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UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**Money, wealth, and consumption among Pentecostal Charismatic Christians
in Harare**

by

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To my late father - Aleck Taru - who unfortunately did not stay in this world long enough to see the completion of this project



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Abstract

This thesis examines the entanglements and interactions between OMG – a Charismatic Pentecostal Church and the post-colonial Zimbabwean state through an ethnographic analysis of church members' everyday lives. I focus on money and consumption, and make several arguments in an attempt to explain the rapid expansion of OMG. Whilst the study adopts a political economy approach in framing the conditions under which the church emerged, I place Pentecostal Charismatic belief and experience at the centre of the analysis. Money and commodity consumption have been creatively incorporated into OMG belief systems and doctrines at a time when the Zimbabwean economy is performing poorly, and poverty is an everyday reality for most of the population. The consumption of commodities has religious significance inasmuch as it is a critique of the post-independence government that has largely failed to improve the lives of Zimbabweans. In consuming commodities, OMG congregants set themselves apart from non-members and construct themselves as 'blessed' and thriving. I argue that the mismanagement of the postcolonial state has provided crevices and clefts through which OMG has emerged and grown as a proxy to the state by appropriating aspects of state and chieftaincy rituals. Secondly, OMG offers alternative social spaces for citizens to be - or to appear to be - upwardly mobile and construct a sense of common identity based on religion, history and belonging.



Acronyms

AAG	Affirmative Action Group
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
AIC	African Independent Churches
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AOG	Assembly of God
CIO	Central Intelligence Office
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
FTLRP	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
HGM	Heavenly Glory Ministry
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IEEP	Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Programme
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MP	Member of Parliament
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
OMG	One God Ministry
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PCC	Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
RBZ	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
RCEC	Russian Church of Evangelical Christians
SI	Statutory Instrument
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
USD	United States Dollar
UZ	University of Zimbabwe
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African Patriotic Front
ZAOGA	Zimbabwe Assemblies Of God Africa
ZCC	Zion Christian Church
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZIMASSET	Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation
ZIMRA	Zimbabwe Revenues Authorities
ZIMSEC	Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency
ZINARA	Zimbabwe National Road Administration
ZNA	Zimbabwe National Army
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police
Z\$	Zimbabwean Dollar



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1. ISSUES, CONTEXT and CIRCUMSTANCES

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?” asked Alice. “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to” said the Cheshire Cat.

Lewis Carroll (1963: 59), *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*.

Minerva ... stood against the side of the entry, and revealed herself to Ulysses, but Telemachus could not see her, and knew not that she was there, for the gods do not let themselves be seen by everybody. Ulysses saw her, and so did the dogs, for they did not bark, but went scared and whining off to the other side of the yards.

Homer (translated by Samuel Butler, 2009).

The Odyssey

Book XVI.

There are discrete, describable and accessible experiences associated with religion ... these are important for researchers.

Tanya Luhmann (1989: 356) *Persuasions of the Witch’s Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England*.

As we sat around the table after dinner Nyasha¹ took the chance to tell me more about prophet Ben². Nyasha continued with the conversation we had started earlier on our way home: “He is more than a president, it is a demotion for him to run for the presidency. A prophet anoints leaders. In the Bible Samuel anointed David even when Saul was the king. Prophet Ben doesn’t want to be the president of Zimbabwe. He already has a huge number of followers, sons and daughters from all political parties in Zimbabwe. If he becomes a president, he limits himself to Zim(babwe) and a (political) party and will lose some of his son and daughters. At One Ministry of God (OMG)³ we have people from all political parties and ethnic groups and race, he is a unifier. What is it that he will gain by joining politics, he has power, money and a thriving business empire? He lives comfortably than most ministers and Members of Parliament (MPs). Mind you, he drives top of the range cars and wear

¹ Nyasha Moyo is a One Ministry of God member whose family I stayed with for the greater part of my fieldwork. Nyasha was one of my interlocutors. Later I when I refer to ‘the Moyos’, I will be referring to Nyasha’s family composed of his wife, two children and himself. Nyasha was in his early thirties and his wife in her late twenties. We were in the same age group, this helped me relate with the family. I use pseudonyms on all persons and the church for ethical reasons. The focus of the study is not about the ministry per se but on ways religious orientation has a bearing on members’ interaction and relation with Zimbabwean postcolonial state.

² Pseudonym for founder of and head prophet at OMG

³ A pseudonym for the religious movement whose members this research focus on



designer suits, MPs do not own such cars. Government cannot afford to buy the type of cars he drives... only corrupt ministers can afford such cars. He is way ahead of politicians. Do you know that these politicians come to consult him when they are sick and when they seek re-election? The prophet said many influential politicians will rise from our church, his sons and daughter will occupy influential positions in government. He will help them achieve this, he encourages those with interest in politics to join. He will intercede for their success and for the prosperity of Zim(babwe)...”

Nyasha sipped water from the glass he held in his hand and continued narrating: “...if Zimbabwe could get loyal and dedicated citizens like the prophet, Zim will improve drastically. The prophet is a good example of a good investor, he has interest in the cinema industries, in bakery and confectionary, in construction and hardware as well as in mining. The prophet has created jobs and employed many people... think of those at the guest houses, at OMG TV, those employed by the ministry and at his businesses. The government cannot even create jobs, but he is. When the government is stuck, he makes things happen. He is building schools and rehabilitating some, making donations to hospitals, providing boreholes and medical services to people in rural areas, prisoners and orphans, paying for tuition for orphans and other liked across the country. When was the last time the government constructed a school? The government cannot even do these things. He is doing well but the government still want him arrested...He knows how to invest and understand how money and the economy work. He is teaching us to be like him. To be good investors. He understands the language of money. Money listens to him⁴, (US) Dollars and not Bond notes *asekuru*⁵, I have been watching him every time he enters the auditorium, he places USD 100 or USD 50 notes on the altar. New notes, but the government is struggling to source US Dollars...”

As I would learn later, Nyasha’s portrayal of prophet Ben as an exemplar of success, influence and popularity is common among OMG members. Prophet Ben was placed at a position higher than that of the president. Nyasha acknowledged that prophet Ben dressed and consumed top of the range vehicles, just like the president, prophet Ben was a better leader than the then president Robert Mugabe and his henchmen serving as ministers. Money, consumption and wealth are identified as under Prophet Ben’s command. As a follower, Nyasha considered himself also on the path to accumulate wealth and consume global commodities. Furthermore, prophet Ben’s lifestyle and preaching offers a critique to the current crop of political leadership that has failed to come with policies that enable Zimbabweans to accumulate wealth and engage in elaborate consumption of commodities.

⁴ Money, like other objects such as commodities, tree, sun and the moon have a life of their own and have the ability to act. Thus, objects are given human characteristics such as the ability to listen, have a language, can come and leave and even harm persons.

⁵ A term used to refer to a colleague



Initially, I had framed my study around the notion that money and consumption were the conduits through which Pentecostals in Zimbabwe link to global neo-liberal capitalism as well as global cultural forms. In this way, money and consumption were gateways through which Pentecostals participated in global processes. As I conducted fieldwork, I dropped the initial framework because narratives and everyday realities of OMG Pentecostals showed that their relationship with money and commodities was neither a function of neo-liberal capital system nor the desire to be part of the global consumption. Money and consumption are grafted onto the local political and economic context and religious milieu that OMG Pentecostals find themselves in. In light of these observations, I realized that the political economy has a bearing on ways in which religious movements and their members produce forms of sociality, solidarity, hierarchies, morality and quotidian experiences. On this basis I chose to follow the political economy approach in explaining the activities of OMG and its members. Concomitantly, the study's focus shifted to ways in which Pentecostal Charismatic Christians (PCC), in our case OMG and its members interact with and relate to the postcolonial Zimbabwean state. This study focus on contradictory and complimentary interactions between OMG and Zimbabwean government, bringing to the fore, the complex nature of this interaction. The everyday realities of OMG members, their interactions with the representatives of Zimbabwean state in everyday lives are explored in order to bring out the emerging relationship between OMG and post-colonial Zimbabwean state. In the process I investigate the model of the 'ideal society' that OMG members envision and ways in which they make efforts to create/construct that society in postcolonial Zimbabwe. Lastly, I explore the role money⁶ and consumption plays among OMG Pentecostals and how both bridge the gap between lived realities in current Zimbabwe and the idealized versions of society envisioned by OMG members.

⁶ Money is one way in which states claim its existence. States issue out currencies that in turn represents the state, Zimbabwe has no local currency since 2009 when it adopted a multi-currency system. It is of interest to know how Pentecostals relate with the US Dollar. Both Pentecostalism and US Dollar are global in nature but find meaning in the local Zimbabwean context.



In studying these issues, I turn away from over relying on official church positions gained through church literature, sermons and teachings, rather I focus on the everyday lives of OMG members. How do OMG members act in the presents of state representatives? How might their patterns consumption be viewed as a political statement and critique to the postcolonial government? In what ways is OMG replacing the state in the everyday lives of its members and in the lives of some Zimbabweans such as prisoners, the elderly, Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) and chiefs? What parallels can we draw between OMG machinery and state machinery as well as the institution of chiefs? Is OMG appropriating repertoires of the state and chiefs, making it an inchoate state in making?

Despite the increase in local Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity in Zimbabwe, there are few studies that focus on ways in which PCC interacts with the post-colonial Zimbabwean state. Historically, studies on church-state relations have a bias towards what are called 'mainline churches' such as Roman Catholic, Methodist and Anglican churches. There is large body of literature that explore the nature of individual mainline churches or collectively through Zimbabwe Council of Churches, mainline churches-linked Non-Governmental Organizations with the colonial Rhodesian state and government as well as with the post-colonial Zimbabwean state and government (see Dachs & Rea, 1979; Lapsley, 1986; Banana, 1996; McLaughlin, 1996; Dorman, 2002). Literature on Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity and its engagement with the Zimbabwean state is starting to emerge. Gukurume (2018) brings out the nuanced interaction between Pentecostal Charismatic students and University of Zimbabwe (UZ) officials. UZ is a state university, thus bring the Pentecostal Charismatic students into direct interaction with state officials running the state institution. Gukurume's (2018) study is localized to a learning institution and involves struggle for survival and relevance between Pentecostal Charismatic students, mainline churches' students, especially Seventh Day Adventist that is favoured by UZ vice chancellor. The study by Gukurume (2018) makes similar observation at a micro level though that some Pentecostal Charismatic Churches are filling gaps that are left by the state and government. Some PCCs provided accommodation and catering services to their members as UZ failed to provide student accommodation and food to its students.



The arguments

This thesis advances three interrelated arguments that are:

Firstly, the postcolonial Zimbabwean state provides the crevices and clefts through which OMG has emerged and grown as a proxy to the state by appropriating aspects of the Zimbabwean state and those of chiefs.

Secondly, OMG offers alternative social space for citizens to be upwardly mobile, unite and construct a sense of common identity based on religion, history and belonging outside the functions of the postcolonial state.

Thirdly, OMG is replacing the postcolonial state in its members lives and extending this to the wider Zimbabwean society through several activities and services OMG offers.

The activities and services, such as charity activities, broadcasting services, rehabilitation of hospitals and schools among others juxtaposes the inadequacy or unwillingness of the Zimbabwean government and OMG ability and willingness to improve the lives of Zimbabweans. Money and consumption, are the core of the analysis, reappearing throughout the dissertation and are theorized in relationship to the church, society, politics and morality of exchange. Money and consumption are central in the critique of the state and chiefs, as both money and consumption shade more light on a society OMG envision for Zimbabweans *vis a vis* the realities on ground.

To fully explore these issues, the study takes an experimental approach that involves combining political economy. While I situate the activities of OMG members within Zimbabwe's political economy, I take OMG Pentecostals beliefs and non-human actors seriously.

1.1 Definitional issues

In this section I only define the following concepts: state, government, power, authority, legitimacy. Each chapter contains a body of literature relevant to the chapter, there is no stand-alone literature review chapter.



Political scientists often define the state from a structuralist perspective (see Kopecky & Mair, 2003:277 ; Joyce, 2006: 4). This perspective emphasises the institutional nature of the state, defining the state as a bounded entity with “various institutions, such as the bureaucracy, the military, the police, the courts, and the political executive (parliament) – that is, the government” (Kopecky and Mair 2003: 277). From the definition the state is broader as it encompasses institutions of the public realm. On the other hand, Kopecky and Mair (*ibid*) conceptualize the government as an arm of the state concerned with formulation and implementation of policies of the state. By nature, a government is formed by political parties. A state is society conceived of as a single actor, but of course, it has many divisions and contradictions in practice. People and institutions find room to operate in the cracks that result. Unless mentioned otherwise, state will refer to the government of Zimbabwe. It is most often used as rulers' collective ability to project power within and beyond the country.

Anthropologists are increasingly focusing their attention on studying statehood or what is called anthropology of the state. Anthropologists' attention is on representations and practice of the state (Sharma & Gupta, 2006; Chigudu, 2017). The idea of unitary and bounded entity is dropped. Anthropologists have shown that power and authority is diffused in society and that idea of the state as the sole repository of both is too ideal. Instead anthropologist focus on what Abrams (1988) calls 'state-systems' or state processes to capture the complex and fluid nature of states. In this thesis, I focus on the complex state-systems to bring out the dynamic and complex relations between OMC and the Zimbabwean state. A focus on institutions leads us to quick conclusions that the Zimbabwean state is 'weak', fragile or failed (see Rotberg, 2002: 92). As I will argue in chapter three, the Zimbabwean state systems and processes are complex as they show a combination of both being strong, present and in some areas while absent and minimal in some respects. It is an uncomfortable mixture of both strength and fragility that gives complex state systems and processes that is far from a failed state (Alexander & McGregor, 2013; Chigudu, 2017, 2019). As I will show in chapter three, the Zimbabwean state has been heavily militarised through secondment of military officers into strategic state institutions. Alexander (2013) has depicted how Zimbabwe Prison Services has



been 'disciplined' and captured through appointments of military officers, serving and retired. On the other hand, the ZANU PF government has entrenched itself with the state institutions and processes through appointments of ZANU PF loyalist to key state institutions. There is a thin line between ZANU PF, government and state leading some scholars to argue that the Zimbabwean state has been captured by ZANU PF.

Closely related to political processes are the three concepts of power, authority and legitimacy. Weber defines power as the ability to achieve desired objectives even in face of resistance by other. Framed in this way, government can impose their way on wider society. However, such power is prone to resistance. Thus, through various ways governments solicit citizens acceptance of deployment of power by leaders and institutions. This leads us to legitimacy which is based on individual and collective perceptions about a leaders or institutions' rightful and justifiable exercise of power. When people question the exercise of power by politicians and institution, that exercise of power is illegitimate. Governments that comes to power through questionable means or are faced with governance crisis that they fail to provide for citizens face legitimate crisis. This is true about ZANU PF government whose electoral victories have been questioned since 2000. Furthermore, government has failed to provide adequate social welfare service and protection to citizens, this has undermined the governments legitimacy in citizens eyes. Weber views authority as a both legitimate power and the right to rule. These three concepts are interrelated but cannot not be used interchangeably. As I will show in chapter three, the Zimbabwean government still wield power to force citizens to comply with its directive. Despite this, its legitimacy and authority has been heavily contested and questioned by ordinary citizens.

1.2 Methodology

To explore the ways in which OMG and its membership interacts with the state I engaged in an ethnographic study of everyday lives of OMG Pentecostal Charismatics in Zimbabwe, mainly those in and who visited OMG churches in Harare. For fourteen months I attended church services, events and activities organized by OMG members. From June 2016 to August 2017 I participated in most



of OMG activities and gatherings, crusades, mid-week zonal services, marches and awareness campaigns, musical award ceremonies, meetings and other fellowships events organized for and by OMG members. From September 2017 to December 2018 my attendance was erratic, mainly to follow-up on some issues. Despite the erratic attendances, I remained part of the OMG community through OMG mobile applications⁷, OMG “Short Message System” and WhatsApp groups that I had joined during fieldwork. I continue to get updates, information, sermons and announcements.

Between October 2016 and December 2016, I attended more than ten church services three hundred kilometres away from Harare, in Masvingo, Midlands and Matabeleland North provinces⁸. In these provinces I attended services in urban areas as well as in rural areas and growth points such as Hwange, Chivi, Zvishavane, Bikita, Madamombe and Gutu with the aim of observing how the PCC gospel at OMG plays out in non-urban settings (see Fig 1-1 below). I also observed the relationship that exists between such branches and the headquarters in Harare, concomitantly hierarchies between pastors in these branches and the clergy in Harare.

⁷ OMG has two mobile applications downloadable from Google Store and App Store. One of the applications is for giving general information on upcoming events, livestreaming of events, OMG activities and the history of OGM. It serves as a noticeboard. The other application is for advertising and selling OMG content and material. OMG radio and Television stations are accessed through this application.

⁸ I attended one Sunday service in Hwange, the service was led by a pastor from Victory Falls



Figure 1-1 Map of Zimbabwe showing OMG branches visited during fieldwork

Source: Author's creation

The process of obtaining a written consent from OMG was long, stretching for February to May of 2016. The consent letter I received from OMG was a ‘poisoned chalice’ that brought about unintended consequences. Before fieldwork I thought the letter would facilitate easy access to OMG Pentecostals. The letter was on OMG letterhead, with OMG emblem watermarked and bearing prophet Danny’s⁹ name and personal contact details though signed on his behalf by a junior pastor (see Appendix A). The letter fascinated a number of OMG members, and most of them were willing to give information because they knew “the study was not harmful in any way, if it was harmful, prophet Ben and Prophet Danny would have known it

⁹ Prophet Danny is the spokesperson of OMG and of prophet Ben. He doubles as the director of ceremonies at OMG. He is considered second in command at OMG. Apart from prophet Ben and Prophetess Jane, prophet Danny is the only other person referred to as a prophet. All other members of the clergy are pastors. I will discuss his duties in detail in chapter 4 when I present the organogram of OMG



prophetically before consenting.”¹⁰ Whenever I produced the consent letter to OMG members they were startled when they saw prophet Danny’s name and contact details. Some members asked if I had met him, if he knew me personally and how I had accessed the ‘inaccessible’ clergyman. From being startled, some congregants then asked if I would tell or give pastor Danny the information, I had obtained from them. To some extent the consent letter affected responds that I got on some issues. I had to ensure the interviewees that I would not pass the message to any of clergyman. As a guarantee to some of my interviewees, I did not record the interviews and discussion as I did not want to limit what the Pentecostals would say.

Between June and August of 2016, I rented accommodation in Harare, before I moved in to stay with one of my interlocutors who was a member of OMG. This move opened doors for me to observe and learn more about the everyday lives of some of OMG members networking with the Moyos and with Nicky’s family¹¹. Once I moved in with the Moyos my relationship with and access to other OMG members changed. Furthermore, we developed close relationship due to easy access to cash at a time of cash shortage. I will explore this relationship in detail in chapter five. As fieldwork progressed, I seamlessly blended with OMG members and became an active member of OMG community, at one time intervening when an altercation broke between Nyasha and his wife. To collect data, I heavily relied on observations, conversations and in-depth-interviews that I conducted with OMG members in Harare, Hwange, Madamombe, Bikita, Masvingo urban and Chivi. I interviewed congregants whom I had been referred to by previous interviewees or other OMG members. I accessed most of my participants through purposive and snowballing sampling techniques.

To capture information on consumption of objects and things, I made use of an experimental method I call *religious biographies of things*. Religious biographies of

¹⁰ OGM member I interviewed on 16 November 2016

¹¹ Another family which I grew strong relations with during fieldwork. Nicky was in his late thirties and had a son. I related to Nicky the same way I would to my ‘elder brother.’ The family was blessed with another son towards the end of 2017.



things is a method borrowed from Kopytoff (1986). *Religious biographies of things* were the most appropriate method for understanding social, cultural, sentimental value OMG members attached to commodities. As an experimental method, I solicited for religious biographies of individuals and things, as a method for capturing OMG congregant's attitudes, meanings and conceptualizations of commodities they consume and how consumption relates to their *model for the world* and *model of living*. Sketches of biographies of commodities consumed by OMG congregants showed how money and commodities are discursively given meaning in OMG religious matrix, their role in everyday lives of congregants and how they contribute to congregants' *model of living*. This experimental method captured the 'life histories' of commodities, providing me with information on methods of acquisitions that I discuss in detail in chapter seven.

Pentecostals attend church services with notebooks, writing pads and pen. This made it easy for me to jot down notes and observations during sermons. With time I reduced the copious notes I jotted to 'acceptable pages' after some inquisitive members of the security department 'interrogated' me trying to ascertain if I was a journalist. At the beginning of every church service, attendees are instructed to greet three to six people next to them or to 'give' someone close coins to donate to OMG. This presented the opportunity for me to meet and acquaint myself with congregants sitting close to me. At times these 'greeting and giving rituals' opened avenues for long lasting relationship with OMG members¹². I will return to these greetings and giving rituals in chapter five. I often inquired about issues that I did not understand from interlocutors and at times from OMG Pentecostals who sat next to me. With the help of Nyasha and from my own observations I learnt about the dress code associated with OMG Pentecostals. I exchanged my jeans and t-shirts for formal trousers and shirts as well as floral shirt.

