a mind-set that disregards common logic and even bypasses a simple heartfelt faith in the God of the bible. Instead, those involved will just "go with the flow." ([www.charismaticmovement.com](http://www.charismaticmovement.com): 23/04/2013).

If the NRRM are to continue being relevant beyond this century, there has to be a radical dimensional change in terms of how they preach and or interpret the Holy Bible. The lessons from Augustine of Hippo should assist in terms of how the Holy Scriptures is perceived; i.e. Augustine took the view that the Biblical dimension of preaching is not done from the literal translation of the Bible (Brown 1969: 76). This implies that the NRRM preachers need to be start re-orienting their style of handling Biblical Scripture and move away from a prosperity perspective of understanding salvific history to a theologically sound means of analysing the Bible so that the text is applied to the lives of the people and help them be able to attend to life's questions in their present situations. This is necessary because the Biblical message is not directed at promoting economic prosperity per se but the moral worth and ethical value of life in its fullness. In doing so, many people will be able to appreciate the value of both the Bible and the Church because the preaching will be enabling to them.

In the same vein, A. Kenton (1998:119) argues that for the NRRM preachers to be relevant and effective they will have to adjust to the conventional style of preaching by way of using the market place approach. This means getting outside the walls of the movement to find out what people's challenges and needs are in the real sense of social service and spiritual healing then address these needs from a Biblical perspective. In promoting Biblical preaching, preachers should aim for contextual proclamation. If the word does not speak to people's experiences, it cannot be the word of God because the word of God has to relate to human experience and be spoken in the relevant language, if not, then it is not the word of God for the word became human (FARRIS 1998:16). All this is vital for the NRRM if their continued existence is to be guaranteed. The NRRM preachers should start being strategic in how they seek to remain relevant across a new generation that enjoys economic success out of hard work and strategic planning without appealing to magical practices.

The NRRM preachers need to appreciate that preaching, worship and community prayer should not necessarily be confined to one particular motif, but a variety of human needs which are threatened by the disorders of the broken world. They need to start moving out of their conference centres and have direct interaction with the masses that they seek to disciple. Open air crusades and big revivals gatherings which are too frequent with the current order do not provide a convenient atmosphere for spiritual growth but they only help to proclaim the gospel to a larger audience within a broader social

setting. The evangelical crusades have an immediate appeal to those who are searching and are uncertain about their ground of existence both outside and within certain religious environments (Rick 200:108).

Some of the key questions that need to be addressed by the NRRM before they become obsolete in the Church relates to the efficacy of their worship styles in the light of the conventional Christian liturgy and forms and the need to nurture and promote congregational spirituality which is the essence of Christian tradition and practice. A deliberate move toward striking a balance between spontaneity and liturgical patterns of worship will indeed reflect a semblance of maturity to the NRRMs' character. The word of God should be understood to fit the varied life situations of God's people (Philip 2004:153). In the same context, worship should be a joyful creativity and an orderly pattern of communicating with the divine. Enculturation should be a must with due respect for the nature of the liturgy and for the demands of the universality. In the same spirit, spontaneity is no option toward promoting the obvious and common interests of the believer so that worship does not become monotonous and boring. This is a call for user-friendly liturgies which allow for variety and spontaneity whilst maintaining order in 'the house of God'.

In an effort to address the efficacy of worship and the nurturing of Christian spirituality there is need for self-introspection toward a new paradigm shift by the NRRM leadership. This calls for spiritual discipline on the part of the NRRM



leaders so that the sermons are re-aligned toward promoting the authentic Biblical values which are anchored on the teaching and writings of the Holy Bible. It is critical that the sermons must be understood as the only foundation for the proclamation of God's divine acts of salvation to a fast changing world order without losing their anchor in the Bible. Part of that spiritual discipline must be visible but not limited to personal humility, prayerfulness, respect, and dedication to service through the avenues of pastoral visitations.

There is need to promote a moral personal identity in the proclamation of the Biblical message and in the conduct of pastoral ministry by the person of the Pastor so that the Pastor is first and foremost a servant of Christ and not a mere businessman. In promoting personal moral identity, the Pastor has to be a guiding figure in helping the worshippers toward developing a personal relationship with the Divine as an act of genuine and authentic worship. This promotes a holistic approach to pastoral ministry. The word 'holistic' relates to or is concerned with wholes or complete systems; that is in dealing with both the mind and the body ([www.anniestebals.com](http://www.anniestebals.com): accessed 17/02/2013).