For ethnographic studies it is impossible to account for all the respondents and people from whom one collects data from. Some observations are made during

¹² A number of participants that I interacted with had been met through these greeting and welcoming rituals.



praise and worship segments, some during prayers, some of the ethnographically important information came to me during conversations with OMG members and at times from non-OMG members. For the first fourteen months I observed, engaged in discussions, conversations, interviews with and observed OMG Pentecostals. The data that I discuss in this dissertation came from forty-eight in-depth interviews (see Appendix B for interview guide). I also made use of secondary sources of data as an ancillary method. I followed OMG stories carried in newspapers, news bulletins as well as those stories circulating as gossip. OMG activities and leadership have been attracting media attention (Chitando, Gunda & Mapuranga, 2013: 310; Mateveke, Mukenge & Chivandika, 2013: 270–273). I visited *The Herald House*¹³ library where I had access to all local newspaper articles on prophet Ben. There was a box dedicated to all stories that include and involve prophet Ben and OMG. To get closer to OMG lived realities I had to triangulate data collection methods. Despite triangulation of methods, the arguments advanced in this thesis cannot be extrapolated to other Pentecostal Charismatic movements in Zimbabwe and beyond.

Throughout my fieldwork, I learnt that gossip and rumours are not “genres of unreliable oral information,” (Gluckman, 1963: 307; White, 1994: 75) they are pointers to general opinions and popular attitudes shared by a group of peoples. There was gossip that circulated among OMG cliques, from the rumours I gathered basic profiles about certain congregants, pastors and prophets. The Pentecostals often gossiped about the bad that is done by fellow Pentecostals. In other words, gossip and rumour are ways of assessing reputation and opinion of certain individuals, activities and events. As I will illustrate in chapter seven, gossipers make statements about moralities. While one gossips about the bad that the other has done, one elevates his own standing *vis a vis* the other being talked about (Gluckman, 1963: 308–309; Paine, 1967: 282). Gossip “is a hallmark of

¹³ Herald House is where *The Herald*, a state-owned newspaper, is housed. There is a library which contains newspapers and articles. The library archives articles on local prominent persons, prophet Ben is one of such persons. A OMG started archiving newspaper articles that include prophet Ben and OMG as a pastime, but later the librarian created a file for both OMG and prophet Ben as media focused on both increased.



membership” (Gluckman, 1963: 313). For me, being part of a gossiping clique confirmed the intimate relationship that was building between myself and some of the OMG Pentecostals. White (1994: 76) and Wilson (1974: 99–101) caution researchers to take and use information acquired through gossip with caution. I do not entirely depend on gossip and rumours though they provide me with access to alternative narratives (see chapter three).

I adopted methodological ludism¹⁴ as postulated by Drooger (2014) and Knibbe & Drooger (2011). Through adaptation of methodological ludism I managed participate and engage in activities that congregants engaged in, this approach allowed me to balance between my role as an academic and participant simultaneously. Participation brought me closer to my respondents’ world and experiences. I sincerely participated in OMG rituals such as prayers, tithing and donation giving, feastings, being laid hands on, sprinkled anointed water and or oil. As I will discuss in detail below, bodily experiences such as feelings, sounds, dreams and visions were important in immersing me in the experiences of OMG Pentecostals. Bodily experience facilitated my entry into the world of OMG Pentecostals that I often heard from interviewees and had read about from other ethnographic monographs (Luhmann, 2004, 2012; Daswani, 2011; Espirito Santo, 2016; Palmisano, 2016; Pierini & Groisman, 2016).

¹⁴ Andre Drooger (2014: 70-72) introduces a methodological position for studying religious processes. The methodological position encourages researchers to approach fieldwork as a play in which one has to be prepared to switch roles and position in order “to deal simultaneously and subjunctively with two or more ways of classifying reality.” The researcher bounces between science and religion, and outsider, insider. Peter Berger (1967) identified three methodological positions that inform researchers studying religion, namely methodological agnostic, methodological atheism and methodological theism. These methodological positions are reductionist in their analysis and fails to capture the realities of believers. Methodological agnostic allows the researcher to have his own beliefs that he does not disclose for methodological reasons. Methodological ludism allows researcher to bounce between science and religion, own religious beliefs and those of the people whom they study. I will expand on this idea in the following section. I have adopted this methodological position as it gives room to take beliefs seriously and privilege ontological claims over epistemological issues.



1.2.1 Data analysis

Data analysis is an on-going exercise that runs through the whole research process. In analysing the data, I follow the steps suggested by Boeije (2010: 113–114). Data collected was categorized on the basis of themes that emerged from interviews, conversations, observations as well as newspaper articles and sermons. From the broader themes, I conducted axial coding with the aim of selecting conceptual abstractions from each theme. Axial coding helped in selection of relevant categories for further analysis. Partly, axial coding informed conceptual abstractions upon which dissertation chapters, literature review and conceptual framework are organized. Lastly, I conducted selective coding with the aim of determining connection and between themes with the aim of understanding the bigger picture of OMG religious processes. Field data informed the narrative carried in this dissertation, with prominence given to data rather than theoretical underpinnings.

1.2.2 Reflexivity: Bodily Experiences and Ontology

In this section I consider ways in which my position, training and social background influence and is influenced by my research experience and activities among OMG Pentecostals (cf Nyamnjoh, 2012: 66). Researchers grapple with issues of reflexivity from the development and framing of the research up to the write-up and dissemination stage. As ethnographers we are continuously influenced by the experience that we come across during fieldwork, even for years after we leave the field.

It took me about three months to learn how to dress, to develop warm relations and ‘feel at home’ when around OMG Pentecostals. During the same period I acquainted myself with the rituals and structure of OMG church services. I paid tithe, some of the pastors and prophets at OMG laid their hands on head as they prayed for my ‘life situation’, I earnestly prayed, wore religious paraphernalia worn by other OMG members (wrist bands, t-shirts), sang and participated in activities such as feasting¹⁵

¹⁵ The opposite of fasting, instead of depriving themselves as a supplication to God, OMG members organized ceremonies for feasting as a way of praising and worshipping God. I expand on this ritual in chapter six



that OMG members engaged in. I immersed myself. During fieldwork I did not attend services conducted at other religious movements except for one other PCC in Harare that I occasionally visited at the invitation of a colleague. OMG was more than a religious movement whose members I was studying, it was a religious movement that I became part of and whose members provided support and assistance during times of crisis in my life, especially when my father passed on.

As an ethnographer, it is of importance that I declare my spiritual biography and how it helped or inhibited the research process. I was not a spiritual blank slate when I studied OMG religious movement. I am a Christian, a member of the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) movement studying other Christians. This has been problematic in anthropology (see Howell 2007: 272). The religious movement I am a member of has theological, doctrinal and belief system that are different from those of OMG's. The conceptualizations and role of the Holy Spirit, its duties, dreams and visions, feasting and prophesy are different. At OMG, 'live and direct' prophesies, healing, dreams and visions are given prominence. Furthermore, SDA that I am a member of emphasize that we must prepare be for the Second Coming of Jesus and the passing of this world. On the other hand, at OMG I encounter eschatology that encouraged members to amass wealth in the here and now. At first I experienced 'cultural shock' taken out of my religious way of life. With time I got over these setbacks, and allowed myself and my body to experience the multi-sensory nature of Pentecostalism. There were some religious aspects I shared with OMG members: belief in Holy Trinity, the Bible, fasting and prayers. Fieldwork experiences reconfigured my own understanding of the Holy Trinity, spiritual life and opened avenues to dream and vision experience and interpretations. My relationship and understanding of God and other spiritual actors was redefined through fieldwork exercise. Fieldwork experience and encounter etch lasting impression on me as a Christian ethnographer. My 'locatedness' was instrumental in understanding the realities that OMG Pentecostals spoke about and lived in, despite differences in theological orientation between my religion and the one I encountered at OMG. I did not visit the church that I am a member of during fieldwork. I will return to this in the conclusion.



My positionality as a Christian and a doctoral candidate impacted my study in ways that I had not foreseen. I grew up in a family that was a member of a non-Pentecostal religious movement. Despite this, I had flirted with African Initiated Churches and missionary Pentecostalism movements such as AFM and ZAOGA. The little knowledge of Pentecostal liturgy and doctrine was handy during fieldwork, I entered the field with some knowledge of Pentecostal rituals. I made use of the knowledge to participate in some of the rituals. Though I had some knowledge, I also encountered rituals, practices and doctrines that were new and novel to me. I had to learn and understand such rituals. The knowledge that I had on Pentecostalism was useful in facilitating easy transition into Pentecostalism.

The information that I was pursuing doctoral studies was a public secret among OMG members. It was boldly stated on my consent forms (see Appendix C), and I always stated when I introduced myself to interviewees. In Zimbabwe PhD is held in high esteem, for some congregants this made them feel inferior. For some it presented an opportunity for them to proselytize me. Nyasha always told me that if I become a member of OMG, with the level of education I was pursuing, the spiritual coverage¹⁶ and blessing would help me reach higher levels. I had to conduct myself in ways that accommodated those who felt inferior or ashamed that a young person like me had advanced beyond their levels of education. I made sure that I do not issue out instructions as some people would follow them because they are coming from an 'educated person'.

While I 'felt at home' studying fellow Zimbabweans with whom I shared common languages with seemingly eased the communication barriers between OMG Pentecostal and myself, I had to negotiate my position as a researcher. The commonality of language, little knowledge of some of Pentecostal rituals and liturgy positioned me as 'an insider' who had knowledge and skills members possessed. However, being inquisitiveness and producing consent letters and forms always exposed my 'outsiderness.'

¹⁶ Spiritual protection and security



In immersing myself into the routine of lives of OMG members' lives I managed to access the family's realities and worldview. My ethnography was a "polymorphous engagement" with both human and non-human actors (Hannerz, 2010: 77). OMG members believe in active spiritual agents and beings that play an important role in everyday lives. Communications with such agents occurs through visions, dreams and 'the small still inner voices'¹⁷. As fieldwork progressed, I learnt to communicate with these agents through visions I saw in dreams. OMG members take oneiromancy serious, we discussed our dreams every night and Nyasha and his wife 'interpreted' the dreams. Furthermore, we prayed to God so that his angels influence, transform and guide our lives and reveal things hidden from us but have the potential transform our lives in positive or negative ways.

I had encounters with the Pentecostal Holy Spirit. During the encounters I lost awareness of my surrounding and people around me. At times I was partially aware of my surroundings. These encounters produced feeling that are out of the ordinary, they induce feelings of happiness, sadness and awe at the same time. Such encounters with the spiritual actors and agents are real and are sought after by OMG Pentecostals. Pentecostalism is a bodily religion in which bodily experience are of importance (Luhmann, 2004). The Moyo's prayed every night before going for bed and at times we woke up to pray around mid-night to 3am. During these 'war room' situations, Mrs Moyo always told me that I had the gift of the spirit but my eagerness to know what is happening and to be in control of the situation closed-off the spirit from leading me. 'Strange mutterings' voices and words clouded my mind, and Mrs Moyo always told me to speak those words and imitate those voices as they are from the holy spirit. In following them, that is how the spirit would teach me to speak in tongues¹⁸.

Anthropologists studying religious phenomena are calling for research methodologies that portray the realities of everyday lives for the people we engage with during fieldwork. Viveiros de Castro cited in Holbraad and Pedersen (Holbraad

¹⁷ OMG member i had conversation with when i stayed at OMG Prayer Resort in April 2017

¹⁸ Also called glossolalia



& Pedersen, 2017) laments that for long the discipline of anthropology has been elevating the “conceptual regimes of the anthropologist” above that of the ‘natives’. This has been done without taking into cognisance the diversity of ontologies between the anthropologist and the people being studied. Nyamnjoh (2012: 63) cautions anthropologists against imposing their own ways of knowing upon the people they study. Furthermore, Nyamnjoh (2012: 65) makes a bold claim that

reality is much more than that which we can see, hear, touch, smell and taste, this means there is knowledge over and above what our senses tell us...

Ethnographers need to go beyond the classical methods of gathering data, as some of the methods limits the realities observed and encountered (Luhmann, 1989, 2010; Piette, 2015). One way of getting closer to everyday realities and worldview is to encourage multi-sensory ethnography that goes beyond classical methods. Ethnography is a dispositive exercise in which the researcher is both a scholar and person whose mind and body are the lenses through which s/he immerses himself in the world of study participants (Foucault, 1979 cited in Pierini and Groisman, 2016: 1). In my study bodily experiences ushered me into what most Pentecostals easily access and experience. It was a reality I had never experienced, such intersubjective encounters remain etched on my body which acts as diary for recording and remembering such experiences that are common among OMG Pentecostal Charismatics but which outsiders often miss. The body is both an instrument and object of ethnographic investigation. Ethnography was a transformative exercise in which my understanding of the world, dressing and spiritual life changed (see Holbraad and Pedersen, 2017:19).

In this study I present a case of a person of colour studying, with Christian background studying other Christians persons of colour. There are aspects of worldview and everyday realities that are shared between the researcher and the researched. The shared worldview informs the way I interacted and conceptualized social actors and agents that OMG Pentecostals interact with in their lives. I privileged ontological concerns with the aim of taking people and their beliefs seriously before making claims to understand their lived realities and models of the world.



1.2.3 Positionality, Representation and Ethics

As I went into the field, I had a number of questions on ethical issues. How 'native' should I go? What are the implications of not participating in activities that congregants do? What will congregants think when I do not participate in activities at church? What should I do if the prophet gives a prophecy directed to me? Should I ignore or refuse? Should I accept? What implications does it have on my fieldwork and respondents? These questions made it clear to me that I had to carefully navigate my way so that I do not fully 'go native' and abandon my fieldwork, at the same time, I must take congregants beliefs seriously. Participation helped me win respondent's trust.

My approach is characterized by empathy. I became like any other member of OMG, I almost got baptised¹⁹ to complete the rituals of breaking with the past as Meyer (1998a) puts it. My eagerness to learn and understand everyday lives from the members' perspectives made me not to see the "unlikable people who work hard at their unlikeability"²⁰ (van Wyk, 2014a: 211). Drawing closer and sharing lives with some OMG Pentecostals provided opportunities to understand their worldviews and actors that are involved in their world and worldview. I learned and experienced some of the spiritual actors and agents that OMG members interact with in their everyday lives.

¹⁹ The date of baptising fell on a day that I was in Masvingo, following-up on some OMG members I had met in Harare. I had indicated my participation in the ritual.

²⁰ Illana van Wyk is a white anthropologist whose study focused on a religious movement composed of black South Africans. Her choice for ethics of disliking can easily be mistaken as the continuance of apartheid era racial segregation. I do not imply that foreign, non- believing or non-native ethnographers always fail to comprehend lives of respondents, Evan-Pritchard (1976), despite being a Christian, gave a rigorous and less polemical analysis of Azande witchcraft. Neither do I argue that native anthropologists' accounts are in line with respondents' conceptual regimes.



When I commenced my fieldwork, I was aware of ‘current’ ethical controversies surrounding an earlier ethnographic research among Pentecostals in South Africa²¹, I obtained permission from OMG to conduct my research (Appendix A). While I had a consent letter from OMG to conduct my research, I also developed individual consent forms that all participants completed (Appendix C). As aforementioned, the letter from prophet Danny complicated my positionality as the researcher and influenced how I negotiated my position. In seeking consent I adopted the dynamic informed consent in which I continuously sought consent from participant by asking respondents’ willingness to participate in my research, reminding them through statements like “do you mind if I use this in my research” or “that is really useful for my research, can you elaborate on that” (American Anthropological Association, 2012). During conversations, congregants raised issues that were of ethnographical interesting and related to my study, I solicited for verbal consent to include such discussions as fieldwork data.

I have anonymized all the names of religious movements and persons to curb any negative consequences that may arise from this study. The use of pseudonyms cannot prevent persons familiar with the Zimbabwean religious landscape from correctly guessing or identifying the religious movements that I discuss. A lot of Zimbabweans will certainly give a correct guess. Lastly, I seek guidance from examiners on how to deal with DVDs, tracts, website and Universal Resource Locators (URL) that reveal the true names of the prophets as well as the name of the religious movement(s)²². I have included official websites and URL to articles in

²¹ Universal Church of the Kingdom of God through a press release has distanced itself from the study conducted by Van Wyk on the basis that she did not apply for consent to study its members. See Mafokeng (2015) <http://mg.co.za/article/2015-10-30-letters-to-the-editor-october-30-to-november-5-2015>

²² While I am sympathetic to one of the examiners comment that religious organization are powerful and manage their representation well, I have resisted the suggestion to use real name of the Pentecostal movement. I was granted ethical clearance from the church to conduct this research on the basis of my letter to them, which I attached to my Post-graduate Research and Ethics application, in which I explicitly stated that I would NOT use the real name of the church.



which prophet Ben and OMG are revealed by his name. These URL, newspaper article links and website do not hide the identities of the persons and the religious movements. Should I remove these sources from the copy of this thesis that I submit for online posting? If I keep the URL readers will identify the religious movement and its leadership, undermining the anonymity that I seek to uphold. This is an ethical quandary that I seek guidance and advice from seasoned scholars and examiners on how best to conceal the identity of OMG but also providing details that augment data and argument I present in this thesis.

1.3 Themes and Outline

I conclude this introductory chapter by outlining the organisation and structure of this dissertation, highlighting arguments raised in each. Nine chapters, including this introduction, make-up this thesis. Of the nine chapters, chapters two and three are background chapters based on analysis of secondary data. The remaining six chapters are empirical, largely derived from data collected through fieldwork. The last chapter is a recap of ideas and arguments raised throughout the thesis.

The aim of **chapter two** is to give an overview of global Pentecostalism. The chapter lays the historical development and operations of Pentecostalism in different locations and contexts around the globe. Of interest are ways in which Pentecostals understood their purpose in world, and societies they are part of. I explore different ways Pentecostals interacted with the state in Latin America, North America, Eastern parts of Europe and in Africa, drawing parallels with Pentecostals in Zimbabwe.

Chapter three provides an abridged historical account of Zimbabwe and its inhabitants. In the same chapter I trace the political economy of Zimbabwe, highlighting different phases and how they affected Zimbabweans in general. I then insert the emergence and operation of the Pentecostal movements within the obtaining political economic environment.

Chapter four aims to acquaint readers unfamiliar with OMG with a detailed account of the ministry. In this chapter I trace the emergence of OMG as a lunch-time



interdenominational gathering to a transnational movement. OMG worldview, composition, structure and operations are discussed to illustrate ways in which the ministry has organized its activities and exercise control over its membership. In this chapter I engage with literature on the schismatic nature of Pentecostal movements to explore OMG split from Apostolic Faith Mission (Dillon-Malone, 1978; Daneel, 1987; Kiernan, 1996; Chitando, 2009). Furthermore, I discuss literature on forms of religious authority and how they play out at OMG as well as how religious authority at OMG mirrors and critique the forms of authority associated with the state (Weber, 1946; Csordas, 1997; Engelke, 2004; Maxwell, 2006; Kirsch, 2008).

In **chapter five** I focus on money, exploring ways in which OMG Pentecostals retool and discursively understand money. Through focusing on every day and ritualized understandings of money I will show ways in which money is discursively incorporated into OMG discourses. Money participates in the creation of morality among Pentecostals, this is illustrative of the way money can be an extension of the self. For analytical purposes I discuss ethnographic material by Hart (2001, 2007, 2011, 2015), Dekker and Van Dijk (2010), Zelizer (1997), Guyer (2017), Simmel (1907) and Bloch and Parry (1989) among others. I explore rituals such as tithing and free-will offering where money in its ritualised form participates. In this chapter I engage with literature that deals with the *social meaning of money*. I contextualize the chapter, especially tithing and giving, within Maussian gift exchange. I explore ways in which money is 'appropriated' from the state and reframed with religious discourse. I interrogate work by Dodd (2014), Mauss (1935), Lindhardt (2009, 2015), Ukah (2007a, 2013) and van Wyk (2014b).

I frame **chapter six** in a way that dispels the individualist and retreatist explanations that broadly portray Pentecostalism as insulated and '*other worldly*' (Gifford, 2004; Robbins, 2004a). I explore ways in which money facilitates relationships between OMG and the wider Zimbabwean state and society. While there are arguments made that money creates fleeting and impersonal relationships between parties involved, the case presented will show how money is fostering personal, warm and intimate relations among Pentecostals. Furthermore, I argue that money enables OMG to project its version/model of society to non-members through its activities in



Zimbabwe. I make use of David Graeber's (2001, 2005) conceptualization of society. I graft Jean and John Comaroff's ideas on 'sovereigns' onto Graeber's conceptualizations (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2008). In this chapter I further the idea that money presents the ground on which OMG presents itself as a responsible movement when compared to the state that is often associated with crony capitalism and inefficiencies.

In **chapter seven** I shift attention to *consumptionscapes* among Pentecostals. I discuss and engage major works on consumption and the politics of identity construction. In particular I focus on literature by Ferguson (1999); Bourdieu (1984); Nyamnjoh (2005) and Friedman (1994a,b) for the general framing of consumption and identity construction. To ground the practice of consumption within Zimbabwean historical and current context I rely on Burke (1996), West (2002) and Mate (2014) for analytical guidance. The display and consumption of commodities is part of ways in which Pentecostals create their collective identities. Furthermore, consumption is a way of evangelizing and a strategy of 'marketing' prophet Ben, God of prophet Ben and OMG ministry. I argue that consumption provide OMG Pentecostals with the avenue of critiquing and questioning the state's inability to improve the lives of citizens and its inability to facilitating access to Western material commodities that Zimbabweans desire for.²³

Chapter eight continues with the theme of consumption albeit at individual level. The chapter is contextualized within the harsh economic conditions in Zimbabwe. In this chapter I focus on strategies of commodity acquisition to illustrate the weaknesses of focusing on the act of display of commodities. Kopytoff's (1986) approach of detailed *biographies of things* reveals the agency of the Pentecostals in their relationship with commodities. I contextualize this relationship and the agency of Pentecostal within the arguments raised by Taussig (2010); Meyer (1998b); Miller (1987, 1990); Hahn (2008) and Ger and Belk (1996). I present a case of Pentecostals who display and consume commodities acquired through

²³ The government of Zimbabwe has adopted the 'Look East Policy' which saw Asian, especially Chinese goods flooding Zimbabwe.



borrowing, imitations and gifts. I also explore the moral economies that inform and structure consumption among OMG Pentecostals. A number of OMG Pentecostals have precarious access to commodities yet show their agency by negotiating their way into Pentecostal economies of prestige.

Chapter nine is a recap of major analytical conclusions and arguments derived from the data that I present in earlier chapters. I advance the main argument about Pentecostal consumption and ideas on money and wealth and how these aspects shape the interaction between OMG Pentecostals and the post-colonial Zimbabwean state.



2. PENTECOSTALISM: CONTEXTS, GENEALOGIES AND TRENDS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives historical overview of the origins and developments of the Pentecostal movements. I trace the intellectual and theological strands that gave rise to Pentecostalism. Furthermore, I explore ways in which Pentecostal movements have interacted with different nation-states across the globe. I place emphasis of political and socio-economic conditions in those nation-states and the dynamic interactions between the state and Pentecostal movements. The central idea I present in this chapter is that Pentecostalism is a global phenomenon with varied local manifestations across the globe. Pentecostal movements have interacted and related to different states in different forms. This chapter lays the historical background to OMG, a Pentecostal movement this thesis focuses on.

2.2 Global Pentecostalism

This section traces the origins and diversities that are found among Pentecostal movements.

2.2.1 Genealogies of Pentecostalism

The places of origin and spread of modern Pentecostalism has been explained by several contradictory schools of thought (Westerlund, 2009: 1). For quite some time, the school of thought that Pentecostal revival occurred in 1906 in Los Angeles at Azusa Street has held prominence in academic discourse. Concomitantly, Pentecostalism in other parts of the world has been portrayed as an American derivative that was 'exported' to the Other. Brouwer et. al (1996); Drew Smith (2006: 1–2) and Gifford (1990, 1994a,b, 2002: 170) point to North America as the source of Pentecostalism and explain its global spread as the process of 'exporting the American gospel' and 'American religious outreach'²⁴. Literature that questions the America-centric origins of Pentecostalism has been on the rise. Pentecostalism is at times traced back to Jerusalem, to the Upper Room during the day of the

²⁴ Sub-titles of books edited by Brouwer et al (1996) and Drew Smith respectively



Pentecost when gifts of the spirit descended on followers of Jesus²⁵ (Adeboye, 2004).

Wacker's (2001: 1) account of theological and intellectual origins of Pentecostalism illustrates that its emergence was a process and not an event. Wacker (2001) notes that some of the components of Pentecostal theology had British origins, from the preaching of John Wesley and from teachings at a Higher Life Conference. Furthermore, Wacker (2001) argues that by 1895 Pentecostal-like groupings²⁶ had emerged in North America before the 1906 revivals. Earlier encounters with black spirituality gave what became Pentecostalism some of its practice. Hollenweger (1980: 70) identifies some Pentecostal practice and theology that have non-western origins, namely exorcism, glossolalia, laying of hands and early Pentecostal hymns and songs.

Anderson (2004), Robeck Jnr (2014: 25) and David III (2014: 74) contend that Pentecostal revivals occurred in diverse and multiple places across the globe. Anderson's (2004) work has gone a long way in dismantling the core-periphery model in the global spread of Pentecostalism by pointing to independent emergence of Pentecostal revivals in Asia, South India (Anderson, 2004: 123), Africa (Ojo, 1995, 2006: 157; Kalu, 2000, 2008) and Russia (Lane, 1978: 473; Lofstedt, 2009: 165) before contact with western Pentecostalism. Anderson (2010: 117) sums up that "Pentecostalism is not a movement with a distinct beginning in the USA or anywhere else....". Kalu (2000: viii, 3, 18) argues that African Pentecostalism neither emerged after contact with foreign missionaries nor is it an 'extension of American electronic church or a creation of televangelists.' Both Kalu (2008) and Ojo (2006: 158) acknowledge the role of American Pentecostals in the shaping of African Pentecostalism later through invitations extended to the former by the latter groups. Kalu (ibid) further argues that African Pentecostalism's "problems and idioms are sourced from the interior of African spirituality."

²⁵ see the Bible of Acts 2: 1-4

²⁶ I use the term grouping to avoid the term sect.



While there may be contentions in the historiography of Pentecostalism, there has been general acceptance of what constitute Pentecostalism. Anderson (2004:14) offers a heuristic definition based on features common in most Pentecostal denominations. Pentecostalism is understood as a “movement concerned primarily with the experience of the working of the Holy Spirit and the practice of spiritual gifts” (Anderson, 2004: 14). Asamoah-Gyadu (2005: 12, 2006) offers a comprehensive definition of Pentecostalism, defining the phenomenon as:

Christian groups which emphasise salvation in Christ as a transformative experience wrought by the Holy Spirit and in which pneumatic including ‘speaking in tongue’, prophecies, visions, healing and miracles in general, perceived as standing in historic continuity with the experiences of the early church as found especially in the Acts of the Apostles, are sought, accepted, valued, and consciously encouraged among members as signifying the presence of God and experiences of his Spirit.

Pentecostalism furthers the vibrant Apostolic Christianity associated active operations of the Holy Spirit (McClymond, 2014: 31). Furthermore, Pentecostalism is an experiential religion with unique pneumatology which is sensorial and has bodily manifestations (Csordas, 1990: 21, 1997; Mitchell, 1997: 82; Davies, 2010; Luhrmann, 2010: 217, 2012).

2.2.2 Mapping the contours of Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity

Scholars and ordinary people have reductively called Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity names such as ‘name it and claim it’; ‘the faith formula movement’; ‘prosperity gospel’; ‘entrepreneurial religion’, ‘casino Pentecostalism’ and ‘health and wealth’ (Gifford, 2002; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005: 203; Alsayyad & Roy, 2006: 497; Ukah, 2007a,b,c, 2013). This nomenclatural trend exposes the simplicity and reductive naming based on the use of generic characteristics and themes within PCC theology as the defining factors. The first two terms portray Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity as ‘occultist’ and superstitious. This line of thought has been raised to paradigmatic levels in anthropology through the works of John and Jean Comaroff (Pieterse, 2016). Condemnation of Pentecostal Charismatics has been that they celebrate consumption at the expense of production, or that they aim to produce wealth from nothing. The immediacy of wealth and consumption sought by Pentecostals is explained as a pointer to the unfettered power of God. Such consumption is understood by the Comaroffs as ‘sacral consumption’.



Contextualizing Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity within the global neo-liberal system, the Comaroffs explained the recent wave of Pentecostalism in South Africa as an ‘enchanted’, irrational reaction to and a ‘misrecognition’ of the global neo-liberalism.

Ukah’s (2007) and Van Wyk’s (2014a) polemical studies on Nigerian Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity and UKCG in South Africa reduce PCC as self-enrichment projects for graduate preachers leading less-educated congregations. Pentecostals are portrayed as victims being fleeced of their hard-earned money through what Ukah an elaborated system of ‘sacred accounting’ and Pentecostal ‘kleptocracy’. These arguments are compelling, but fail to situate tithing system within the broader Pentecostal Charismatic doctrine and worldview. The tithing system is analysed outside the believers’ conceptual regimes of the tithing system. Scholars often impose the rational choice models on issues of faith. Faith operates at different plane from the economics. Furthermore, there is less details on Pentecostal rituals, beliefs and sermons to contextualize the Pentecostal worldview, logic and the operation of the tithing system. As I have argued in the previous chapter, researchers need to ask the correct questions that lead them to the conceptual framework of the researched. OMG Pentecostals have moved beyond the production of wealth through miracles. The use of terms such as ‘gospel of prosperity’ ignores the complex theological teachings that Pentecostal Charismatics receive.

Pentecostal Charismatic Christians across the globe share common underlying liturgical and theological aspects. As highlighted earlier, Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity lays “emphasis [on] personal salvation (being born again), gifts of the Holy Spirit (Charismata), experiential forms of worship and spiritual warfare” (Lindhardt, 2007:37). The belief that faithfulness and sinless life is rewarded by God lays the foundation for Pentecostal Charismatic Christian doctrine. Divine rewards are among other spiritual gifts, health, wealth, protection and fruitfulness (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005: 202). Jesus, so the story goes, was crucified for believers to enjoy the afore-mentioned rewards. Rewards are elevated and treated as a right each faithful Pentecostal Charismatics is entitled to. Material and spiritual successes are



interpreted as divine blessings (Heuser, 2016). The inclusion of material wealth as a sign of divine blessings has led some scholars to derogatively and reductively refer to Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity as 'name-it-and-claim-it' (cf Ukah, 2007)

Apart from faith and uncorrupted lifestyle, there are principles that govern the extent to which divine rewards manifest in believers' lives. The act of donating money to the ministry in the form of tithe and offering unlocks one's rewards and blessings (Heuser, 2016:2; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:207). The act of donating to the ministry is known as 'sowing of seeds.' The imagery of farming is illustrative, it vividly shows how the system works. In giving to God, one is investing in a fertile ground that would return plenty-folds. 'Seed sowing' creates a theological construction of ritual exchange between Pentecostal Charismatics and God. Droz and Gez (2016) note that this exchange acts as 'trap' to ensnare God to return gifts offered to Him by believers. For Van Wyk (2014a), the offerings donated to the ministry are a form of a petition and an entreaty to force God to grant UCKG adherents their desires. In chapters five and six I will explore this in detail, illustrating how OMG is constructing a network of social welfare for its member at times the state is failing.

Deliverance rituals take centre stage in much of Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity activities. Intensive exorcism sessions meant to deliver believers from demons and other evil spirits are regular during services (Maxwell, 2006; Siegel, 2013: 10) Demons are targeted in these sessions, demons of poverty, barrenness, and other social ills. Apart from demons, believers are delivered from sickness and curses (Siegel, 2013:10). There are personalized demons that torment believers. Ancestral spirits and old auntie or uncle's spirits may 'manifest' as a demon stifling believers prosperity. Some demons are impersonal. Demons of poverty, divorce, anti-marriage, childlessness at times do not have a human agent behind them (ibid). Deliverance is ritualized often with the possessed person screaming and wailing. Pentecostal Charismatics' concern with fighting demons is illustrative of the importance of spiritual warfare in Pentecostal religion. Rituals of deliverance make up the first stages of rupture and 'breaking with the past' (Meyer, 1998a:327-328). This 'breaking with the past' is relative to persons and place, it finds



contextualization and meaning differently in every society. The past that Zimbabwean Christians hold differs amongst themselves, and with other Christians elsewhere. The configurations and operationalization of the 'break with the past' are not the same among half a billion Pentecostals across the globe (Engelke, 2010: 195).

Due to lack of a standardized doctrine among Pentecostal Charismatic churches, there exist different variations of the principle and tenets discussed above. Furthermore, scholars present differing accounts on work and work ethic among Pentecostal Charismatics. In Ghana, Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) observed that Pentecostal Charismatics were encouraged to work. Hard work was considered as divine duty and as a way of serving God. For work to be fulfilling it had to be undertaken in observation of the afore-mentioned beliefs and principles. Otabil Mensah of International Central Gospel Church encouraged Ghanaian Pentecostal Charismatics to work hard and observance of the divine principle to get the most out of God. On the other hand, there are ethnographic study that portray Pentecostal Charismatic doctrine as deceptive and breeding laziness. The Comaroffs have argued that Pentecostalism in South Africa encourages consumption without looking at the productive side of things. Gifford (1998) argues that by locating cause of poverty and inequality within the spiritual realm and the focus of faith formula theology, Pentecostalism disempowers believers. Believers do not act due to spiritual causalities and explanation given for such phenomenon as poverty.

Concerns with this-worldly success partly explains the global popularity of Pentecostal Charismatics Christianity. Csordas (2009: 5) notes that the 'portability of religious practises' and a 'transposable religious message' drives the growth of Pentecostal Charismatics Christianity across the globe. Pentecostal Charismatic rituals and experiential encounters empower believes and gives hope in challenging situations. Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity message is grafted onto local context easily allowing itself to be contextualized in various societies (Meyer, 2004; Heuser, 2016: 2). Once contextualized, the beliefs, the 'word' preached and rituals performed in Pentecostal Charismatic ministries become indigenous (Ojo, 1995: 106). The teachings, rituals and the sermons are original as they seek to aid



believers deal with existential challenges in specific contexts. Pentecostals are quick to own, localize and retool the notion of prosperity and success to make it applicable to their contexts and situations (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Haynes, 2012a).

Apart from a 'transposable messages' and a 'portability of practises', Heuser (2016:3) notes that Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity has spread to all continents due to theological paradigm shifts from classical Pentecostal theology. Classical Pentecostalism inculcated escapist attitude in believers. Classical Pentecostals wished to escape their contemporary world in favour for the other world established by Jesus. Classical Pentecostals prayed and hoped - for communities in which the devil would not access. Pentecostal Charismatics theological formulations of believers' place in the world is different from that of classical Pentecostalism. Pentecostal Charismatics engage the world. Their eagerness to take 'dominion over the world' motivate believers to envision a different society from the one they are part of. In addition, Pentecostal Charismatics theology interprets material wealth and success as fruits of spiritual blessings. Concomitantly, Pentecostal Charismatics embrace money and actively seek for it (Lindhardt, 2009). The condemnation of poverty in PCC doctrines acts as the basis upon which believers launch attacks upon poverty and the state that creates precariousness.

Pentecostal Charismatic Churches' use of modern mass communication media has allowed them to enjoy global followership and coverage (Heuser, 2016:3). Satellite television, radio stations, crusades, the internet, literature produced by prophets and pastors, recorded sermons and websites are some of the media through which Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity message and imageries traversed the globe. The preaching of a de-localized 'transposable message,' by Pentecostal Charismatic preachers, is conducted with global audience and followership in mind (Marshall-Fratani, 2001: 89; Dronen, 2013). Most Pentecostal Charismatic Churches have the word 'International' in their name signalling intentions for expansion. Many African Pentecostal Charismatics churches have managed to turn into transnational religious organization with branches scattered across the world. Maxwell (2006) chronicles ways in which Zimbabwe Assemblies Of God Africa transformed itself from a local prayer band to a transnational ministry with branches regionally and internationally. Through reverse missionary Pentecostal Charismatic



movements are taking the gospel back to Europe and America considered as places of origins classical Pentecostal churches. Maxwell (2006) and Burgess, Knibbe and Quaas' (2010) ethnographic studies captures some of the African initiated Pentecostal Charismatic movement that have spread into Europe, targeting Africans in the diaspora.

Having outlined the genealogy of Pentecostalism, various strands and characteristics, I now examine the political and economic conditions in different places Pentecostalism has thrived. I shall bring to the fore the interplay between Pentecostalism and nation-states across the globe.

2.3 Scholarship trends on Pentecostalism and State Relations

There is a large body of literature examining the dynamic relationship between Pentecostalism and governments and the state. The bulk of these studies are comparative in approach and often lump together various Christian denominations under the broader banner of Protestantism (see Martin, 1990; Freston, 2001; Chitando, 2009). The focus on Protestant Christianity includes a variety of denominations, some of them not Pentecostal movements²⁷. A generalization, on the basis of Christian denomination is common and often fails to capture the nuanced variations in the religious groups. The voting trends of Christians in general and Pentecostals in particular is an area that has interested a number of researchers. Most studies on voting behavior of adherents has often neglected the everyday lives of adherents, only defining their political involvement in terms of votes casted (Steigenga, 2001; Oro, 2005; Valenzuela, Scully & Somma, 2007). The political participation of Christians and the denominations' engagement with the state are explained in terms of Christian candidates voted into various legislative assemblies. Christians are political in their everyday lives and make decisions that are political. Pining adherents' political participation to voting behavior is reductive (Marshall, 2009). Ethnographical studies on the relationship between Pentecostal Charismatics Christianity and the state are few (see Marshall, 2009; Obadare, 2018) In this study, I focus on a OMG's rituals, sermons and adherents' lives to illustrate

²⁷Such movements as Presbyterians, Jehovah's Witness and Anglican fall under Protestant Christianity but are not Pentecostal. Westmeier (1999) focuses on what he calls Protestant Pentecostalism in Latin America. Due to this some studies place Pentecostal movements under the broader category of Protestantism.



ways in which Pentecostal Charismatics engages with the post-colonial Zimbabwe state in their everyday lives. Simultaneously, I explore ways in which OMG provides alternative that often downplay the importance of the state in Pentecostals' lives. Below I give an overview of studies that focus on the intersections of the state and the Pentecostal movements.

2.3.1 Pentecostalism in the Americas

In this section I present the demographic profile of the first generation of Pentecostals in America. I discuss in detail their attitude and stance towards the state and national politics. In the United States of America from its start, the bulk of Pentecostal converts were illiterate “dregs, misfits and drifters” (Wacker 2001:199) and “the crippled and the displaced” (Robert Anderson, 1979). African Americans of slave descent, native Americans, white Americans from the south and migrants from Asia, and Latin America were the regular members of early Pentecostal churches. Most of these converts were either unemployed or did menial jobs in industries and farms (Robert Anderson, 1979). Early Pentecostals ridiculed professors, politicians, doctors and politicians. There was hatred for categories of people who were socially and economically well-off than the Pentecostals (Wacker, 2001). In some cases leadership of early Pentecostal churches, consisted of educated and middle-class families whose lifestyles differed from that led by their followers. American Pentecostals from the beginning, developed disliking for abstract bureaucratic entities such as the state, trade unions, corporates and even the League of Nation (Wacker, 2001). Early Pentecostals perceived the operations of these entities as misaligned to Pentecostal principles, belief in the second coming of Jesus and their faith.

Early American Pentecostals were ‘otherworldly’ that they did not concern themselves much with issues of earthly power and governance. The government, the state and God demanded a form of loyalty from believers. Pentecostals reasoned that in demanding patriotism from citizens, the American state displaced faith in God. Furthermore, the state claimed to provide, protect and aids citizens, the same attributes and roles Pentecostals associated with God. Pentecostals developed a disliking of the government and the state. Pentecostal movements distanced their charity activities from those of the government. Charles Parham’s



stance on the United States' government is illustrative of the general approach most of his followers held. In his teachings, Parham portrayed the government as an 'imbecile' entity whose foundations were unscriptural and ungodly. Levi Lopton, another Pentecostal preacher in America scoffed the government for wasting God's resources on ungodly events such as Fourth of July celebrations (Wacker, 2001: 217-219).

The dispensationalism that characterized early United States' Pentecostal movements moulded believers' negative attitude towards 'this-worldly' phenomena such as politics and the state. Wacker (2001: 220 - 223) claims that early US Pentecostals were apolitical²⁸. The doctrinal teachings on rapture diverted believers' attention from the state. Some teachings state that existing nation-states would be destroyed and replaced by a theocracy. Early Pentecostals had no intentions to reform the world, but to replace it (McClymond, 2014: 31). Only a handful of early Pentecostals actively dabbled in politics, or sought elected offices. Parham discouraged his followers from both voting and supporting any political establishment. Politics fell outside the domain of early US Pentecostal theology and ideology. Early US Pentecostal movement had little engagement with the American political machinery.

American Pentecostalism has always been marked by pragmatism. Despite its attack on terrestrial agents of power and authority, Pentecostal's relations with the police was cordial. The police protected Pentecostals from attacks from several groups that were against the movements. Racists, criminals and other religious groups disturbed event organized by Pentecostals. The police were a symbol and source of public order and protection. Pentecostals accepted them as their protectors. Early US Pentecostals also related intimately with the land which they viewed as God-given. The intimate connection with the land, and rejection of

²⁸ Despite the claims for 'apoliticism' by early American Pentecostals, such a stance is political in the sense that their lack of active political participation (dis)advantages some political parties and candidates. Thus, apoliticism is implicitly political participation. The majority of early American Pentecostals were the marginalized, why was this category of people interested in joining Pentecostal movements, such decisions might have been political.



authority over the same land, complicates the relationship between Pentecostals, state and nation. The land had religious and symbolic significance among the US Pentecostals. As former slaves, the land of pointed to their freedom and salvation (Wacker, 2001). Wacker (2001: 237) sums up that early US Pentecostals had “no use at all for the state, the political entity centred in Washington, D.C”.

David III (2014: 83) offers an interesting analysis of early North American Pentecostals. White Pentecostals actively participated in politics and trade unions while African-Americans and Pentecostals from minority ethnic groups distanced themselves from politics and civil rights movements. To a larger extent, race determined the degree to which early Pentecostals engaged with the world they lived in.

Latin America has received much attention when it comes to the growth and activities of Pentecostalism. David Martin (1990) offers an extensive exploration of the growth classical Pentecostalism in Latin America since the 1960s. The dismantling of church-state unity in Latin America saw the weakening of the Catholicism. This, Martin interprets as a victory of American gospel over Catholicism that predominant in Latin American states. Pentecostalism brought with it democratization processes and egalitarianism. Pentecostal fervour appealed to the marginalized categories in society: blacks, women, Indians and the poor. Furthermore, its appeal to the marginalized is explained in terms of hope, empowerment through the Holy Spirit and promises it offers. Catholicism’s alliance with the state offended the marginalized categories who strongly associated Catholicism with foreign invasion, violence and sado-masochism. The appeal of Pentecostalism to marginalized categories of society is found in intimate social networks, warm laity-clergy relationship and experiential form of worship that it fosters. On the other hand, Catholicism had been hierarchical and depended on foreign missionaries whose interaction with the laity was minimal.