A Biblically centred approach to faithful worship demands that the Pastor must represent all aspects of the human nature and never act as if he/she was God. It must be the duty of the Pastor, therefore, to spiritually find ways of feeding the Church members so that they find abundant life in their worship service. The Pastor must never be the Shepherd that feeds self and forgets to care for

the flock so that he/she fulfils Jesus' command to Peter: "Tend my flock; Feed my sheep" (John 21:17). The process of tending and feeding the worshippers has to be loud and real through Sunday School lessons, sermons, liturgies and other worship activities of the Church which are inclined to grow the flock spiritually, psychologically and sociologically so that worshippers do not need to go and look for healing and deliverance somewhere else.

The NRRM Pastors will need to conduct engage in pastoral counseling sessions of value through effective pastoral work so that believers experience the value in belonging to the movements in their moments of crisis. Sibongile, an nineteen year old student at Bulawayo's National University of Science and Technology (NUST) who goes for fellowship in one of the NRRM (Sibongile did not want the name of this denomination to be made public) complained that each time she wanted to talk to her NRRM Pastor concerning certain issues she couldn't solve on her own, the Pastor would tell her to go and "pray to God in faith and claim her rightful place in the company of believers and stop behaving like a sinner who does not know God" (Sibongile, Interview: 21/02/2013). Sibongile needed counseling after she got into a romantic relationship; she ended up attending services at the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (hereinafter called UCCSA) after getting help from the pastor in that church denomination. When I asked Sibongile why she decided to leave her NRRM for the UCCSA she responded with bitterness:

“Pastors in these movements have no time to listen to people’s individual problems as is done in the older Protestant Churches, what they are concerned with is to preach about money and power week after week and never remember that there are certain things that people need to see God’s hand at work besides issues of material prosperity” (Sibongile, Interview: 21/02/2013).

From the interview I held with Sibongile, it is clear that some young people in these newer charismatic movements are starting to feel insecure because in their crisis moments they receive very little attention, if any, from the Pastor. This is a wake-up call that whilst it is good to promote health and wealth; the NRRM pastors need not become too busy with issues of prosperity and self-glory to the extent of not having quality time to attend to individual worshippers’ spiritual and personal needs.

Another way of creating solid structures that look forward to the future beyond the excitement associated with miracle and healing services in the worship life of the NRRM is through properly planned Christian education sessions. In these Christian education lessons more time must be given to Bible study classes which help to grow the faith of the worshippers beyond their mere public testimonies of what God has miraculously done for them in the economic sphere of life. The NRRM will do well to learn from the early Church which grew around the home groups whose Christian education was a vehicle for spiritual nourishment. The Book of Acts gives us a full narrative of how Christian education lessons helped to build the spiritual lives of believers:

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42-47)

The NRRM pastors should be able to equip the congregants with the necessary Christian education that helps them to cherish and grow their faith outside the excitement of the material benefits which are but some mere incidental aspects and never the core of faith in Jesus. A futuristic NRRM would know that a permanent membership is not a result of one miracle but of a living and enabling teaching which is coupled by a satisfying environment for prayer and worship. The material benefits and not primary concerns in salvation history just as Christ declared:

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: They neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the

kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:25-34)

The Christian education programme should be informative, relevant and biblically centred so that it prepares people to celebrate Jesus’ salvific work on the cross and not their own personal experiences of success in things of this world. Such a programme must maintain the Christian tradition, beliefs and practices as they have been passed on to this generation:

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep ...” (1 Corinthians 15:3-6).

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Conclusion**

#### **7.1 Summary**

This study has explored the content and impact of the TWRRM in the context of the Zimbabwean Church landscape today. The investigation of events at play in the TWRRM's declarations and promises has revealed beyond doubt the value and respect given to the religious discourse by the Zimbabwean communities in their everyday lives. The people's need for some revelatory power in their daily lives is glaringly clear through their zealous expressions as they zealously embrace the promises and declarations associated with the TWRRM. What has apparently become clear through this research is the faith placed in the religious discourse of the TWRRM by many Zimbabweans from all walks of life as they search for deliverance from their varied socio-economic challenges. This religious trend is not different from what is prevailing in other African countries in general.

From this research, it is evidently clear that the Christian Faith is one of the few social and historical phenomena that wields the greatest influence in the lives of many people and determines the social behaviour of the day. The fact that the TWRRM have become the fastest growing Church institutions in Zimbabwe means that the impact and effects of this strand of Christianity deserves serious attention from the school teacher to the politician who

ultimately will have to contend with the effects of these movements in their exercise of public office. It cannot be denied that any religious discourse has critical public repercussions hence the need to be concerned with certain religious proclamations and declarations of the TWRRM. The result of my analysis of the TWRRM has demonstrated the need to take seriously the role of religious education, institutions and organisations in the promotion of public good for the betterment of all citizens.