Pentecostalism is the fastest growing form of Christianity in Latin America (Freston, 2001). LAPOP (2012) pegs the population of evangelicals and Pentecostals to be slightly above a third of the population in Guatemala and slightly over a tenth in



Chile, Peru and Brazil. Pentecostals' encounter with the state vary across national borders, denomination and the socio-economic status of the adherents. In Chile adherents who converted to Pentecostalism are of the working class, migrants and the *lumpen proletariat* (Ramirez, 2014). The low levels of education, lack of resources and illiteracy. These socio-economic characteristics act as an inhibitive hurdle for the Pentecostals to enter the political arena. The way Pentecostalism in Chile has positioned itself in relation to the state is that of disengagement. Chilean Pentecostals' apolitical and escapist stance reduces Pentecostalism to a retreatist haven for the marginalized masses. Neo-Marxist undertone informs Gifford's (1998: 197 and 332, 2002, 2004: 169) observations in Ghana and Liberia that Pentecostalism spiritualizes politics by locating the causes of woes in the spiritual realm. In such cases, Pentecostalism stifles adherents' ability to engage with the state by locating the sources of national problems within the spiritual realms. Structural causes are neglected as adherents shift attention to the afterlife, prayers and exorcism (Gifford, 1998). The socio-economic characteristics of Pentecostals surveyed in Chile also militated against the emergence of robust movement capable of making demands or aim to reform the state. Most of the acolyte were illiterate without any training as preacher or pastors. Furthermore, such Pentecostal movements lacked resources for campaigning and appealing to the electorate (Fediakova and Parker, 2009 cited in Parker 2016).

Pentecostal and evangelical movements attracted converts from different socio-economic classes. Pentecostals surveyed in Guatemala and Brazil were better off than those surveyed in Chile. In terms of household income and wealth, Pentecostals in Brazil were at par with Catholics (Freston, 2004; LAPOP, 2012). Disposable income enjoyed by Pentecostals in Brazil and Guatemala enabled them to take part in politics. Most Pentecostal politicians made their way into politics through constitution-making processes. Pentecostal politicians united on moral issues concerning abortion, same-sex marriages and marriages. Furthermore, the Pentecostal bloc toiled to effect laws that reduced the alliance and dominance of the Catholic Church in respective nations. For illustration of the ways in which Pentecostals in Latin America had a bearing on the political trajectory, I turn to Brazil and Guatemala.



In Brazil, for example, the UCKG and Assemblies of God had moved into the political arena (Oro, 2005). The latter shifted from an escapist stance to explicit political engagement²⁹. Both denominations use their structures to mobilize support for candidates. The UCKG has had a successful political engagement, having managed to secure seats for some of its members in the legislative arm of the state. UCKG pastors have been appointed into ministerial posts in Rouseff-led government. In Brazil Pentecostal movements did not form political parties or presented a united front, they opted to distribute candidates into various political parties. Members of the UCKG were scattered into both right and left wing political parties. This weakened the achievements of the Pentecostal denominations in national politics. Despite entry into politics and winning a number of post in various legislative assemblies, Pentecostal denominations have failed to steer the nation towards their social and economic vision. They lack a clear political vision and agenda. Freston (1998) notes that UCKG entered politics with the aim of enriching itself through state resources. Accusations of corruption and bribe-taking scandals continue to mar UCKG related politicians. Of note is UCKG Bishop Carlos Rodrigues, and Garotinho, the governor of Rio de Janeiro who were both convicted on corruption charges.

Pentecostal movements are portrayed as Christianity groups well-suited for societies and categories of people in transition or crises. This proto-functionalist explanation of deprivation thesis locates the growth of Pentecostalism across the globe as a result of globalization, modernity or neo-liberal induced crises. In Guatemala, Garrard-Burnett (2009: 211) notes that at time the large section of the population experienced challenges such as war, poverty, racism and a dysfunctional social system, Pentecostalism offered mechanisms to deal with the social ills. The spiritual warfare which Pentecostals waged aimed at enhancing personal welfare, productivity and reducing crime (ibid). The case of Almolonga discussed by Garrard-Burnett (2009: 213) portrays Pentecostalism as the driving force behind the town's transformation from a subsistence to a commercial economy. Pentecostalism ability

²⁹ Apolitical attitude and stance may change over time due to a number of factor.



to “adopt and adapt modernity’s techniques, discourses and practices into new imaginaries” has propelled Almolonga into an enclave of economic success, surrounded by poor town (Garrard-Burnett, 2009: 213).

As highlighted in the historical and cross-cultural analysis above, Pentecostal movements adopt different stances in their relationship with the state. Furthermore, the case of UCKG illustrates that religious denominations can change their political stance over time. The same can be observed in Zimbabwe. OMG has had different relations with the state, ranging from supporting the government to critiquing and criticizing the government. These shifts find explanations in the historical trajectories of the post-independence Zimbabwean government. The military-assisted transition ushered a different form of ZANU PF government, in which OMG forged new relations with. I will expand on these alternating forms of relations in chapter six. By comparing OMG to other Pentecostal movements across the globe, I aim to illustrate ways in which Pentecostalism as a global phenomenon finds local manifestation within and relate to diverse economic, social and political landscapes across the world.

On the political scene, Pentecostal politicians have been visible. Two of Guatemala’s authoritarian leaders subscribed to Pentecostal faith (Freston, 2001). Several Pentecostal movements supported the regime of Rios Montt (1982-84) who came to power through a coup. Rios Montt waged a war against communist fighters in rural Guatemala. Montt interpreted the purge as a religious war against atheist and communist. Pentecostal clergy, especially members of *El-Verbo* Pentecostal movement, assumed local level leadership in communities and played an important role in distribution of aid during the Montt’s era. In 1990 Jorge Serrano (1991-93) came into power and Elim Church threw its weight behind him. Serrano’s reign was marred by corruption, violence, lack of respect for democratic principle and rule of law (Smith, 2014: 176). Apart from politicians who identified with Pentecostal Christianity, Pentecostal prophets have moved into the political arena by being elected into legislative assemblies. Noteworthy is Harold Caballeros - the leader of El Shadai Ministry - who has ventured into politics. He ran for presidency in 2007 but did not win. Between 2012 -13 he was appointed the foreign affairs minister



(Freston, 2013). The patron-client relationship between Pentecostal leaders and national leaders has led to the conflation of the two. Pentecostal leaders legitimized and accepted policies designed by leaders they are aligned to. Pentecostal politicians and leaders accepted most projects that were implemented through state machineries, thus conflate them to the state or positioning themselves as an appendix of the state.

Lastly, I turn to Argentina. From the inception, the hordes of Pentecostals in Argentina were drawn from the unstable sections of society – the migrants and the underclass. For the poor and migrants, converting to Pentecostalism was a way of dealing with alienation and anomie that came with relocation. Pentecostalism was a source of meaning and direction in insecure contexts. Social networks of mutual support helped migrants to adjust to the urban and working environment they found themselves in. Willems (1967) associates Pentecostalism with the growth of democratization in Argentina. After the collapse of an authoritarian regime in 1983, Argentina went into the processes of democratization, liberalization of the economy and increased poverty. Roman Catholic dominance on the religious landscape was diminishing and Pentecostalism' sway was on the increase. With its focus on the individual, Willems argued that Pentecostalism would lead to democratization as it was more likely to push of individuals rights than the Roman Catholic church. While Pentecostal clergies have condemned corruption, poverty and inequality, their impact on the political scene has been minimal. Pentecostal denominations have neither formed a political party nor held a vision for society. D'Epina (1969) refutes Willems claim that associates Pentecostalism with democratization. Pentecostalism subjects the laity to the authority of the clergies whose style of leadership is personalized and subjective.

In Latin America, Pentecostalism offers social reform to adherents through its ability to instil self-esteem and entrepreneurial values in challenging situations. This partly explains its popularity among the poor and those in crisis.

2.3.2 The Born-again movement and the state in Eastern Europe

Pluss (2014) identifies Thomas Ball Barrat as the conduit through which



Pentecostalism found its way into Europe. Thomas Barrat encountered Pentecostalism whilst in United States of America and on his return to Europe in December 1906 spread the new version of Christianity to England, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland and countries close the Baltic Sea. From Barrat's missionary activities, Pentecostalism spread across Europe.

There are two streams through which Pentecostalism found its way into the Russian Empire. Pentecostalism in Russia dates back to 1911, when a missionary of Scandinavian origin introduced Pentecostalism in Helsinki. It is at Helsinki were Smorodin and Ivanov first encountered Pentecostalism. These two later became its local leaders. Ivan Voronaev is the other conduit through which Pentecostalism found a firm grounding in Russia. Having converted to Pentecostalism whilst in America, Voronaev returned to Russia in 1921 to spread his new-found strand of Christianity as an Assembly of God missionary (Lane, 1978). Through these streams, Pentecostalism has become part of the Russian religious landscape, boasting of over 300 000 adherents. It is worthy to note that Pentecostal-like groupings had long existed in Russia. These groupings accommodated visitation by the spirits and spiritual gifts such as tongues and prophecy. Lane (1978) identifies the Khlysts and the Molokan branch of Priguny as examples of early Pentecostal-like groupings. Lofstedt (2009) places born-again movement as the third largest religious community after Russian Orthodox Church³⁰ and Islam. The history of Pentecostalism in Russia illustrates the movement's ability to navigate the restrictive and prohibitive religious and political terrain controlled by the Russian Orthodox Church and a communist-atheistic state respectively.

Pentecostalism in Russia faced a number of challenges during its inception. The Russian Orthodox Church's close alliance with the state increased its hostility on Pentecostalism. The majority of ethnic Russians were baptized into the Russian

³⁰ The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) emerged as a religious movement in 1054 when Western Christianity separated from Eastern Christianity. ROC resisted the imposition of Latin practices by the papacy. In this regard, ROC shares a number of common features, infrastructure and practice with Roman Catholicism. In this regard, ROC has a different theological and liturgical orientations from Pentecostalism. For detailed comparison see Stamoolis (1984) and Heith-Stade (2010).



Orthodox Church at birth. The emergence of Pentecostal denominations presented Russians with an alternative to the state linked Russian Orthodox Church. The Russian Orthodox church complained about losing adherents to a 'new and foreign' religion (Lofstedt, 2009). Russian Orthodox Church, for a long time had, divided citizens of the Russian Empire into orthodox Russians (ethnic Russians) and non-orthodox citizens (from other parts of Russia federations such as Georgia, Kazakhstan and Moldova). The church polarized citizens through such compartmentalization on the basis of ethnic origin. Pentecostalism on the other hand, did not discriminate on the basis of ethnic origins, making it more attractive to these ethnic groups that were shunned by the Russian Orthodox Church. Disenfranchised and marginalized citizen found hope and comfort in Pentecostal movements that operated in Russian. This created tension between the Russian Orthodox Church and the state on one hand, and Pentecostal movements on the other. Pentecostalism was accommodating the marginalized sections of the Russian federation population neglected by both the state and the Orthodox church. In the 1990s the Russian Orthodox Church had on several times through the state curtailed Pentecostal proselytizing and missionary activities.

The Pentecostal movement has always been an enigma to the Russian government. Russian Pentecostalism's European and American origins positioned Pentecostalism in direct confrontation with the government's communist ideology. As early as 1924 there were complains that Pentecostal ministries were recruiting more youths than those joining the party's youth league called the *Komsomol* (Marsha & Tonoyan, 2009: 512). The government saw the Russian Church of Evangelical Christians (RCEC)³¹ as a threat as it diverted the youth's attention and loyalty from the state. The enactment of law against religious cults adversely affected the operations of The Russian Church of Evangelical Christians, the affiliation board of Pentecostal movements. Stalin's rule intensified persecution of Pentecostals, culminating in the imprisonment and death of Voronaev (Marsha and Tonoyan 2009: 512). Pentecostal prophets often predicated the destruction of the Soviet state, and its replacement with another world (Lane1978). The prophets

³¹ Evangelical and Pentecostal movements were affiliated to this board



veiled their attacks on the Soviet system by clothing them in spiritual and supernatural authority. As a way of undermining Pentecostalism, in 1945 the government co-opted Russian Church of Evangelical Christians into state-controlled Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists did not permit its affiliated-members to practice glossolalia. This move weakened the Pentecostal movement by stifling one of the defining feature: 'glossolalia.' The oppressive, hostile and harsh conditions created by the state and the Orthodox Church forced most Pentecostal ministries to close. The Brezhnev Era (1964-1982) also witnessed unprecedented persecution of Pentecostals. The twenty-years ordeal of the Vashchenko family is clear testimony of the state's intolerance to Pentecostalism. The Vashchenko were jailed and flogged. In 1983 the government granted them visa to leave for America, where they could pursue their faith in freedom (Marsha and Tonoyan, 2009: 513).

As the Soviet Union neared its demise, the grip of the state loosened. In 1990 the passage of a law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organization, as well as the fall of the Soviet Union the follow year marked a shift in the position of Pentecostal Christians. RCEC gained control of its affiliates and re-introduced glossolalia, spiritual healing as well as Holy Ghost baptism. Western European and American Pentecostal churches made in-roads into the Russian religious landscape. Word of Life, Vineyard Churches and Calvary Chapel International expanded into Russia (Lofstedt, 2009). With the communist Soviet Union gone, Pentecostalism soon attracted Russians who had been raised under communism but were eager to take part in the global circuits of consumption. Pentecostalism is cited as offering the means and legitimizing consumption of American and west European commodities (Lofstedt, 2009: 170). This was interpreted by the state as a promotion capitalism and a celebration of its triumph over communism.

Pentecostal Christianity increased public visibility through donations, welfare projects and healing of the sick. Furthermore, Pentecostal Christians involvement in political issues in Ukraine during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine made Vladimir Putin impose strict control on Pentecostal movements in Russia (Lofstedt, 2009). Adelaja, the founder of God's Embassy gave moral support to leaders of the



Revolution through prayers before and after the 2004 Orange Revolution (Marsha and Tonoyan 2009: 512). Due to Russian government's heavy handedness, RCEC has adopted neutrality when it comes to issues that directly involves the government. RCEC has remained silent on the issue of military conscription. Like Pentecostalism in Russia, Pentecostalism in contemporary Zimbabwe, has grown in an environment marked by heavy surveillance by the state. Russian Pentecostalism developed its own trajectory shaped by the obtaining situation in Russia. To pacify the state and to shake of the 'foreign origin' accusations, RCEC has turned apolitical³².

Soviet Pentecostals were from marginalized ethnic groups. They were migrants, less educated and of lower economic status (Lane, 1978). Scholars have hypothesised that Soviets turned to Pentecostalism as a way of gaining spiritual control and dominance which they lacked under the authoritarian Soviet state. Pentecostalism provided safety nets and assuaged migrants' psychological stress of being uprooted from familiar environment. Pentecostals themselves were always on the move as they tried to avoid state surveillance or angering local atheist groups (Lane, 1978).

Pentecostals in Ukraine have forged a different relationship with the state. Voronaev had laid a firm foundation for Pentecostalism in Ukraine (Lane, 1978). The case of God's Embassy ministry, discussed by Marsha and Tonoyan (2009), reveal ways in which Pentecostal movements turned political. Adelaja - the founder and leader of God's Embassy – offered spiritual assistance to some of the leaders of Orange Revolution. This led to friction between God's Embassy and the state. Adelaja was seen as sympathizing with pro-west elements in Ukraine, and thus placed his ministry in direct confrontation with the government. His ministry was labelled a cult. In the Post-Soviet Ukraine, Pentecostalism is portrayed as the agent of democracy and civil engagement. God's Embassy started charity activities directed towards the poor and the marginalized. The charity activities include soup kitchens, rehabilitation of drug addicts, children living on the streets, and taking care of orphans and

³² Refer to footnote 28



constructing schools. At an individual level, Pentecostalism drive towards entrepreneurship and the social networks, both inside and outside Ukraine, appealed to many Ukrainians. Pentecostalism was promising success in a country experiencing economic challenges. Ukrainians were more receptive of Pentecostalism at a time the state struggled to support its citizens.

Pentecostalism's continued survival in Post-Soviet society rests on its ability to reinvent itself as well as its civil and political dimensions. Pentecostalism engage with and offer experiential experiences that the state and other strands of Christianity fail to offer (Kolarz, 1961). There are few detailed ethnographic encounters on Soviet Pentecostalism focusing on a Pentecostal denomination or adherents, capturing life histories and experiences (Lane, 1978 and Lofstedt, 2009). Most accounts are from secondary data as in the case of Lane (1978) or from website and internet (Lofstedt, 2009). Of note is that Pentecostal movements in East Europe appealed to people who lived under oppressive states that denied them full liberties and freedom. Pentecostalism was a sanctuary for these people.

2.3.3 Asian Pentecostalism

Many scholars have shown that Pentecostalism had an independent origin in Asia (Anderson, 2004: 123; Ma, 2014: 152). Revivals that took place in Pyongyang in 1907 are identified as some of the events that led to the emergence of Pentecostal-like religious movements in Asia. In recent years, a number of Pentecostal movements operate in Asia, most of them have not taken active role in politics. In Philippines, Mariano Velarde leads the *El-Shaddai* Pentecostal movement which actively participate in national politics. Mariano Velarde openly supported Joseph Estrada's bid for presidential post in 1998 elections. Joseph Estrada won the election but was later impeached for mismanagement of national funds. Some of Pentecostal movements that venture into politics have aligned themselves to questionable politicians. As I have shown above, Pentecostals in Guatemala and Brazil supported corrupt candidates, some of whom gained power through unconstitutional means. Pentecostal movements in Asia are reproducing the same trend. Mariano Velarde and his *El-Shaddai* movement have ventured into politics through the formation of *Buhay Hayaan Yurabang* political party. The part has



enjoyed at least two congressional seats since 2004. This is similar to UCKG which has actively moved into the political arena in Brazil. Mariano Velarde entered politics with the aim of transforming the state along religious doctrines and visions.

2.3.4 The Post-colonial African state and the Born-Again movement

Pentecostalism is the fastest growing religious movement in the world, with two thirds of born-again Christians found in Africa. Pentecostalism is visible on the religious landscape of Africa as well as in the public domain (Drew Smith, 2006: 2; Freston, 2017). Concomitantly, more studies have been conducted to explore ways in which Pentecostalism has configured and interacted with various facets of believers' life. Two strands of thought have emerged to explain state-Pentecostalism relations in Africa.

One strand, put forward by Gifford, argues that Pentecostalism has little or no direct impact on national politics and the state as it locates causes of poverty, inequalities as well as of prosperity and security in spiritual actors and agents. The shift from practical issues to metaphysical ones limits the context and successes Pentecostals can register in addressing challenges and problem bedeviling African nations. Pentecostals in Ghana and Liberia adopted an "enchanted approach" to politics through spiritualizing the sources of national woes (Gifford, 2004: 161). The 'spiritualization of politics' removes Pentecostals from the political arena and limits their active engagement with the state to redress national problems. Prayers and seeking God's guidance are the two strategies Pentecostal preachers preach as the solutions to national woes. Pentecostal rituals and practice offers psychological and spiritual security to puny believers without any attempts to "confront the socio-political structures of the nation" (Gifford, 1995: 6). In the case of Ghana, Gifford (2004: 181) remarks that "politics does not really matter because a Christian prospers quite independently of the context." Pentecostalism shifts believers' attention from the state to God who changes situations and prosper believers regardless of the context.

Gifford has opposed and played down the role of Pentecostal movements' engagement with the state. 'Spiritualization of politics' and focus on 'narrower world



of personal behavior' are identified as the limiting factors to Pentecostal movements' social engagement in Ghana and Liberia. Pentecostals are involved in 'implicit politics. However, Gifford misses the point that Pentecostalism opens up the 'public sphere' in which believers can discuss and offer an evaluation of the state (Maxwell, 1995a: 12; Westerlund, 2009). The growth of Pentecostalism into rural areas, townships and growth points marks the widening of an alternative 'public spheres' where Pentecostals residing outside cities and town can discuss and engage with aspects of state. Spiritualization of social and political issues has been identified as the source of political action and mobilization for Pentecostals (Ranger, 1986; Marshall, 1993, 1995, 2009; Maxwell, 2006). Teachings that seek to explain the everyday conditions of Pentecostals ultimately lead to the critical analysis of state system and processes.

The second strand views Pentecostals as actively engaging in politics. The conversion of the educated, business and military personnel into Pentecostalism brought with it a paradigm shift from retreatist to active engagement with the state. Pentecostals are empowered through the Holy Spirit and the 'Name of Jesus' to act against the failures of the state. Pentecostals' worldview allows them to act against state if the state exhibits ills Pentecostals associate with the devil (Marshall, 1993). In Nigeria, Pentecostals seek both personal and national redemption (Marshall, 1995: 254). In its effort to bring about the redemption, Pentecostal movements colonize secular space such as the state by attempting to moralize the state along Pentecostal doctrines. Pentecostal movements operate within existing political economies and nation-states, and often do not share the same vision with the state. Pentecostal movements imagine and foster their visions of society (strategic programme) within and at times in contrast to an existing vision put forward by the state. This juxtaposes Pentecostal movements' vision with that of the state and ushered out complex interactions between the two (Marshall, 2009). Explicitly, Pentecostals are thrown into the political arena, challenging the government's vision on the type and form of society to be created. Pentecostal movements' desire to transform lives and the nation gives them national vision and makes them key players in Nigeria (Marshall, 1995: 245; 2009: 25). The state has been rendered redundant by Pentecostal movements that provide institutional alternative to social



services that are supposed to be in the state's domain (Marshall, 1993: 225; Omenyo, 2014: 143). These trends are present in Zimbabwe, where Pentecostal movements are increasing their popularity by taking advantage of space that are created by government's incapacitation.

Pentecostals have assumed political leadership positions and public office in various Africa state. In Nigeria, Pentecostal Bishop Idahosa was the spiritual father of and adviser to Peter Obadan, the Deputy governor of Edo state. Pentecostals have assumed national leadership in Zambia. Fredrick Chiluba was a born-again Pentecostal whose presidential bid in 1991 was supported spiritually and financially by local and international Pentecostal preachers such as Hinn Benny. Pentecostal preachers such as Nevers Mumba, Godfrey Miyenda and Simon Mwale have formed political parties with the aim of giving Zambia a born again president (M'fundisi, 2014). Pentecostals across Africa have been entering the political fray. Pentecostal movements have been instrumental in critiquing the government and reforming political cultures. A few of Pentecostal preachers condemn corruption, mismanagement of funds and lack of accountability that are rampant in most African states (Maxwell, 1995b: 121). Pentecostalism has also been portrayed as a nursery of democracy and liberty due to a form of egalitarianism that Pentecostal movements encourage.

2.4 Conclusion

Pentecostalism has a rich and diverse history, its denominations come in a variety of forms. Due to its variegated nature, Pentecostalism grafts itself differently onto nation-states with different political, social and economic conditions. The shift in theological orientation from premillennialism to postmillennialism is marked by shifts in ways Pentecostalism engage with the state. Early Pentecostals in United States of America shunned politics as they prepared for the second coming of Jesus Christ. The demographic composition of these Pentecostals partly explains their withdrawal from national politics. Categories of the marginalized, the poor and former slaves made up early Pentecostal congregations. The same can be said for Pentecostal in Chile who were less educated and economically unstable. Pentecostal movements that draw membership from a cross section of society are well positioned to engage



with the state and even challenge the governing political elites. The presence of influential persons among Pentecostals makes political participation possible. Educated and economically stable Pentecostals have knowledge, finances and networks that enable them to successfully challenge national leadership. Furthermore, as argued by Miller and Yamomari (2007: 30), “Pentecostals no longer see the world as a place from which to escape ... but instead as a place they want to make better.” This shift from early Pentecostals is evident in Brazil, Guatemala, Zambia and Nigeria where Pentecostals are actively participating in national politics. From the above discussion, it is clear that interactions between Pentecostals and the state defies simple generalizations. Pentecostalism as a global movement reconfigures itself differently in different cultural and political contexts. In some cases, Pentecostals align with the government while in others Pentecostals they oppose the government.

The argument that Pentecostals are passive in politics misses the point by focusing only on institutionalized politics. Pentecostals engage with the state in their everyday lives, responding to the local political exigencies. I now turn to the specificities of the Zimbabwean state to provide background information of the state that Pentecostalism in the form of OMG interacts with.



3. ZIMBABWE: AN ABRIDGED HISTORICIZATION

3.1 Introduction

Having laid the historical trajectories of the spread of Pentecostalism, and outlined encounters between the state and Pentecostal movements across the globe, below I outline the obtaining situation in Zimbabwe. I give a brief sketch of the inhabitants of Zimbabwe, the mutating levels of fragility of the postcolonial Zimbabwean state and the activities of other Pentecostal ministries. In laying this historical background, I wish to paint the general context within which OMG has grown and spread and to show the complexity of the post-independence Zimbabwean state. I argue against the prevailing discourse and portrayal of Zimbabwe as a 'failed' or 'collapsed' state, by showing that in some respect the ZANU PF government has selectively and deliberately neglected some of state institutions, responsibilities and mandate to citizen, while simultaneous propping-up and strengthening those aspects of the state necessary for its survival and continued stay in power.

The detailed political economy of Zimbabwe I present here is not in any way new, however, I have chosen to present it in detail for two reasons. First to dispel ideas that Zimbabwe is a failed state. Secondly, to provide sufficient background to the local conditions under which OGM emerged and how it has positioned itself in light of this. The ZANU PF government has lost any pretence of running a developmental state. The majority of the citizens are disappointed with the post-independence government that promotes unbridled crony capitalism. As I shall elaborate further in this chapter, the post-colonial Zimbabwean government has experienced shifting levels of fragility over the past four decades. The post-colonial state is strong and in control of some areas, whilst its grip on other aspects of social, political and economic life are not firm. An uncomfortable simultaneity of fragility, state-absence and heavy state involvement in particular aspects of citizens' lives is observable in Zimbabwe. It is under these shifting levels of fragility that I intend to explore the activities of OMG. The central argument presented in this thesis is that the postcolonial Zimbabwean state provides the crevices and clefts through which OMG has emerged and grown as a proxy to the state. OMG offers alternative social space



for citizens to unite and forge a common identity, history and belonging outside the function of the postcolonial state.

3.2 Peopling modern Zimbabwe

Current inhabitants of Zimbabwe can be accounted for by two major historical migration of Bantu people. Through migration, the ancestors of Shona speaking people³³ settled on the Zimbabwean plateau by fourth century AD (Pikirayi, 2001: 77; Mlambo, 2014: 4). The Bantu migrants displaced the autochthonous group of the San foragers (Fisher, 2010: 137 footnote 15; Thondhlana, 2014). The Shona sub-ethnicities were dispersed across the land, unconscious of a common culture and without a unitary political system (Ranger, 1989). The second Bantu group, the AmaNdebele, made their way north in the early nineteenth century, displaced from the south. The AmaNdebele were fleeing from the unrest caused by Mfecane³⁴ and from Afrikaners in the Transvaal area (Pikirayi, 2001: 217; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009: 166–188; Mlambo, 2014: 24–27). Between 1838 and 1840 the AmaNdebele established their dominance by defeating the already crumbling Rozvi State. While various groups of the Shona people were dispersed, the AmaNdebele established their state in the south-eastern side. The dominance of the AmaNdebele was cut

³³ The invention of the unified Shona has its roots in 1929 colonial administration's commissioned research led by Clement M Doke. The use of the broader terms Shona and AmaNdebele is as a result of this study and colonial compartmentalization. The post-colonial government has maintained this geographical compartmentalization of people according to ethnicities. The post-colonial government has compartmentalized Zimbabweans into Mashonaland provinces (Zezuru), Matabeleland provinces (AmaNdebele), Masvingo (Karanga), Midlands contains a mixture of the other ethnic groups and Manicaland (Manyika) (see Fig 3.1 below). This use of Shona or AmaNdebele gives an impression of a homogenous group, glossing over differences in ethnic and dialects among the sub-ethnicities. Zezuru, Karanga, Manyika, Korekore and Ndaу are bunched together into the Shona people. The Tonga, Nyubi, Venda, Sotho, Tswana, Birwa, Lozwi, Kalanga are compartmentalized into AmaNdebele. For detailed breakdown of the ethnicities in Zimbabwe consult Kuper (1954:34), and Hughes and Van Velsen (1954: 44), Mombeshora (1990), Chimhundu (1992), Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2007), Ranger (1989), Hachipola (1998) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009: 99-103).

³⁴ A Nguni word for 'the crushing, in Sotho-Tswana the period was referred to as *difaqane* 'the scattering'



short by the British occupation. The Anglo-Ndebele war of 1893 dismantled the Ndebele state.

Political systems established by the two Bantu groups have different histories, cultural values and hierarchies (Bourdillon, 1991: 103; 117). Despite these differences, the functions of the political machinery were the same. The Shona sub-ethnic groups had a four-tier political system consisting of *mambo* (paramount chief) who was the overall symbol of authority, followed by *madzisho* (chief) and *masadunhu* (sub-chiefs) and lastly *masamana* (village head)³⁵(Gombe, 1998; Maxwell, 1999a; Gwaravanda, 2018). The paramount chief was assisted by a council of lower level functionaries in the form elderly advisors, chiefs and sub-chief. The chiefs, sub-chiefs and village head were usually from the same lineage as the paramount chief. These leaders were living descendants of the ancestors that once ruled over the same territory. Their relationship with the ancestors made them ritual experts who performed rituals pertaining to fertility of the soil and soliciting for rains (Bourdillon, 1991; Maxwell, 1999a: 12). Furthermore, there was a panel of advisers chosen by chiefs and these were usually non-kinsmen to assist in decision-making and on governance.

On the other hand, broadly, the AmaNdebele had a highly centralized political system headed by the *inkosi* (king) who appointed *indunas yamabuto*³⁶ (chiefs) and *abalisa* (headman). Furthermore, there were three hierarchized councillors of the nation (*izinduna* and *ezinkulu*) who assisted and advised *inkosi*. Two different councils (*izikulu* and *umpakati*) played administrative duties in the Ndebele kingdom (Hughes & van Velsen, 1954: 63–69). The duties of these leaders were relatively similar in both groups, the leaders administered the customs and law, allocated land and organized and provided spiritual leadership by leading the ritual cycles and welfare systems in territories they controlled (Kuper, 1954: 28-31; Lan, 1985: 167;

³⁵ This hierarchy was not universal among all Shona groups, there were variations that came to be identified. Most scholars such as Kuper (1954), Bourdillon, (1991) and Weinrich (1971) do not include the position of *mambo*.

³⁶ Led and controlled a regiment of the army and people in specific territories of the kingdom



Bourdillon, 1991: 103-117; Chigwata, 2016) The political systems were based on lineage and kinship relations, charisma of the chief/king and also on a bureaucratic system consisting of councils and advisors. These political systems were reconfigured and reduced to a three-tier system under the colonial administration (Mashudu, 2018)³⁷. Chiefs became salaried government functionaries who operated as the intermediate link between the colonial state and chief's subjects. The discussion of chieftaincy has a bearing in this study, in the next chapter I will develop further the idea that the appeal of OMG is partly based on its machinery and structure that symbolically functions in similar ways as that of chieftainship at a time the authority and appeal of chiefs are waning.

Various Shona groups had a rich cosmology which had a transcendental remote deity called *Mwari* or *Nyadenga* who created and governed activities on earth (Kuper, 1954: 32). *Mwari* has great interest in human activities. Through priest(ess) called *mhondoro*, *Mwari* intervenes in human affairs (Bourdillon, 1991). There were political functions associated with the position of *mhondoro*. During Shona uprisings, *mhondoro* coordinated and assumed leadership roles. Apart from *Mwari*, the Shona cosmology consisted of ancestral spirits (*vadzimu*) concerned with affairs of a lineage or a clan and other benevolent and malevolent spirits that populated the Shona cosmic world. A thin line separate the physical and spiritual world of the Shona (Kuper, 1954: 35; Bourdillon, 1987, Chitando, 2009). Hughes and van Velsen (1954: 103) note that the AmaNdebele cosmology centres on high deity called *Umlimo* or *Unkulunkulu* whom they gave offerings to. Ancestral spirits (*amadhlozi*) among the AmaNdebele functioned in the same way as *vadzimu* among the Shona. Witches, benevolent and malevolent spirits filled the cosmological world of the

³⁷ The colonial government placed chiefs under the Native Commissioner, both the AmaNdebele groups and Shona groups were forced to adapt new political structure composed of Chiefs, Village heads and Headmen regardless of previous structure. The colonial administration weakened the institution of chieftaincy and the post-colonial government has continued with this process. On 03 March 2018, the Zimbabwean government, through the then Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing July Moyo, blocked the coronation of Ndebele king arguing that the laws of Zimbabwe do not accommodate any monarch. I will pursue these issue further in the following chapters.



AmaNdebele too. Both the Shona and the AmaNdebele believed in a sophisticated cosmological world consisting of various spirits, religious practitioners, and intermediaries between humans and the divine.

3.3 Post-colonial governance and statecraft

Below I discuss the political economy of Zimbabwean post-independence state, highlighting alternating periods growth and decline. I discuss the origin of ZANU PF, its performance of power and how it has presided over post-colonial state system from 1980. I further the idea that ZANU PF has entrenched itself into state system that the political party has become synonymous with both government and state. It is important to note here that from its colonial origin, the Zimbabwean state has always been highly bureaucratic and violent. (Alexander and McGregor, 2013: 749).

3.3.1 ZANU PF and processes of statecraft

The British South African Company established a colonial state. The initial resistance to the establishment of the colonial state was led by spirit mediums - Nehanda and Kaguvi - who spurred black Africans to rise in First *Chimurenga/Umvukela*³⁸. This primary resistance of 1896-7 was subdued by the BSAC, dismantling indigenous political systems that existed. The colonial state was highly polarized along racial lines. State institutionalized racial discrimination saw population being compartmentalized into white citizens and black subjects (Mamdani, 1996; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006, 2012, 2018). Such discrimination that manifested in high taxation, loss of arable land and little political liberties for black Africa led to the formation of National Liberation Movements (NLM) for the purposes of achieving political sovereignty and political autonomy (Southall, 2013; Bereketgab, 2018: 3).

One of the earliest NLM in Southern Rhodesia was the moderate and conciliatory Southern Rhodesia African National Congress (SRANC) formed in 1957. The colonial state harshly suppressed SRANC, leading to the formation of National Democratic Party (NDP) in 1960 which was radical in its opposition to colonialism.

³⁸ Violent nationalist revolution (see Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012; 2018)



Later on, NDP was replaced by Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) in 1961. Joshua Nkomo had led NDP, and then ZAPU. In 1963, a splinter group calling itself ZANU led by Ndabaningi Sithole emerged. Scholars have explained this split in terms of ethnic polarization between Shona speaking groups that formed ZANU and Ndebele speaking groups that remained as ZAPU. From its inception, ZANU took a radical stance, calling for armed struggle as the only way to defeat the colonial government. Furthermore, ZANU sought to be the dominant and solely legitimate NLM by constructing a narrative of patriotic history that links ZANU's resistance to that of the 1890s primary resistance (Ranger, 2004; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006; Tendi, 2010; Onslow, 2011: 6). To this end, ZANU sought to trivialize and otherize competing NLM by claiming to be leading Second *Chimurenga* from 1964.

In its 1963 policy statement, ZANU made it clear that its aim was to establish a unitary and indivisible “ZANU state” (ZANU, 1979: 65; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018: 127). From its inception, ZANU leadership aimed at conflating and entrenching the party and the post-colonial state. In 1977 Robert Mugabe took over and consolidated his control over both ZANU and its military wing called Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA). Mugabe's ascendancy to the helm of ZANU and its military wing came with heavy handed treatment to an internal opposition or questioning to his authority. Mugabe violently squashed Nhari rebellion in 1977 as well as Vashandi rebellion in which he presided over the trials of the ‘rebels and sell outs’ (Moore, 1995: 396–397). Furthermore, it is alleged that Mugabe and ZANU PF have continued to eliminate real and perceived threats through the ‘sellout logic’³⁹(Scarnecchia, 2012: 235–238).

After winning election in 1980, Mugabe and his ZANU sought to consolidate power by pushing for a ‘ZANU state’ in the form of one-party state. This period witnessed the “conflating of the nation with the state, party with the state, ... and consequently

³⁹ It has been alleged that Mugabe may have played a part in the assassination of the ZANLA leader Josiah Tongogara. Opposition to ZANU PF is dismissed as sell-outs and British-American puppets. The sell-out logic is divisive as often those labelled sell-outs are dealt with heavy-headedly by ZANU PF members, police and military personnel.



producing uncaring dictatorial regimes dominated by personality cults, greed and injustice” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018: 125). ZANU entrenched itself into state institutions and structure transforming itself into a ‘party qua state’. Mugabe and ZANU became intolerant to any opposition, often resorting to violence in silencing dissenting views (Raftopoulos, 1991: 17–21). Both Mugabe and ZANU boasted of their competency in unleashing violence. Mugabe once bragged that he had “a degree in violence” while one of ZANU PF spokesperson, Nathan Shamuyarira once stated that “ the area of violence is an area where ZANU-PF has a very strong, long and successful history” (Meridith, 2007: 241). Over the years, opposition political parties’ leaders and members; independent press and citizens have been silence through violence. The culture of violence has continued under Mnangagwa’s leadership, with the military and police unleashed on citizens and opposition political party members⁴⁰ (Southall, 2017).

Recently, Zimbabwe’s patriotic history weaves in Mugabe and Mnangagwa’s hagiographies, strongly attaching them to the history of the post-colonial state. The two presidents have been constructed as fathers of the nations. The cult of leadership present in Pentecostal movements, which I will discuss in the following chapter, replicates that of political leadership in Zimbabwe. Mugabe and Mnangagwa are seen as fathers of the nation and as sources of power unto themselves (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018: 122). David Maxwell (2006) makes similar observations among ZAOGA leadership. Both presidents and prophets derive legitimacy and justify their leadership and position through hagiographies that portray them as indispensable to the creation of the state and religious movements they lead. I will develop this argument in detail in chapter four, showing ways in which OMG structure and administration mimics that of ZANU PF.

⁴⁰ ZANU PF has remained the same without Mugabe at the helm, perpetuating a system Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015 calls Mugabe-ism. Mnangagwa’s government labels Movement for Democratic Change as a Western sponsored political party, perpetuating the ‘sellout logic’. For detailed discussion of violence in and by ZANU PF refer to Kriger 2005



3.3.2 Technologies of Nationhood and Statecraft

Concepts such as nation, nationalism and national identity are historically constructed and constituted. They are imagined (Benedict Anderson, 2006) and thus marked with fluidity, contestations and fragilities (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009:2). The postcolonial government's efforts towards nation building have been marked by the production of narratives that homogenize experiences of citizens by ignoring some historical events⁴¹, emphasising 'nationalist triumphalism', 'patriotic histories' and 'patriotic memories' (Ranger, 2004; Kriger, 2006; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009). Emphasis on 'nationalist triumphalism' by the postcolonial government has created dissonance between nation-as-people and nation-as-state through subscription to a false notion of primordial origin of the 'Zimbabwean people.' Postcolonial Zimbabwe is a "complex mosaic of contending histories and memories" which the government has tried to flatten out through patriotic histories weaved to hagiographies of the current leadership (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009: 20). The postcolonial project of conflating the nation-as-people and nation-as-state has been less successful as citizens' loyalty and identities have remained predominantly ethnic. The failure of the post-colonial state to foster citizenship and nationhood into an imagined community project reduces the post-colonial state into a mere 'administrative sovereignty' based on colonial boundaries (Verstraelen, 1998:46). The Zimbabwean police and the army represent 'national' institutions as their main role is to defend the nation from enemies from within and from without⁴² (AllAfrica, 2016; News24, 2017; Dzirutwe, 2016, and cf Marshall, 1995: 247). Robert Mugabe's efforts to kill opposition through establishing a one-party state have failed.

⁴¹ The postcolonial government has closed any platforms for open discussion of the Gukuruhundi genocidal civil war. The families of victims still seek closure and redress. The genocide has been referred to by Robert Mugabe 'as a moment of madness' in our history, closing productive discussion and debates on the issue.

⁴² The Zimbabwean government has prioritized state security and defence forces ministries. Amid budget deficits, the government pacify soldiers, police force and members of the intelligence community by prioritizing them over other government employees. Soldiers are the first to get their salaries and bonuses ahead of other civil servants.



Alternative forms of citizenship and autonomous spaces, such as religious and political, are viewed by the government as hindrances to effort to unite citizens⁴³.

The postcolonial state has become coterminous with ZANU PF. Robert Mugabe and recently, Emmerson Mnangagwa's leadership is portrayed as sacral, portraying the two as indispensable to the postcolonial state. The inability or unwillingness of Mugabe to groom a successor has further strained ethnic ties among citizens. Mugabe's action raises speculation and cut-throat competition among ethnic groups as each ethnic group positions its member for take-over after Mugabe. On the other hand, Mugabe has been blamed for appointing Zezuru from Mashonaland provinces to key positions in government. Robert Mugabe, and now Emmerson Mnangagwa for appointing Karanga from Masvingo and Midlands provinces. Over the years, Zimbabwean presidents are contemporary 'big men' who create value through patrimonialism. Masunungure cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009: 179) concludes that the Zimbabwean postcolonial government has excelled on state-building and blatantly failed on its nation building project. These failures coupled with the parlous state of the economy and the legitimacy crises⁴⁴ that dogged the postcolonial government since the early 1990s have adversely affected the function of the state (Moyo, 1992: 330).

The situation obtaining in post-colonial Zimbabwe is nuanced and complex that rendering the state as failed is far-fetched (Skynews, 2017)⁴⁵. The Zimbabwean

⁴³ Ethnic polarization and factionalism along ethnic lines are rampant in ZANU PF. Its ugly head raises during rallies in which the Zezuru ethnic group expresses its indomitability in a jingle (in)famously known as Zezuru unconquerable. Refer to an Op-ed carried in a weekly tabloid of 19 February 2016 <https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2016/02/19/ethnicity-zanu-pfs-messy-predicament/>

⁴⁴ The government has maintained power but lacks legitimacy. Since year 2000 elections have been disputed. There claims of electoral fraud perpetrated by the people controlling state apparatus. Recently, Mnangagwa was declared president through the courts.

⁴⁵ Mugabe recently noted that Zimbabwe is not a fragile state during the 2017 World Economic Forum in Durban. Mugabe could have said this for the sake of covering ill governance but there is truth in his remarks when considers how the Zimbabwean state operates. See <http://news.sky.com/story/mugabe-says-zimbabwe-is-not-fragile-but-america-is-10862796>



state is marked by an uncomfortable mixture of both a strong and operational as well as weak and dormant state institutions (Verstraelen, 1998: 46). Postcolonial Zimbabwe government is unable or unwilling to fulfil some of its duties and responsibilities, especially those concerned with citizens welfare and well-being, but rather meet those that are central to the survival of ZANU PF in and as government.

For example, the Zimbabwean government has mastered well the art of 'lawfare'. Its ability to "resort to legal instruments ... to commit acts of political coercion, even erasure" are well documented (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2008: 30–31). The Zimbabwean government has passed laws and amended the constitution as a way of stifling opposition and also for legitimizing postcolonial state's perpetuation of violence as witnessed during the land reform, *Gukurahundi*, and Operation *Murambatsvina*. Furthermore, lawfare has enabled ZANU PF government to entrench itself into the state and perpetuate gross human rights abuses and disregard of the rule of law⁴⁶. The recent amendment of the constitution dissolved the separation of power by abrogating the section of the constitution that called for public interviews for the appointment of the chief justice (Mhofu, 2017). The postcolonial government has also forced its presence in the public sphere by muzzling private media through 'lawful' "strategy of the ban"⁴⁷ (Worby, 2003:78 cited in Melber 2004). State-controlled or linked broadcaster and media houses have unfettered access to Zimbabweans (Melber, 2004: 8-10; Sachikonye, 2011a: 25-27) However, churches are increasing their access the public sphere through free-to-air channels. The government laws are restrictive to private media houses as they are perceived as purveyors of anti-government sentiments (Sibanda, 2016; NewsDay Staff Reporter, 2017; The Standard Editor, 2017).