The TWRRM has had a huge impact in the public life of the Zimbabwean people in particular and the religious image of the African Church in general. Another interesting discovery in this thesis is the reality that those attracted to this religious movement are not the “so – called” uneducated class and the rural folk as some have tended to argue; rather, this movement has largely attracted the cream of the society through their Campus Crusades in the Universities as well as the emerging indigenous business people through organisations such as the Christian Businessmen’s Forums, Bible Fellowship International and many other social groups of the same thrust.

The general outlook of the TWRRM is thus a composition of the young and old; male and female; poor and rich; educated and uneducated alike. All these different classes of people are united under one basic need: The search for prosperity and good health amidst the glaring levels of unemployment and

poverty in the society. The prophetic power that transforms the human conditions of poverty to wealth and health becomes the pulling factor to active identification with these TWRRM. But is this faith or a fear response? What became evidently clear in this research is the driving force of fear associated with the negatives circumstances which exist within the worldview of the people. This fear is understood to be a spiritual warfare hence the solution is believed to be within the confine of the religious circles. The TWRRM comes in handy toward providing a religious solution to circumstances of life that require some divine interventions.

From a psychological perspective, the highly emotional declarations of faith by the disciples of the TWRRM tend to exude a “protective fear” and not a positive faith. The “fear of faith” is a result of an opportunity of security from the challenges that threaten one’s worldview. The “fear of faith” is jealous and positive since it expresses a protective attitude which nurtures the believer’s security. The fear of “what if” is negative since it looks back and feels the threats of the “past life”. This fear does not exude confidence in the present since it is not certain of what the past means in the context of a new experience of life hence the common denial attitude. There is an exerted effort to rubbish the past and pretend that it never was real. This is clearly a superfluous religious discourse which is based on mere denials.



The content of faith in the context of the religious needs of the people seems to be born out of the elimination of fear through some miraculous experience delivered by the prophetic figure. Failure by the prophet to bring positive rewards to the satisfaction of each and every individual disciple tends to result in those individuals moving out to newer movements that tend to emerge from the older movements. The existence of roving membership in these movements demonstrates the fluid nature of the TWRRM and the lack of genuine conversion which is traditionally associated with the preaching of Christianity. It seems that what people want from these movements is not the conversion to Christianity but they are simply running away from various levels of their challenges in life in search of better ways toward economic and social stability and prosperity.

This research has fully explored the promises and declarations associated with the TWRRM in their social and spiritual thrust toward changing the economic conditions of its adherents through some miraculous powers outside the basic laws of economics. Of particular interest is how the TWRRM understands the concept of being blessed by God in the context to one's socio – economic and political condition(s). Another factor of significance is the existence of a special interest in the phenomena of the prophetic power to deliver miracles that have an economic and social value to people's present conditions and needs.

Observably, the TWRRM focuses on the holistic needs of humanity which have to be met in or within the worship service by the God of love who never fails

those that God has called. This element of faith proclamation is the new face of Christianity in Africa. One can easily locate the hospital, the industry and commerce all available in the context of worship as one is healed during the act of worship, one is also economically empowered and assured of success in life during the act of worship; and interestingly, the prophetic power is invoked to miraculously provide money in abundance to everyone who has faith in the prophetic oracles. Indeed, this is the new face of Christianity which begs to be explored from an authentic Biblical perspective.

The TWRRMs' impact to the wider Christian community has indeed come as lesson to the older protestant Church denominations toward positively responding to the needs of the congregational members in a way which helps them to realise the value of genuine worship. The general assumption that a large percentage of those who join the TWRRM have a shallow religious foundation and that their commitment to the Church is always questionable must be abandoned in search for an authentic means through which such people are helped to fully experience the presence of the Divine in their traditional Church denominations without always being on the move in search for an authentic faith in some newer charismatic movements.

It must not be assumed, however, that the TWRRM are a kind of "garden of Eden" for those who need material benefits. The ideas of a blessed life within the theology of the TWRRM may be, as observed, detrimental to one's spiritual

growth if the focus is not the need to worship God in spirit and truth as the Bible declares:

“Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he” (John 4:21-26).

The point which needs to be stressed is that by starting a genuine dialogue with the theology of the TWRRMs, the older Protestant churches will be helping themselves to engage in self-introspection towards renewal and restoration in the spirit of adapting to the guidance of the Spirit of God. At the same time, the TWRRM will be forced to examine and align their theology toward correcting some of the many faults of which they have been sometimes justly accused of. It must be noted that the current trends suggest that the TWRRM have acquired a strong foothold in a materialistic religion to the extent of neglecting the ethical and moral values of Christianity.

It is also noted that most of the prophetic oracles of the TWRRM are in their zenith or apex and it is likely that this phenomenon as a whole will pass away with time and that will bring to an end this huge religious movement. Currently, the TWRRM must be seen to be providing an excellent opportunity for the older Protestant churches to meaningfully undertake a self-

introspection towards aligning their ministry to meeting the changing needs of the twenty first century generation in the context of many social and economic challenges so that Christianity does not lose its relevancy. This is necessary because any religion that is worth its taste must be contextual and authentic at the same time.

This research has noted that the African worldview has generally aided the growth of the TWRRMs. This has come about through a translational model whereby the worldview of the recipients of the gospel is viewed as a platform for evangelization. In this context, the TWRRM have fully addressed the needs, hopes and fears of their followers by employing a traditionally friendly emphasis in the proclamation of the gospel to the already existing religious Institutions. Like every other African, Zimbabwean worshippers need practical ritualistic actions and not mere promises of a blessed future; they want to feel, see and experience the hand of God hear and now. It is, therefore, crucial that worship life in the older Protestant churches must cater for the needs and hopes of its membership in a way that enables the worshippers to feel that the Church is truly their home and fountain of hope.

This research has noted that the rise and growth of the TWRRM can be understood as a social movement at play. Their platform of worship is artistic; it projects a dramatic explosion of events in a way that appeals to the seeking mind. The events which have been accepted as miracles at work are to be

understood as processes of expression through which believers hunger and thirst for meaning in the context of their human needs and challenges in this temporary life on earth. The TWRRM are thus a clear reaction to contemporary, socio-cultural and economic conditions that have a bearing in terms of people's experiences and expectations. The TWRRM have a revelatory meaning as to how the older Protestant Church denominations can re-look at their own ministry in a practical and relevant context in order to appreciate the needs and challenges of their congregants as they make Christianity meaningful and authentic to its recipients

There is no doubt in my mind that the historical and theological stature of the TWRRM have been enhanced by the prophetic oracles which very much are in rhythm with the African worldview. The critical 'space' which has now been occupied by the TWRRM in the African Church landscape is a clear reflection of the lack of general religious contentment in the older protestant denominations. The factors which have promoted the growth of the TWRRM clearly demonstrate that the people's faith response is conditioned by their environmental and social factors, which factors also define how they express themselves in worship in a fruitful and fulfilling manner.

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All Biblical References came from the: English Standard Version Bible

## APPENDIX

### Interview Questionnaire Tool:

Please place a tick in the spaces provided. Where you are required to comment, do so precisely.

#### Section A

1. Gender Male ☐ Female ☐

2. Age Group

Below 20 Years	
Below 19 Years	<input type="checkbox"/>
19 – 30 Years	<input type="checkbox"/>
Above 31 Years	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Your Christian Status

Clergy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Laity	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. How long have you been a Christian?

Less than 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 – 10 Years	<input type="checkbox"/>
Above 10 Years	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Section B

Respond to the following questions in the best way you are comfortable with:

1. What is your general understanding of the religious views of the prophetic religious movements?

2. Have you ever experienced worship in a prophetic charismatic movement? If so, how would you describe your experience?
3. What do you consider to be the key factors that draw people to the prophetic charismatic church groups?
4. In your own perspective, do you think that the teachings of the prophetic charismatic movements have an effect on the worship tradition and doctrinal beliefs of the older traditional church denominations?
5. What can the older traditional church denominations learn from the new charismatic prophetic movements?
6. Do you think that your socio – economic and political condition has an influence in how you express your worship of God?
7. Can you claim to be a Christian on the basis of your material blessings without any moral and ethical values?
8. Do you think the preaching of wealth and health as the central theme of Christian worship is biblically and morally justifiable?
9. What do you see as either the opportunities or challenges associated with the beliefs and promises of the charismatic prophetic movements?