⁴⁶ The land reform was legalized through Rural Land Occupiers (Protection from Eviction) Act of 2001. Justice Gubbay who had ruled against the government on land reform was threatened by war veterans and fled from Zimbabwe. Recently, the military coup has been declared legal and constitutional through the courts.

⁴⁷ Recently the operation of an independent Kwese Tv has been illegalized. KweseTv had to approach the courts to resume operations. Private television and radio stations have been shut down by the government over the years. The premises of the Daily News were bombed by allegedly ZANU PF supporters.



There are sections of the Zimbabwean population that have benefited from the post-colonial state led “violence in the name of nationalism and socialism” (Moyo 1992), ‘statism patronage system’, politics of affection, cronyism and lawfare (Ranger, 1995; Melber, 2004: 8; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2008: 10 respectively). For such beneficiaries, post-colonial Zimbabwean state is categorized as a developmental state (see Chipika and Malaba, 2017: 228). ‘Economic nationalism’ programmes such as The Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Programme (IEEP), Affirmative Action Group (AAG)⁴⁸, and Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) have received positive evaluation for changing the fortunes of ZANU PF supporter and some black Zimbabweans. AAG and IEEP have been instrumental in creating and expanding a class of ‘national bourgeoisie’⁴⁹ in Zimbabwe (see Chibber, 2005: 245). The postcolonial government performs a paternalistic role to local capitalists. These programmes are elitist and beneficial to a few in patron-client relationships with political elites.

3.3.3 Chieftaincy in postcolonial Zimbabwe

I discuss the waning influence of chieftaincy in this section as a way of laying background for the argument I will develop in the following chapters. The institution of chieftaincy is an extension of the post-colonial Zimbabwean state. Chiefs and headmen fall under the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing. While the institution of chieftaincy in Zimbabwe has been experiencing circles of waxing and waning, Pentecostal churches, in particular OMG, have taken advantage of this space created to launch itself into the public arena (Maxwell, 1999; 2006; Fontein 2015; Lan 1985).

The position of chiefs in the governance system is complicated in several postcolonial African states. The incorporation of institutions of chiefs, headmen and village heads into the system of colonial governance reduced many of the chiefs

⁴⁸ A group that represent black business owners. The group is linked to ZANU PF party.

⁴⁹ Chibber, (2005:245) defines national bourgeoisie as a class or “segment of local capitalists who are oriented to the domestic market, ... and ally with the state.”



and headmen to extensions of the colonial administration (Kyed & Buur, 2007: 1; Mapedza, 2007: 185). Chiefs and headmen were placed under the Native Commission, which limited the authority and power they exercised. Once placed on colonial government's wage bill, some of the chiefs and headmen became accountable to the government and not the people who lived in chiefdoms and territories under their control⁵⁰. The colonial government initiated the processes of undermining some aspects of chieftaincy (Weinrich, 1971). Apart from the colonial administration, Pentecostal movements such as AFM undermined the authority of chiefs by not recognizing the institution of chieftaincy and undermining chiefs' spiritual legitimacy through incessant condemnation of *mhondoro*⁵¹ as inspired pagan and heathen spirits (Maxwell, 1999a: 75–76).

Most African postcolonial governments have continued to weaken the institutions of chieftaincy (Kyed and Buur, 2007). The relationship between chiefs and the post-colonial Zimbabwean government is characterized by ambiguities and ambivalence. Former president Robert Mugabe and his henchmen selectively propped up the chiefs when the legitimacy of his presidency was questioned, Emmerson Mnangagwa and ZANU PF make appeal to establish traditional authority for their own political survival (Mapedza, 2007: 185). Chiefs were pushed to the background when Robert Mugabe's legitimacy and support was secure. There is an identifiable five year cycle of the waning and waxing of the influence of Chiefs and headmen in Zimbabwe (see Chaumba et al 2003: 600 cited in Fontein, 2015: 44;95). During election periods, Robert Mugabe and more recently Emmerson Mnangagwa extend overtures to chiefs by increasing chiefs' salaries, provision of vehicles, telephones and electrification of their rural homestead as a way of restoring their status (Akwei, 2017). After elections the ZANU PF government's attention focus on other issues. The way chiefs relate to the state is not uncommon, as I highlighted above, the post-

⁵⁰ I am aware that not all chiefs became proxy of the colonial administration. What obtained is more complex, some chiefs seemed to follow the colonial administration for reasons different from that of the administration, some for mere protection against rivalry chiefs. The colonial administration attempted to limit some of their authority and power but there are incidents of chiefs who resisted overtly and covertly to this (cf Maxwell, 1999; Lan, 1985).

⁵¹ Spirit mediums that installed and legitimized chiefs (cf Bourdillon 1991; Lan 1985)



colonial Zimbabwean government that aligns to and timeously prop up certain institutions for the sake of continued survival in power.

Apart from the cycle discussed above, generally, chieftainship is on decline in Zimbabwe. 276 Chiefs in Zimbabwe sit at the pleasure of the president who has the power to appoint and dismiss chiefs⁵². The post-colonial state has withdrawn the bulk of the authority and duties exercised by pre-colonial chiefs as discussed in section 3.1.1. The postcolonial state has passed a number of legislations that undermine the power, authority and functions of chiefs and headmen. For example, the District Councils and Communal Lands Act of 1982 took away the chiefs' prerogative to allocate portions of land in territories under their jurisdiction. Furthermore, the government established Village and Ward Development Committees in 1984. Issues concerning villages and wards were spearheaded by the respective committees in consultation with chiefs. Elected councillors further undermined the authority and influence chiefs previously enjoyed (Maxwell, 1999a: 43; Mapedza, 2007: 188). The postcolonial government is suspicious of chiefs because some of them had been part of the colonial administration and were representative of the administration within their territories. Chiefs recruited labour and collected taxes on behalf of the colonial administration. Thus, as early as 1980 the postcolonial government had been suspicious of chiefs. The passage of Customary Law and Primary Act of 1981 limited the nature and type of crimes, petition and grievances chiefs and headmen handled. Magistrates took over that function from the chief⁵³.

The Zimbabwean government has also attempted to strengthen chieftaincy through the Traditional Leaders Act of 1998. The Act was passed during a period characterized by instabilities⁵⁴ and questioning of Robert Mugabe's legitimacy. The Traditional Leaders Act (29:17) restored some of the functions that had been lost by

⁵² Section 283 of the constitution gives the president authority over chiefs. The president has replaced the colonial Native Commissioners.

⁵³ chiefs can be tried at the magistrate's court if they break the law

⁵⁴ ESAP had failed. There were food riots, demonstrations, war veterans demanding compensations for their efforts in liberating Zimbabwe and land invasions had begun



chiefs and headmen. Village and Ward Committees were phased away and replaced by Village and Ward assemblies headed by chiefs. Furthermore, the government established the Chief's Council and Provincial Assemblies of Chiefs for administrative purposes (Mapedza, 2007). The president of the Chief's Council and his deputy are *ex officio* members of the Senate. Sixteen Chiefs are elected into the Senate through Provincial Assemblies of Chiefs⁵⁵. Despite these efforts, postcolonial chiefs and headmen have lost the charisma and authority that their predecessors enjoyed. Furthermore, most Zimbabweans have lost confidence in chiefs and headmen, especially those that align themselves with and campaign for ZANU PF (Chigwata, 2016: 69). In light of all this, some formations such as Pentecostal churches capitalize on the void that is left to establish themselves and gain popularity.

3.3.4 Hope and bliss in the 1980s developmental state

Precolonial inhabitants of Zimbabwe enjoyed relative social and economic stability. Precolonial states, such as the Great Zimbabwe, Rozvi, the Ndebele engaged in several economic activities that varied from trade, mining, hunting to agriculture. The colonial occupation of Zimbabwe by the British in 1890 brought marked shifts in the lives of Africans. Zimbabwe was drawn into the global capitalist economy. Bond and Manyanya (2003: 1) argue that Zimbabwe's political economy has never been stable evidenced by the 'replay after 1980' of same economic and political challenges that it had encountered before. Once incorporated into the global capitalist economic system, the colony experienced economic booms and burst that came with being part of a global economy system. Between 1928 and 1930, for example, there was an economic decline. Exports were halved and national income dropped significantly (Bond and Manyanya, 2003: 4). Under Godfrey Huggins' leadership, Rhodesia experienced economic boom. Despite all this, in 1980 the post-colonial government inherited a well-developed economy based on agriculture, mining and manufacturing sector.

⁵⁵ The senate is the upper house of assembly. Only sixteen Senator Chiefs are elected into senate because two metropolitan provinces do not fall under chief's jurisdiction, that is Harare and Bulawayo Metropolitan provinces. Each Provincial Assemblies of Chiefs elect two chiefs.



The economy was structured in a way that benefited white settlers. For the black Zimbabweans, independence came with optimism for good and decent livelihoods, political participation and economic prosperity. Early years of independence were marked by hope and high expectations that the post-colonial government would address issue of housing, education, wealth distribution and business ownership which had been lopsided to the advantage of white minorities (Mlambo, 2014: 206). To a larger extent, the post-colonial government made efforts to improve the lives of blacks through pegging of minimum wages, subsidies on staple food, free primary education and health for the poor (Mlambo, 2014:194). Between 1980 and 1990 the government increased primary schools from 3358 to 6042 and doubled enrolment in primary schools. Private colleges aided the government in its effort to educate black Zimbabweans. Enrolment of Africans into university rose fivefold in the same period (Kanyenze et al., 2011: 304–305). In the health sector, the government rehabilitated 161 clinics and constructed the same number of clinics across the country. Through the Primary Health Care, the government facilitated poor Africans' access to health service. Most black Zimbabweans accessed health care services free of charge. Children were immunized and fed through government programmes. The post-colonial government managed to reduce infant mortality rate which was higher among Africans (Kanyenze et al., 2011: 366–368). Furthermore, life expectancy for Africans increased significantly (Mlambo, 2014: 209-210). The post-colonial government had the ability and the means to actively take a leading role in improving the lives of the citizens. This was made possible by a stable and booming economy that grew by 21% in the first two years of independence (Mlambo, 2014:212). This prosperity was short lived as the post-colonial government had inherited a debt of more than USD700 million, recurring droughts, financial mismanagement and corruption (Bond and Manyanya 2003:17). The government turned to IMF and World Bank for a quick fix to economic challenges gripping the nation.

The hope and bliss that characterized this period were marred by atrocities that the post-colonial government unleashed on the AmaNdebele between 1983 and 1987. The government deployed the North Korean trained Fifth Brigade into Matabeleland.

Rape, disappearances, maiming, torture, murders and unlawful detention became the order of the day (Verstraelen, 1998: 68). In the five years of genocide, more than 20 000 AmaNdebele and sympathisers were massacred. Up to this day, the postcolonial government has failed to unite Zimbabweans. *Gukurahundi* atrocities exacerbated the polarization among the citizens⁵⁶ (Sachikonye, 2011a: 15; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009: 180-183). The attempts to eradicate dissent and prop up state controlled public sphere were futile. The post-colonial government failed to unite its citizen, and citizens searched elsewhere for unity, belonging and identity construction. Furthermore, the compartmentalization of citizens which manifests itself in provincial nomenclature acts as barrier to the construction of national identity and unity (see Fig 3-1).

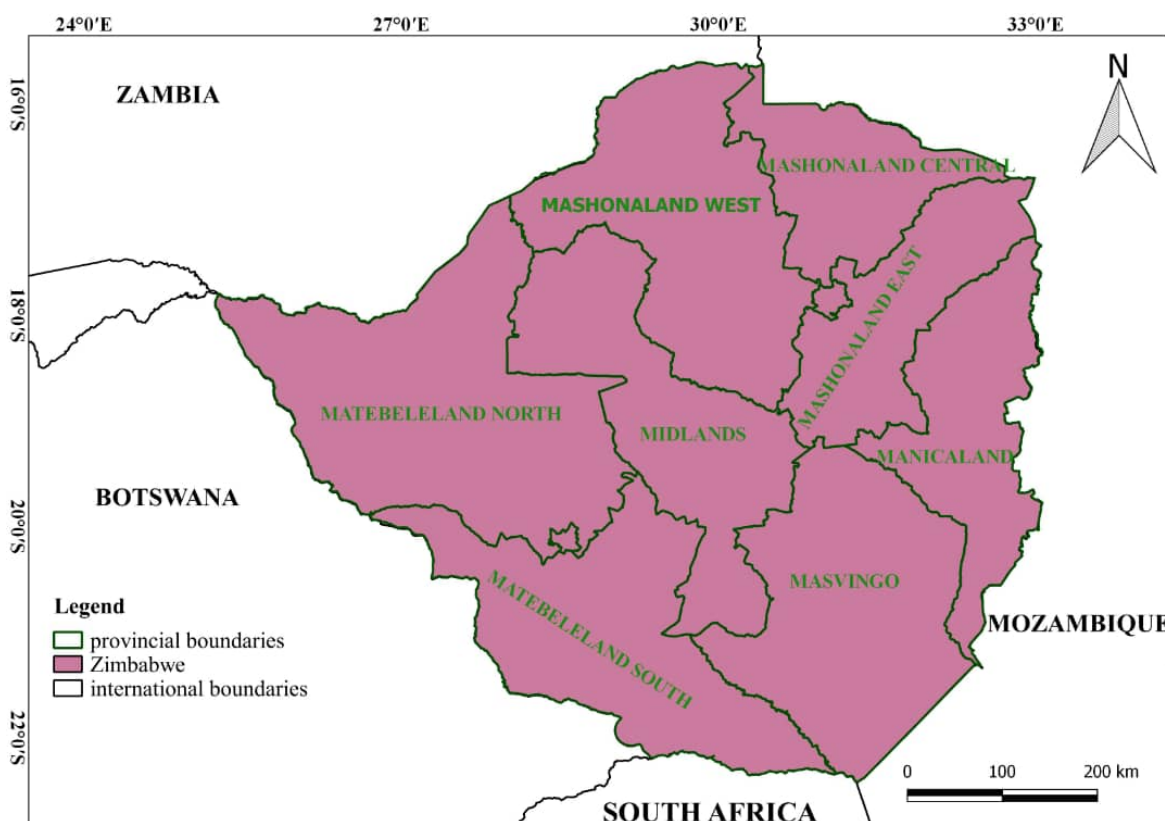


Figure 3-1 Map of Zimbabwe showing provinces

Source: Author's creation

⁵⁶ The government has not made public the findings of the 1981 Chihambakwe Commission of Inquiry and the Dumbutshena Commission of 1983. The only attempt made was to give a blanket amnesty to all parties (victim and perpetrators) involved in the *Gukurahundi* massacre through the Clemency Order Number 1 of 18 April 1988. Families of the victims have not found closure as the state refuses to open up and facilitate discussion of the issue.



3.3.5 Fragility, Precariousness and Militant urbanites

At the behest of World Bank, in 1991 Zimbabwe implemented Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) to remedy economic challenges. The programme's pillar was on 'rolling back the state' by cutting government expenditure in social welfare, commercialization of parastatals and forfeiting government's role in price control, exchange control, labour restrictions and investment regulation. ESAP led to increased trade deficit, unemployment, de-industrialization, inflation, lower wages, increased poverty, shortage of housing, reversal of gains made in health and education sector (Bond and Manyanyiwa, 2003: 35). Government's withdrawal from public service negatively affected housing situation. During the 1990s, housing financing and provision was left to market economy. Most urbanites could not afford to own houses in the urban area (Bond, 1998: 298). The general hardship experienced by workers and urbanites in Harare triggered riots and strikers. Between 1991 and 2000 at least six 'IMF riots' broke out. 1993, 1995 and 1998 witnessed urbanites taking to the street to express their disgruntlement with the raised price of food and fuel (Sachikonye, 2011a: 23). 1995 and 1997 saw workers both in public and private entities organizing demonstrations against lower wages and worsening working conditions. Bond and Manyanya (2003:32) gave an apt evaluation of ESAP "in reality, ESAP failed miserably." The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) reduced its support for Zimbabwe due to policy zigzagging by the government. The negative impacts of ESAP were visible and the government moved in to reverse some of the strategies that undermined its ability to govern the national economy. The government reintroduced price controls and import duty on luxury goods in 1998 (Bond and Manyanya, 2003: 40).

In 1997 the post-colonial government faced new challenges from liberation war veterans who questioned its legitimacy. Faced with such challenges, Robert Mugabe moved to allay the worries of 50 000 war veterans by paying them a Z\$ 50 000⁵⁷ gratuity and a monthly pension of Z\$ 2000⁵⁸. Furthermore, the government set up a health fund to cater for war veterans and another fund to cater for the

⁵⁷ equivalent to USD 4000 then

⁵⁸ equivalent to USD150 then



education of war veterans' children. As a way of pacifying war veterans and his supporters, Mugabe agreed to hasten the process of land redistribution. The payment of unbudgeted gratuities to war veterans, the chaotic land redistribution exercise and involvement in Democratic Republic of Congo's war precipitated an unprecedented plunge of the economy. On 13 November, the Zimbabwean dollars shed off 74% of its value against the United States dollar (Mlambo, 2014:201). Inflation was on an upward spiral, food prices skyrocketed forcing urbanites into the streets in January and October of 1998. The same year, university students took to the street. Both economic and political crisis mounted. Zimbabweans were discontented and agitated, they expressed their discontentment with the government by voting 'NO' to government's Draft Constitution in February 2000. It is important to note here, that National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) which organized and mobilized people against the ZANU PF-prepared constitution comprised religious organizations affiliated to Zimbabwe Council of Churches, student bodies, trade unions, women's groups and human rights organizations (Muzondidya, 2009: 196; Raftopoulos, 2009: 206). Zimbabweans were disillusioned when they realized that the hopes, aspirations and promises of the new Zimbabwe were unachievable under the ZANU PF government. Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and civil society organizations came to together to mobilize Zimbabweans against the post-colonial government. The same actor in NCA were instrumental in the formation of the opposition political party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999. As living standards and condition lowered, many Zimbabweans were unhappy. By the turn of the century, many citizens lost faith in government and searched elsewhere for means to gain control over their lives.

3.3.6 The New Millennium

The post-colonial government faced insurmountable challenges during the early years of the twenty first century. IMF blacklisted Zimbabwean government and closed all credit facilities. Furthermore, the imposition of 'smart sanctions' crippled the government and worsened the plight of ordinary Zimbabweans (Mushinga, 2015: 27). Various sections of the Zimbabwean population coalesced together to form the MDC with the intention to rescue the nation from its challenges. Sachikonye



(2003: 112) notes that the opposition decried the unwillingness and or the inability of the government to improve the national economy; collapsing health delivery system and public service corruption, and gross human rights abuse by the government. In May of 2005 the ZANU PF government embarked on an operation 'to clear out the filth' out of urban areas. Houses were demolished affecting 700 000 urban dwellers during Operation *Murambatsvina*⁵⁹ (Tibaijuka, 2005; Sachikonye, 2011a: 25–27). This worsened the housing shortage as fewer people could afford owning a house in urban areas since the introduction of ESAP. Infant mortality rate increased from 53 per 1000 per live birth in 1995 to 60 per 1000 live birth in 2009; while maternal mortality in 1990 was pegged at 168 per 100 000 live birth and jumped to 880 per 100 000 live birth in 2005. Urban areas lacked safe piped water, worsening the health situation. 3 800 people succumbed to the cholera epidemic of 2008 and 2009 (Games, 2011: 206). With the health care crumbling, and the HIV and AIDS epidemic decimating the population, life expectancy declined to forty-four in 2008 from sixty-two in the 1990s (Mlambo, 2014: 239; Bond 1998:359). On the economic front, the government failed to curb the runaway inflation which reached 231 million percent in 2008 (Gono, 2008; Muzondidya, 2009: 220; Games, 2011: 206), the national currency was worthless and had to be abandoned. There were food and cash shortages, and the majority of people earned salaries below the poverty datum line. The formal sector collapse as industries closed or moved to neighbouring countries. The informal sector burgeoned creating what Jeremy Jones (2010) has termed a *kukiya-kiya* economy.

The government failed to adequately provide for inmates. Prisoners lacked enough food, medical supplies, clothing, blankets sanitary supplies and hygiene products (Alexander, 2009; Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2011). Inmates suffered from diarrhoea, measles, tuberculosis, cholera and pellagra. These diseases are pointers to poor ventilation and hygiene. Being sent to jail was considered a death sentences as most people died in custody due to lack of food and proper sanitation. The government neglected feeding, clothing and providing medical attention to the inmates (News24, 2015). Alexander (2009) notes that "(f)or Zimbabwe's

⁵⁹ Literally, Drive out filth.



Government the prisons are not a priority.” In 2016 through the presidential pardon, 2000 inmates were freed as a way of decongesting the prisons. The failure of the government to provide for inmates provided space for other actors to come in and fill the void created. Red Cross and religious organizations have provided assistance for prisoners (Gov UK & Immigration and Visa, 2017).

The postcolonial government has been dogged by accusations of corruption and mismanagement of public funds. Corruption is rampant among top government officials and cascades down to the police forces that squeeze the little that people have through bribes (Chikwati, 2017; Reuters, 2016). The Comptroller and Auditor-General’s report for 2016 has shown that ZANU PF politicians running the government have bled the state through endemic corruptions, fraud, misappropriation of state funds and embezzlements⁶⁰. Despite pointers to parastatals and government departments and ministries that have abused state funds, the government has failed to take action to curb such malpractices. A recent report by Global Witness (2017) exposes the state’s role in parcelling out the Marange diamond field to companies linked to political elites, the military and the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO). The state relies on patron-client relationships which benefit the top echelon only. Ordinary Zimbabweans have taken to the social media platform to condemn government officials and politicians’ lack of accountability and transparency. In a time, the government is failing to provide adequate housing and health service, government ministers and other top officials continue to enjoy a lavish lifestyle supported by public funds.

⁶⁰ To mention but a few, the report pointed to ways in which state funds were being looted by politicians and government officials. For example, Minerals Marketing Corporation of Zimbabwe (MMCZ) paid \$25 000 sitting allowances to board that was never constituted and never sat; Grain Marketing Board (GMB) blew over \$7.9 million on non-core business activities whilst failing to pay farmers; Zimbabwe National Roads Administration (ZINARA) and Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZimStats) could not account for over 30million; National Social Security Authority (NSSA) failed to identify land that was bought for \$3.4 million using pensioners’ money, while Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) was not in possession of title deeds to the houses allocated to its leadership. The houses were valued at over \$2.4 million.



On the political front, the MDC challenged ZANU PF government's legitimacy and questioned its ability to improve the fortunes of the nations and its people. Elections held since 2000 have been controversial amid allegation of violence and rigging. After losing the first round of 2008 presidential election, ZANU PF government gave itself a new lease of life by entering into a power sharing deal with the two MDC formations. This ushered out a Government of National Unity (GNU) in February of 2009 (Chipika & Malaba, 2017: 238). The negotiations which set up the GNU were long and winding as ZANU PF jostled to control ministries and portfolios that guaranteed ZANU PF's stay and regaining control over state apparatus. ZANU PF angled itself for ministries of mine, defence, tertiary education, youth and indigenization, local government, justice and parliamentary affairs, media, information and publicity as well as home affairs which had co-ministers from both ZANU PF and MDC-T. ZANU PF politicians demanded ministries and portfolios that gave the political party control over major institutions of the state such as the military, police and judiciary. Ministries concerned with health, social welfare, public works, and economic development were placed under the custodian of the MDCs⁶¹.

Through all the processes, ZANU PF has managed to entrench itself within government system and state institution that at times it is difficult to separate the two.

3.3.7 A State of Controversies and Contradictions

Emerging literature on Fast Track Land Reform Programme is proving that the ZANU PF government has achieved success in redistributing land and improving the plight of some subsistence black farmers (Moyo, 2011; Scoones et al., 2011; Hanlon, Manjengwa & Smart, 2012; Chipika & Malaba, 2017: 228). Hanlon et al (2012) notes that the FTLRP is a success story with over "245 000 new farmers

⁶¹ A story in The Herald of 13 February 2009 titled 'New Cabinet Appointed.' The ministries ZANU PF controlled were strategic in the sense that they were directly concerned with security and or the three arms of the state. The MDC bagged ministries that deal with social welfare and services. Furthermore, the prime-minister position offered to Morgan Tsvangirai was ceremonial as Robert Mugabe remained an executive president.



have received land, and most of them are farming it. They have raised their own standard of living; have already reached production levels of the former white farmers; and with a bit of support, are ready to substantially increase that production.” The government has put in place a number of initiatives to support farmers. These initiatives are Presidential Agriculture Input Scheme, Farm Mechanization and Command Agriculture.

Amid economic and political turmoil, there are claims of huge strides in reducing the prevalence of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Despite the collapse of the health delivery system, declining life expectancy and brain drain of personnel in the health delivery system, Zimbabwe saw a convincing decrease in HIV prevalence rate that fell from 29.3% in 1997 to 15.6% in 2007 (Halperin et al., 2011). The shift from a biomedical approach to behavioral change approach, introduction of Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centres at hospitals and by some Non-Governmental Organization such as Population Services International as well as the introduction of the Plan for the Nationwide Provision of Anti-Retroviral Therapy, scaling up of Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission efforts (PMCT), increased distribution of condoms, public awareness and male circumcision are identified as the source of Zimbabwe’s success story (Halperin, et al, 2011; Mushinga, 2015, 31).

This period also witnessed an increase in the numbers of religious groups that emerged in Zimbabwe, they may have played a role in behavioural change by discouraging extra-marital liaisons and cutting short sexual networks. Most mainline and Pentecostal religious groups condemn elaborate sexual networks by stipulating monogamous marriages (Maxwell, 2006). This ‘success story’ has been met with skepticism in some corners. The decline in HIV prevalence rate is attributed to the lack of accurate statistics and records as the health delivery system had collapsed (Mushinga, 2015: 37). Furthermore, Zimbabweans sought solutions in alternative health systems due to the comatose biomedical health delivery system (Basure,



forthcoming)⁶². In my opinion, the decrease in HIV and AIDS prevalence rates is a result of both government and NGOs efforts. The increase in alternate health care systems where statistic of new infections are not accurately captured present challenges when it comes to accounting for new infections.⁶³

These ‘success’ stories were registered in a period that has been described as the lost decade in Zimbabwe’s development trajectory (Sachikonye, 2011b). The post-colonial government resorted to politics and economies of affection to retain support and loyalty through ecologies of patronage and redistribution. Only a portion of the citizenry benefitted from such redistributive projects, while the bulk remained on the fringes. Hopelessness, precariousness and desperation prevailed among the general populace. The prevailing situation in Zimbabwe is best captured in Tagwira’s (2007: 168) novel *The Uncertainty of Hope*. Burdened by the hurdles of life in post-colonial Zimbabwe, Katy Nguni says:

What can we say or do to change anything, anyway?

It is in this context, under such political and economic malaise and a fudging post-colonial government that Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity increased visibility on postcolonial Zimbabwean public space, offering providential guidance to citizens living in the shadows of the state. As highlighted in the previous chapter, a number of scholars concur that the increase in Pentecostalism can be explained in terms of political and economic crisis. The same is true in Zimbabwe where several Pentecostal movements have proliferated in the last two decades. Pentecostal movements have been noted to attract the marginalized and those hard-hit by the crisis as a way of cushion themselves. However in Zimbabwe, both the lower and higher social classes have flooded Pentecostal movements, making it simplistic to argue that OMG is a church of the poor and marginalized. While this thesis adopts a political economy approach, Pentecostal beliefs are taken seriously. In the midst

⁶² PhD thesis titled *In Search of a Cure: Experiences in Alternative Medicine in Masvingo, Zimbabwe*. Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Pretoria.

⁶³ At times herbalists, prophets and Asian medicine merchants rarely diagnose HIV, they may attribute it to some other form of illness.



of this reconfigurations, Pentecostal clergy are moving in to fill the void created by the crisis.

3.4 Pentecostalism, Class and State relations in post-colonial Zimbabwe

In this section I discuss the interaction between the state and Pentecostal movements. Furthermore, I explore the intersection of religion and class formations, showing that Pentecostal clergy have assumed social status that was previous associated with politicians and chiefs. The collapse of the nation economy has provided avenues for Pentecostal prophets to rise into the public sphere and inspire their followers with hope.

3.4.1 Pentecostalism and the Zimbabwean State: Continuities and Discontinuities

I have chosen to focus on encounters of Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) and Zimbabwe Assemblies Of God Africa (ZAOGA) with the state in this section, omitting other religious movements because these two Pentecostal movements have direct links with OMG. Furthermore, AFM is one of the oldest and largest Pentecostal movement in southern Africa. AFM was central to the spread of Pentecostalism in the region. Through secessions AFM aided the establishment of African Independent Churches across the region (Strohbehn, 2005; Maxwell, 2006 and 1999). OMG and ZAOGA are splinter groups from AFM. ZAOGA is local Pentecostal movement whose leader broke from AFM in 1959 and has added a charismatic and material success flair to its theology and liturgy (Maxwell, 1999a: 192, 2006: 66). The same can be said of the leadership at OMG that trained with AFM bible schools.

John G Lake is named as the conduit through which Pentecostalism came to southern African. Lake was a freelance Pentecostal preacher who set up a Pentecostal revival movement in South Africa in 1908. It was Peter Le Roux who transformed Lakes' revival movement into a South African AFM denomination. In South Africa, AFM attracted both Africans and Afrikaners . The Afrikaners were suffering from the failure to find more minerals while Africans were being uprooted from the subsistence economy (Maxwell, 1999). As such, Pentecostalism offered solace, stability and protection that were absent in the everyday lives of the Africans



and the Afrikaners going through tumultuous patches in their lives. In the South African context, Pentecostalism attracted categories marginalized and experiencing economic instabilities.

AFM Pentecostalism found its way into Southern Rhodesia in 1915 through the missionary activities of Zacharias Manamela. Manamela was a black South African who introduced Pentecostalism in Gwanda (Strohbehn, 2005). Two years later two white missionary families, the Goldies and Luttings, were sent to Gwanda and Kadoma respectively. The movement attracted migrant workers such as Isaac Chiumbu and George Chimudzakazi⁶⁴ of Malawian origin (M'fundisi, 2014; Strohbehn, 2005). As I have shown in the previous chapter, in North and Latin America and Russia, Pentecostalism attracted marginalized groups such as migrant workers, ethnic minorities and foreigners. The same trend occurred in Southern Africa (Maxwell, 1999a: 75; 2006: 56-57). The two migrants set up AFM branches across Southern Rhodesia that by 1931 there were 3000 AFM adherents in Southern Rhodesia.

The relationship between AFM and the colonial state was confrontational. The state rejected formal recognition for the AFM because its missionaries operated in restricted reserves, bringing them into direct confrontation with native commissioners (Ranger, 1986; Maxwell, 2006). AFM had eccentric local preachers who rubbished the government's effort to control their activities by allocating them areas of evangelizing. Enoch Gwanzura and John Juma are some of such eccentric preachers (Maxwell, 1999: 254). AFM did not buy-in into governments' civilizing mission of constructing school and hospitals for the locals. In subsequent chapter I will explore how OMG an offshoot from AFM has adopted different strategies of engaging with the state. AFM preached divine healing, personal encounter with God, 'witch-hunting exercises' and native church independency which undermined the civilizing efforts of the colonial state. From the states' perspective, AFM activities

⁶⁴ M'fundisi (2014) refers to Joel Chinzakazi-Phiri, an AFM preacher of Malawian origin who worked in Mutare before leaving for Zambia. This is the same George Chimudzakazi Strohbehn (2005: 28) if referring to.



rendered redundant the government's and other missionaries' 'civilizing' efforts of establish hospitals and clinics. Furthermore, Pentecostal esoteric rituals and personal encounter with God led to ecstasy which contradicted the colonial mission of fashioning disciplined subjects out of the locals (Maxwell, 2006).

Pentecostalism also threatened chiefs by challenging chieftainship and associated authority. Chiefs were functionaries of the state under native commissioners. Pentecostals disrespected the institution of chieftaincy which they perceived as based on heathen traditions (Maxwell, 1999a: 76). Native messengers, and chiefs were humiliated by Pentecostals who neither recognized the state authority nor traditional authority (Maxwell, 2006: 50). AFM provided fertile ground for the emergence of African Initiated Churches such as Masowe and Marange movements which later waged cultural resistance against the colonial project.

The early years of post-colonial Zimbabwe were marked with mixed and complex interaction between the church and the state. Mainline churches that had sided with the government toned down and distanced themselves from the post-colonial state in a move to avoid past mistakes. On the other hand, Roman Catholic Church continues to position itself as the monitor of the state as it continued to condemn and expose human rights abuses by the state⁶⁵ (Mandaza, 1991; Maxwell, 2006: 146)

As the postcolonial government's legitimacy and support waned in the 1990s, ZAOGA forged relationship with the ZANU PF leadership. Leadership of both ZAOGA and ZANU PF/government were brought together at seminars, conferences and meetings they attended jointly. The government would invite ZAOGA to its functions while the latter would reciprocate. ZAOGA backed the former President Mugabe's homophobic stance in September of 1995 (Taru and Basure, 2014; Maxwell, 2006). 1996 saw a combined ZAOGA-ZANU PF rally, strengthening the relations between the Pentecostal movement and the ruling party. The marriage of Robert Mugabe to Grace Marufu, a ZAOGA member and related to one of the

⁶⁵ The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace condemned Gukurahundi killings.



overseers at ZAOGA, strengthened the bond between ZAOGA and ZANU PF. Maxwell (2006) concludes that what ZAOGA did in the 1990s was just ‘time serving.’ ZAOGA partnered the state with the aim of accruing benefits that come with being close to the governing political powers and elites (Maxwell, 2006: 150).

Over the past two decades, Pentecostal Charismatic movements have increased in Zimbabwe (Mangena & Mhizha, 2013; Taru & Settler, 2015). There are over 2,4 million Pentecostals in Zimbabwe (Johnstone & Mandryk, 2001: 689). ZIMSTAT’s 2017 Inter-Censual Demographic Survey report peg Pentecostals at 20% of the population (ZIMSTAT, 2017: xi). During the time of my research, there were two Pentecostal Charismatic movements that dominate the Zimbabwean religious landscape: Heavenly Glory Ministry (HGM) and OMG⁶⁶.

3.4.2 Class Dynamics in Zimbabwe

In this section I explore the links that exist between religion, state and class formations in Zimbabwe. The section concludes with a discussion of an emergent class of Pentecostal clergy who are assuming status that mirror that of celebrities, politicians, chiefs and business moguls.

The concept of class is fluid and can be deployed analytically in varying ways. Castoriadis (1987) follows a Marxist understanding of class as a consciously self-identification category that furthers its interest against those of other classes in society. Goldstein (2005: 89) view class as a taxonomic tool for constituting categories in society and account for processes between and among them. Following Bourdieu’s conceptualization, a class is constituted by a category of individuals who possess similar cultural, economic and social capital. The concept of class is a pointer to “an embodied and experiential sense” among social stratum, consciously and unconsciously (Lentz, 2017: 41). Possession of similar types of capitals translates into similar dispositions, taste and practices (Bourdieu, 1984).

⁶⁶ There is rivalry between these two Pentecostal Charismatic movements, they compete for members, popularity and aim to outdo each other. OMG members were suspicious of members of HGM.



While, Bourdieu's conceptualization of class goes beyond Marxian relationship to economic resources, the inclusion of habitus squashes and levels dynamism that is found within a given class. For Bourdieu, habitus is a unified set of dispositions shared by individuals who form a class. For Bourdieu, a social class is not conscious of its existence, only a share disposition is the underlying factor in categorizing class. This removes internal variations and dynamics found within a class, and ignores the life-histories, religious beliefs, age, ethnicity as well as race among individuals who share a particular disposition (Bennett et al., 2009).

Christianity was introduced in Zimbabwe by Father Gonzalo de Silveria around 1560 way before colonial occupation. The establishment of the colony assisted in the entrenching of Christianity among Africans. The colonial administration granting land to mission churches. Mission churches were dominated by white missionaries (Dillon-Malone, 1978: 8). In colonial Zimbabwe, race and religion had a bearing on class formation. The emergence of black middle class in colonial Zimbabwe was heavily tied to Christian missionary churches that provided education which paved way for Africans to access employment in the colonial administration (West, 2002). Africans employed as social workers, preachers, nurses, teachers, policemen, lawyers and clerks in government departments formed the basis of colonial African middle class. The black middle class was urban based while some of the members of this social stratum could be found at Mission hospitals and school located in rural areas. The missionaries shepherded Africans into middle class through the education system, social clubs and programmes on home-craft that instilled discipline, hygiene and cleanliness (Burke, 1996: 37; Lentz, 2017). The African middle class was defined by level of education, spacious and well-furnished houses, consumption patterns and professional association membership (West, 2002: 2). Educated and residing in the same residential locations which allowed for the development of political consciousness. Political consciousness of the black Christian middle class, to adopt Maxwell (1995: 116) terminology, acted as the launch-pad into politics. The Marxian optics to class adopted by West (2002) portrays a class as constituted by individuals who share a class consciousness and are self-organizing into a stratum. West's reference to peasants gives an impression of static and clinically hierarchical ordering of society on the basis of classes.



During the infancy of post-colonial Zimbabwe, the African middle class continued to enjoy the lifestyle and trappings associated with middle class. Government employees continued to receive decent salaries that left them with large disposable income. The collapse of the economy reversed the benefits and lifestyle African middle class had been accustomed to. The crumbling economic environment that has characterized post-colonial Zimbabwe in the past three decades, has reconfigured the class structure and formation. The *kukiya kiya* economy increased the fluidity in the Zimbabwean class structure, “effect(ing) a sweeping spatio-temporal shift in the country's economic life” (Jones, 2010, 1). Government employees, erstwhile colonial African middle class, were hard hit. There was unprecedented erosion of incomes, consumption and lifestyle characteristic of middle class. Most professionals left Zimbabwe for greener pastures across the borders, those who remained behind witnessed changes in lifestyle. Professionals such as teachers, bank employees, lawyers, doctors, engineers and accountants experienced the vicissitudes that accompanied the economic meltdown (Chagonda, 2010; Maunganidze, 2016: 159–168). The economic and political crisis erased the middle class. Educational attainment and government employment, profession and professional board membership ceased to inform entry into the middle class.

As the middle-class thinned during economic crisis, a class of ‘national bourgeoisie’ burgeoned among those with close relationships with the political elite (Raftopoulos & Compagnon, 2003). This class consisted of ‘tenderpreneurs,’ local bourgeoisie, political elites and members of the AAG (Mangidhla, 2016; Gutu, 2011). Nationalist bourgeoisie aligned themselves to the government, resided in plushy and leafy residential locations and are known for driving top of the range cars, shopping sprees in Paris, South Africa, Dubai and Singapore (Reporter 263, 2016). The then first lady and her family were known for their conspicuous consumption of western and oriental designer commodities. Grace Mugabe’s extravagance and shopping sprees have earned her the monikers ‘*First Shopper*’ and ‘*Gucci Grace*’⁶⁷ (Post,

⁶⁷ Local media has exposed and condemned the first family’s shopping sprees in times of economic meltdown when the majority of Zimbabweans are living in abject poverty.



2014: 95–96). Images of conspicuous consumption of designers' clothes and commodities among the 'new' ZANU PF leadership is slowly filtering into the public through social media. Images of Emmerson Mnangagwa holding a USD 8 600 Louis Vuitton briefcase as well as his penchant for luxurious private airplanes have surfaced on Twitter (Thompson, 2018; News24, 2018). This exposes the Zimbabwean postcolonial government stance of "talking left and acting right." The government's redistributive programmes are socialist in nature, yet exacerbating inequality through creation of a clique of national bourgeoisie.

Simultaneously, an emergent class of the *nouveau riche* composed of 'illegal' money changers, diamond and gold dealers appeared on the Zimbabwean social structure. This class consisted of individuals with little educational achievements, whose consumption patterns and lifestyle triggered them into socialites (Matika, 2017. Nyota and Sibanda (2012: 8) note that teachers and government employees – the now impoverished middle class – contemplate joining *magweja* /*makorokoza*⁶⁸. Some of the civil servants supplement their salaries with petty vending and other moonlighting activities.

The increase in Chinese business persons and the increase in Pentecostal movements has reconfigured the social strata, further complicating post-colonial Zimbabwean social structure. The Chinese entrepreneurs are promoted by the government at the expense of local entrepreneurs and business persons. The (in)formal relations between Chinese entrepreneurs and the government or politicians undermines local entrepreneurs who may pose as threat to the government (Kademaunga, forthcoming)⁶⁹.

⁶⁸ Informal and illegal miners and punners. The idea of informal or illegal is misleading, there is no clear distinction between formal and informal; legal and illegal mining due to linkage between these sectors. Most mining activities are located in the interstices between formal and informal. Makorokoza gold find its way into the formal channels, some deliver to Fidelity Printers.

⁶⁹ Fellow doctoral fellow at Human Economy Research programme working on PhD thesis titled The proliferation of Chinese migrant retailers in Zimbabwe. Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Pretoria.



Another emergent class of pastors and prophets is visible. This category of PCC clergy and acolyte joins the class of *nouve riche* and socialite is conspicuous in its consumption patterns. Wealth and status have Siamese connections with the former as a pointer of the latter. These pastors and prophets derive their status and wealth from the spiritual capital they control. The economic collapse has reconfigured the economies of prestige and status, bringing the clergy to the fore. Power and status are shift from civil servants and the educated to celebrities, athletes, illegal miners and Pentecostal pastors and prophets who have become more visible in the public sphere at a time when the erstwhile elite categories are on the decline (see Lauterbach, 2010: 261).

The collapse of the economy, the rise of backyard industries and the increase of people eking-out-a-living in the grey areas that emerge on the intersection of the formal and informal economy, has led to further differentiation in the lifestyle of the lower class. Discussing the labour market in South Africa, Barchiesi (2010) notes that the lower class must be disaggregated into those in lower levels of formal employment; those in casual and informal employment, and those never unemployed. The same sub-categories of the lower class are present in Zimbabwe with unemployment rate standing at over 80%.

While the missionary churches had promoted the growth of black middle classes within the colony, African Instituted Churches in colonial Zimbabwe, on the other hand, attracted among its rank and files the uneducated and menial labour. Chitando (2009: 33) and Dillon-Malone (1978: 28-30) observed that Masowe Apostles mainly engaged in artisan jobs such as carpentry, vending and basket-making⁷⁰. Masowe Apostles distanced themselves from practice and phenomenon they considered western such as formal employment, colonial health and education services, the bible and use of money. In Masowe teachings, the government is portrayed as evil due to its demands for a number of taxes from Africans. The teachings contained vestiges of economic protest against an evil and earthly political

⁷⁰ Dillone-Malone (1978) has labelled the Masowe Apostles as The Korsten Basket-makers.



establishment. The preaching and teachings comforted apostles who experienced the hardship the colonial system imposed upon them. African Initiated Churches that emerged in the colonial era fostered a cultural resistance to the colonial project (Anderson, 2001; Comaroff, 2013). In the face of repressive regime, AIC adopted apoliticism as members were discouraged from engaging in politics (Kiernan, 1974). In South Africa, as Jean Comaroff (2013: 3) illustrates, Tshidi Zionist rituals embodied 'concealed' and 'coded' 'defiance' that implicitly undermined the colonial project. The cultural resistance waged by Masowe Apostles and ZCC explicitly removed desire to acquire a disposition characteristic of the middle class that mission churches cultivated.