## **Abstract**

This thesis is an historical analytical investigation and theological analysis of the fundamental trends of the ‘Third Wave’ Religious Right Movement and the growth of Zimbabwean Christianity. In an attempt to understand the appealing and growth factors of this religious movement in the Zimbabwean Church scene, the research focuses on the trends and behaviour of the Third Wave Religious Right Movement in Zimbabwe and the critical aspect of how this religious movement communicates the Christian faith to its audience. A critical thrust of the study is the question of whether the disciples of the charismatic movement are motivated by faith or economic factors which may ultimately not be the authentic summons of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The research addresses fears and suspicions of many Christians who are caught up between faith and fear response to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by the New Religious Right Movements, particularly in Zimbabwe.

The hypothetical statement of this work is that there seems to be a subtle reconstruction identity in the theology of the “Third Wave” Religious Right Movement as is clearly manifested through the maneuverings of Christians from the ‘traditional churches’ to these ‘newer charismatic churches in trends which reflect the changing religious geography and the face of African Christianity in general and Zimbabwean Christianity in particular. The research explores the nature, impact and significance of the post – modern

‘Third Wave’ Religious Right Movement in Zimbabwean society in particular. The identity and nature of the ‘Third Wave’ Religious Right Movement in its historical perspective discussed by means of identifying and analyzing the characteristics of this movement and its theological perspectives as well as discussing the factors that promote the growth of the movement in the context of *Missio Dei* (God’s Mission) and the society in general. Critical to this type of Christianity are the images of power and prosperity which are understood as signs of faith. The impact and effects of this type of faith expression in the socio-political landscape is fully explored.

The primary methodology in this study is the historical critical method complimented by oral historiography. Both primary and secondary sources are utilized in this research in a holistic framework for analyzing the historical trends as they unfold in the context of religious declarations and transformations that are part of the phenomenon under investigation. The study observes the translation model of evangelization in the unfolding discourse of the ‘Third Wave’ Religious Right Movement.

The study ultimately reveals how people’s economic fears and hopes in the midst of life’s challenges draw them toward religious movements which promise to positively promote a glorious life with practical results being realized “here and now”. This study has clearly exposed how religion, specifically charismatic Christianity, is seen as a package of an abundant life in the context of humanity’s needs and challenges. There is a clear



obsession, in the charismatic New Religious Right Movement, with wealth and health as pedestals of salvation and a faithful Christian life.

Surprisingly, there is very little reference to moral and ethical issues from the charismatic prophets who are the founders of these New Right Movements. The research notes that the interests of these newer right movements are in prosperity and health: “signs of being saved and blessed”. Lack of economic success is blamed on demons which also causes poor health hence the need to denounce the powers of Satan and engage on “the heavenly gear”. Such teachings have conditioned the prospective converts to seek after material benefits and values as critical aspects of the meaning of salvation and the mission of Christ.

The study further reveals that the ‘Third Wave Religious Right Movement promotes a subtle way of making disciples instead of the traditional way of faith response to the gospel proclamation. But does this charismatic religious life have any relevance to our human situation today? The seven compelling chapters of this study have tackled this question and many others, pointing the way to an authentic Christian mission that is alive and relevant to the meaning of salvation in the context of orthodox Christianity. This study concludes that the Church is a catalyst which carries the keys of salvation to bring meaning and solutions to the varied human fears and failures that characterise the temporary nature of human existence. But in doing so; the Church must act in spirit of orthodox Christianity which is the *sine qua non* of salvation.

## **Abbreviations**

AACCA: All African Conference of Churches

AFM: Apostolic Faith Missions

AIC: African Initiated Churches

ALFA: Abundant Life for All

ARPRM: American Religious Political Right Movement

EFZ: Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe

FGBFI: Full Gospel Businessmen's fellowship International

Fambidzano: Fambidzano Yamakereke Avatema

NRRM: New Religious Right Movement

RRM: Religious Right Movement

TWC: Third Wave Christianity

TWM: Third Wave Movement

TWRM: Third Wave Religious Right Movement

UCCSA: United Congregational Church of Southern Africa

UFIC: United Family International Church

UFIM: United Family International Ministries

VBF: Victory Business Forum

WCC: World Council of Churches

ZAOGA: Zimbabwe Assemblies of God in Africa

ZCBC: Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference

ZCC: Zimbabwe Council of Churches

## Key Terms of the Research

- Charismatic movements
- Prophetic movements
- Authentic Christianity
- *Missio – Dei* (God's Mission)
- *Missio Hominum* (Human Mission)
- Religious Right
- Subtle Christianity
- Efficacy of Religion
- Economic spectrum
- Born Again movements
- Miraculous healing
- Passionate piety
- Belief systems
- Powerless Christianity
- Charismatic Ministries
- Faith response
- Mainline church denominations
- Primary religion

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