3.5 Conclusion

I have discussed the specificities of the Zimbabwean state, pointing to features that make it possible for religious movements to emerge and act as proxy to the state. Zimbabwe is characterized by ethnic polarization and crony capitalism which Pentecostalism in the form of OMG is responding to by providing alternatives. From the background laid above, it is clear that OMG is strategically positioned to react to the prevailing situation in Zimbabwe than to abstract neo-liberal economic system as the Comaroffs would argue. As I shall argue and show in subsequent chapters, Pentecostals go beyond spiritualization of politics by using the structures of the postcolonial state as the scaffolds for its own project to transform both the Zimbabwean society and nation as a whole. I aim to provide the model of the world OMG Pentecostals hold and ways in which they aim to erect such a model. OMG model is projected in a society the where the government also has its model. It is at the intersection of these two models that I locate the interactions and engagements between the state and Pentecostals.

By focusing on conceptual regimes of Pentecostals I bring out the importance of beliefs, rituals and other social actors ((in)visible) that have a bearing on the world Pentecostals wish to create. I now discuss the history of OMG in details, presenting its history, structure, activities, theology and doctrines and how they set it apart from the state that is corrupt and inefficient.



4. BETWEEN THE STATE AND CHIEFTAINCIES: APPROPRIATION AND REPRODUCTIONS

Around 0720hrs on Sunday morning of 24 July 2016, Nyasha, his wife, their children and myself sauntered into the venue for the service⁷¹. The venue was almost full an hour before the service commenced. When we failed to find parking space close to the venue, we anticipated to find the venue filled. On Tuesdays as early as 1500hrs congregants would be at the venue for proceedings that start at 1700hrs. Congregants strategically sat on positions that allow prophet Ben to easily access them. Intense competition characterized the struggle of the strategic sitting positions. Bays 3, 4, 10 and 9 were considered strategic and they filled quickly. These bays were located close to the main stage. Prophet Ben often walks by these bays as he preaches. Bay 13 was the last to be filled because it was not strategic as it is located behind the main stage. OMG seating positions were arranged systematically. Bay 1 and 16 were reserved for personnel in the cleaning department as well as those in the health department. The sick and the elderly sat in Bay 2 while those in the departments of statistics and finance colonized Bay 3. Attendees with hearing and speaking problems sat in Bay 4. There was someone translating the proceeding in sign language for the attendees in this bay. Bay 8 was reserved for what most respondents called “the first families.” Close relatives of the pastors and the prophets sat on this section of the arena. The choir filled bay 12 while the stage overshadowed bay 14 and 15. Bays 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 13 were for the rest of the congregations and attendees.

The furniture selection and the “aesthetic of arrangement” convey various hierarchical positions of the occupants. On the ground, the front rows are reserved for leadership, the VIP and distinguished guests. Two dark brown majestic sofas and small glass tables indicate the positions the prophet Ben and his wife sit. The prophetess is ushered to the seat by an usher who carries her handbag, kneels as she hands back the handbag and bible. The same row of chairs is filled with blue padded chairs lined up while other rows have plastic chairs. Behind the acolyte sat guests housed at various OMG Prayer Resorts. International visitors are encouraged to visibly display and wave national flags of their countries of origins. International visitors had their position on the main auditorium, facing the stage. Bed-ridden and terminally sick attendees were laid in the main auditorium, some with drip apparatus hanging from chairs.

The choir sang few songs before the intercessions and prayer session begun. The Praise and Worship segmented is choreographed in a manner that allows the choir to seamlessly usher congregants into a ritually and emotional charged state and space. The first songs sang were fast paced praise songs exalting God and Jesus. Towards the end of the segment, slow songs with “introspective tune” followed. The emotionally charged songs altered the form of consciousness. Congregants lifted their hands, gazed up, clenched fists and faces as they prayed, creating the presence of God. The intercessor led the gathering through prayers. The prayer points for the day were derived from the monthly devotional book. It dwelt on “Answered Prayers” and Jeremiah 33: 3 was the guiding texts. Congregants were instructed to pray for new and great things in their lives. The intercessor also prayed

⁷¹ There are three services on a Sunday, Couple’s service in English, Shona Service in vernacular and lastly Youth Service in English. On Tuesdays there is only Partners’ Service, everyone attends though it is meant for congregants who financially partner OMG by funding its charity activities.



loudly via the Public Address system⁷², adding intensity to the already loud voices. Prophetess Jane walked in with her aides and security details. Some of the attendees knelt down as a sign of respect for the prophetess. Some placed notes and coins on the altar, as a way of thanking God for the prophetess. The choir performed international Pentecostal songs, with spates of loud prayers, wailing and glossolalia in between. After close to an hour of music and prayer, the mood and the atmosphere had changed. Some congregants were crying, some just lay on the ground and other raised their hands to the sky. Though it was not announced, I observed that prophet Ben's motorcade was absent. The choir had to extend the Praise and Worship section to entertain the gathering for almost an hour.

Prophet Danny walked to the stage, which also doubles as an altar. He greeted the gathering and welcome international visitors. He instructed the congregants to greet at least three other persons. A group that had just checked out from OMG Prayer Resort, was invited to the stage and paraded to the congregation. They were dressed in sweater written Prayer Resort, and arm-bands inscribed "I was there." The group was jovial, sang and just celebrated, one member of the group shared with the rest of us snippets of activities and miracles they witnessed. It was done in a way that aimed to persuade other to follow suit. They encouraged the congregation to sign in for Prayer Resort. Prophet Danny asked the gathering to lift their copies of the monthly devotional prayer book, the sales team was instructed to distribute to those without⁷³. Next, he announced to the wild cheering of the gathering that OMG directory's price had been knocked down to US\$1 from US\$3. I had bought a copy the previous week for US\$3⁷⁴. He advised the gathering on the branded ware for the Annual All-Night Prayer⁷⁵. Those that wished to have their cars branded were instructed to approach bay 5. There was a golf tournament which had been organized and a number of corporate executives had confirmed their participation. Congregants were instructed to register and use the opportunity to "mingle and mix with the executives". The tournament was a platform for congregants to negotiate tender and "mega deals ... signed." Lastly prophet Danny instructed the gathering to raise their home altar offertories and tithes. He instructed them to pray and make declarations into the spiritual realms. He prayed through the microphone while congregants gave personal prayers. He encouraged congregants to serve in the ministry, that was an offertory too, in terms of time. In serving one can join any department, saving OMG from paying for the services. He noted that time was money, thus God blessed both. The choir entertained the congregants with fast paced music.

⁷² OMG is believed to have the best Public Addressing (PA) system in Zimbabwe. OMG owns an Italian made 61 pieces PA system "consists of 40 RCF-TTL55A self-powered speakers with a unit sound output of 3500 watts, 21 RCF-TTL56A low frequency speakers with a unit sound output of 6800 watts, two digital sound mixers, trusses and motorised cranes for its mounting. The system can be used to address more than 100 000 people in an open space and can also be split into smaller units for small venues and crowds" reads a local newspaper.

⁷³ To distribute and collect the USD1 for the booklet

⁷⁴ Nyasha later on advised me on buying church merchandise. Buy after a month or on special events at a discounted price. I mastered the trick and it worked.

⁷⁵ An annual vigil held dedicated to fighting spiritual actors and forces that militate against congregants' prosperity.



As the choir continued to entertain the gathering, the red carpet was laid from the entrance below Bay 12. Security details positioned themselves at the entrance and close to the stage. Movements were restricted as the security prepared for the grand entrance of the prophet. I heard wild cheers from the 'Overflow Tent' and I knew the prophet had arrived⁷⁶. Minutes later, prophet Ben walked into the auditorium, flanked with some pastors and security details. Deafening noise, ululations, screams and 'glossolalia' engulfed the venue. Prophet Ben was in a dark designer suit, he wore gold jewellery, usually rings and wrist watch. As he emerged from the curtains, some of the attendees knelt down till he took his place on the stage. Such aesthetics of presentation constitute ways of legitimizing his charisma and acceptance of his pastoral power. A long queue immediately formed as congregants lined up to place notes and coins on the altars. For the next five minutes, the congregants placed money on various altars dotted in the venue. Prophet Ben's teaching for the day was on 'seeing things the way God sees them.' Congregants were reminded that deliverance is a process. Drawing from the book of Hosea, prophet Ben noted that most people were in unpleasing situations because of lack of knowledge. Knowledge and power were identified as the sources of deliverance. He emphasized knowledge of one's situation and of one's strength. When one focuses on his strength, he excels that at times the drawbacks are cancelled out. The prophet told the congregation that Michael Jordan cannot swim but his focus on basketball has gained him fame. After re-emphasizing his mission, that he has been mandated to transform lives and be the example of how people must live, Prophet Ben concluded the service ritually with these words "And behold I give unto you power!" The gathering also shouts "power" and the drums thud in unison.

The security details were alert and escorted the prophet out of the auditorium to the boardroom. After the leadership left, the congregants were released. I observed a number of OMG congregants hurtle to the altar, placing various documents⁷⁷, notes and coins, laying on the altar as they prayed. As the prayers subsided, I observed hordes of notes and coins that had been left by the supplicants. Swiftly they were collected and placed in bucket before whisked away by some ushers. Not all congregants left the venue, like most congregants I waited for the second service and the Youth Service.

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I laid the history of global Pentecostalism and local reconfigurations in different nation-states as well as political economies. I have also discussed Zimbabwe's political economy trajectories as a way of foregrounding and contextualizing the social, economic and political conditions in Zimbabwe. In this

⁷⁶ The Overflow Tent usually accommodate nursing mothers and those who arrive late. There are big screens from where they follow the service. The tents are located along the entrance and the people there often seen the prophet first before he makes his way into the venue.

⁷⁷ In placing them at the altar, the congregants were soliciting divine intervention. Often these documents were visa applications, copies of contracts, tender, medical records, vehicle registration documents, title deeds and summons of court.



chapter I open by a brief discussion of secessions and schisms that characterize Pentecostal movements in Southern Africa. I discuss in detail the history, organization, doctrines and activities of OMG. In this chapter I advance the argument that at a time some aspects of chieftainship and the state are waning in Zimbabwe, OMG rise is based on appropriation and re-articulation of repertoires of chieftaincy and aspects of the state. OMG has taken advantage of the absence of the state in some aspect of citizens' lives to move into those spaces and increase its appeal among Zimbabweans. By reproducing a machinery similar to that of the state and chieftaincy, OMG strategically places itself in areas that the state and chiefs are absent. OMG machinery consist of charismatic, patrimonial, lineage, militarized and bureaucratic aspects. These characteristics inform both chieftaincy⁷⁸ and presidency in Zimbabwe. OMG machinery mimics that of both ZANU PF and government. While similarities may be drawn between these actors, there are elements that distinguish the two. Homi Bhabha's (1994) notion of ambivalence of the mimic captures well ways in which mimicry produces *almost the same but not quite* phenomena. OMG machinery is almost similar to that of ZANU PF and government but quite different in that OMG has managed to forge divine legitimacy and authority that ZANU PF has failed to. Furthermore, OMG machinery has represented itself as less corrupt than ZANU PF. Chapter six reveals the ambivalence of the mimic in detail.

As the chapter progresses, I discuss ways in which charisma shapes the hierarchy in OMG and structures relations. I argue that OMG hierarchies and relations are more stable than relations fostered by the state, thus gaining the confidence from its membership. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, the state has failed to unite citizens and mistrust is rampant when dealing with government officials who control state institutions. The data presented in this chapter was obtained through interviews, and from secondary sources of data such as newspapers, church literature (tracts, compact disks) as well as from the internet (OMG web page, the

⁷⁸ In chapter 3.1.1 I made reference to the hierarchical composition of Shona and AmaNdebele political systems, bringing to the fore the basis of those occupying certain position: Lineage, ritual expertise, and council set-up.



prophet's web page) and from social media platforms (Twitter, WhatsApp groups, Instagram, Facebook and OMG mobile phone applications).

4.2 Pentecostal Fissiparousness

The prevalence of secessions in African Independent Churches has led Daneel (1987: 203) to conclude that such processes constitute ways in which religious movement expand and grow. Writing on African Initiated Churches (AIC) in colonial South Africa and Zimbabwe, Kiernan (1996); Chitando (2009) and Daneel (1987:195-213) respectively, identified a number of factors that contribute to the fissiparousness nature of African religious movements. The size of religious movement in terms of membership and the number of branches has implication on whether the movement splits or not. Larger movements are more prone to break-away as they are less cohesive. In large religious establishments, followers failed to connect with the church leadership who were far removed from them. Ambitious local leaders capitalise on the remoteness of the overall leadership to break away with followers. Followers are more familiar with local leadership. They follow local leaders in the event of a split from the main group (Kiernan, 1996: 76). Local leaders act as the lynchpin that balances local level dynamics and politics. Among Zionists, an argumentation in popularity and charisma coupled with congenital zeal gave sufficient motive for splitting from mother denomination. Furthermore, the easy access to spiritual power among AIC and Pentecostal movements is conducive for pastors to build enough spiritual capital to start their own ministries. As I will show below, OMG congregants followed their ambitious local leader when he left AFM.

The fluid nature of charisma and conflict over leadership positions are some of the factors that contributed to the schisms among Zionist denominations. The close relationship between AFM and Zionism in colonial South Africa is well documented (Maxwell, 2006 and 1999). This association may partially explain shared factors that lead to increased prevalence of splinter groups in these two Christian denominations. AFM in Southern Africa has experienced several schisms (see Strohbahn 2005: 138-148 for Malawi, Maxwell, 1999, 2006 for Zimbabwe, Gifford 1998 in Zambia. Theological tension, church politics, racism and ambitions are some of the reasons behind the splits. Madida Moyo left AFM in 1945 to set up Pure



Apostolic Faith Mission. The reasons for his leaving were doctrinal. Madida was against the 1945 Church Conference drive towards modernizing efforts by establishing biomedical hospitals. This decision adversely affected Africans who had rose to prominence through the gift of healing. Furthermore, the conference agreed on a poultry project. The rearing of pigs was unacceptable to Madida. The increase in paternalistic leadership by foreign missionaries in Southern Rhodesia and their quest to bureaucratize AFM stifled the chances of Africans like Madida to ascend to higher positions. He left AFM to start his own denomination (Maxwell, 1999b; Togarasei, 2016).

AFM preachers such as Elijah Mugodhi and Isaac Chiumbu's departures were triggered by differences on the institution of marriage. Mugodhi and Chiumbu accepted polygamous marriage while AFM banned such marriages. The former left AFM to form Kruger Apostolic Faith Mission while the latter set up African Apostolic Faith Mission. In 1959, Ezekiel Guti broke away from AFM to establish Assembly of God, African which later became ZAOGA. Beneath the break-away were resentments for white missionaries, thirst for power and status and raging ambitions (Daneel 1987: 195; Maxwell, 1999:192; 2006: 66). While these splinter groups emerged in the colonial period, the postcolonial era has witnessed a number of schismatic groups from AFM. Between 2009 and 2012 a number of young vibrant preachers, ambitious pastors and charismatic evangelists left AFM to form various autonomous Pentecostal ministries⁷⁹ (Chitando, Manyonganize & Mlambo, 2013: 160; Togarasei, 2016: 6). It is during this period that prophet Ben left AFM.

4.2.1 Birth of OMG

Prophet Ben and Prophetess Jane⁸⁰ are the founders of OMG. The prophet was in his early forties during the time I conducted the study. Prophet Ben received pastoral training from AFM's Living Waters Theological College. He graduated in 2002 and was deployed to several AFM branches across Zimbabwe. The couple married in

⁷⁹ At least four prominent pastors defected from the AFM, I have deliberately not mentioned their names or ministries for ethical reasons.

⁸⁰ Wife to Prophet Ben



2002 and had five children at the time of the study. In 2008, whilst at AFM pastor Ben⁸¹ formed a lunch hour fellowship in Harare's Central Business District (Taru & Settler, 2015). Due to the popularity of the lunch hour fellowship, Christians from various religious denominations joined. This forced the venue to be changed to a more spacious venue to accommodate attendees. The lunch hour fellowship was later shifted to Sunday afternoons. The fellowship was characterized by preaching, teachings, healing sessions and prophecies. The increase in fame and financial resources placed prophet Ben in direct conflict with the AFM leadership.

The reasons behind prophet Ben's departure from AFM are complex. The prophetic and healing activities by prophet Ben were not approved by the AFM leadership. Furthermore, prophet Ben's flair for Pentecostal gospel centred on giving and material success was different from that at AFM then. During fellowship meetings, believers donated huge amounts of money than they would donate to their respective denominations and branches. For the AFM leadership and other pastors, the fellowship was diverting people, funds and resources from AFM. A number of interviewees noted that the bulk of the Christians who attended the fellowship were AFM members. Some of the AFM members neglected their obligations to their local branches and pastors in favour of prophet Ben's fellowship. Prophet Ben's popularity, charisma, spirit of discernment and resources were increasing at the expense of AFM. It was the imminent loss of popularity, membership and funds in the form of tithe and offertories that led AFM leadership to confront prophet Ben. Prophet Ben left AFM to establish OMG in 2010 (Taru and Settler, 2015: 118; Herald Op-ed, 2011).

From 2010, OMG has grown to become one of the most prominent Pentecostal Charismatic movement in Zimbabwe boasting of over twenty branches in Zimbabwe⁸² and across national borders into Zambia, Mozambique, South Africa,

⁸¹ Then a pastor, the title of prophet came after the formation of OMG

⁸² Harare, Bindura, Bulawayo, Chinhoyi, Mutare, Masvingo, Zvishavane⁸², Gweru, Mutoko, Gutu, Kadoma, Chivi, Madamombe, Hwange, Victoria Falls, Shurugwi and Kotwa among others.



United Kingdom, Australia and United States of America⁸³. Furthermore, a monthly devotion booklet produced by OMG claim that over 70 000 attendees throng OMG services in Harare⁸⁴. These figures must be taken with a pinch of salt, as Pentecostal movements are obsessed with numbers and figures. One of my interlocutors, told me that:

...the ministry has grown, it has the largest followership in Zimbabwe, we have spread to all provinces, people are converting and following *baba*⁸⁵, some are leaving their churches, despite all the attacks in media and on Facebook, why are they joining us? It is the divine call, my friend. *Baba vanonzwa straight kubva kuna Mwar*⁸⁶. if you mix flour and mealie meal, prophetically he can separate the two, he is the prophet of our times, he will lead us to a new Zimbabwe. Many (people) are realizing it and are coming, even you, why did you choose to study OMG and not other ministries?⁸⁷

Whilst large membership is a pointer to the growth of the ministry vis-a-vis other denominations, large numbers also act as a way of legitimizing the prophet as divinely appointed and anointed. Though teleological, Prophet Ben's charisma attracts new followers, the increase in followership on the other hand legitimizes his divine calling and charisma. This explains the obsession with numbers Pentecostal

OMG has spreading into neighbouring countries namely South Africa (Cape town, Johannesburg, Sandton, Midrand, Centurion and in Zambia⁸². OMG claims that some of its members are in the diaspora especially in United Kingdom, United State of America and Australia

⁸³ In some countries such as Zambia, USA OMG had not official branches but had members in those countries who would often come together and follow proceedings through the internet.

⁸⁴ There is a statistics department that counts attendees to the Sunday services. Attendants may not literally mean membership, some of the people who attend will be seeking healing or to observe OMG activities. During fieldwork I encountered a number of such people who claimed to be members of other churches but were attracted to the 'word' share at OMG or invited by relative and friends.

⁸⁵ Father, used to refer to prophet Ben

⁸⁶ The prophet is instructed by God.

⁸⁷ Interview conducted on 13 August 2016



movements have⁸⁸. In August of 2016 during the Annual All-Night Prayer (AANP) of OMG, most participants believed that more than 300 000 people attended the event. The obsession with numbers is not only in believers and adherents, but the ministry cultivates this obsession. The pictures of the AANP that were posted on OMG websites showed a huge crowd⁸⁹. During the event OMG drones hovered in the sky capturing images. At the start of every service, international visitors are welcomed, with mentioning of the countries of residence and origin. During the midweek service of 28 June 2016, there were international visitors from South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, United Kingdom, Australia and Kenya⁹⁰. This great international attendance is an attestation of the divine calling.

Among OMG Pentecostals, another way of legitimizing a prophet was the prophecies and miracles performed. This explains why testimonies are of importance to Pentecostal movements. There is a time-slot reserved for those who have encountered God and experienced miracles. Testimonies are recorded and at times broadcast on the OMGTV⁹¹. At the 2016 AANP more than one hundred mothers and their babies were paraded as testimonies. During 2015's edition of AANP, these women had requested for prayers as they were failing to conceive. In 2016 they brought their babies as testimonies. Criticism is another way of legitimizing the presence of God. The media-onslaught on OMG heightened believers' faith and loyalty to the prophet. Ex- President Robert Mugabe has on several occasions attacked 'contemporary' Pentecostal prophets whom he accuses of fleecing and misleading citizens and followers (Muperi, 2014; Mugabe, 2017;

⁸⁸ Zimbabwean Pentecostal movements always attempt to undo each other when it comes to followers. They often over-estimate their members and attendees. During crusades bigger arenas such as sports stadiums are selected in anticipation of a huge crowd.

⁸⁹ <http://www.ufiministries.org/gallery.php>

⁹⁰ I will offer an analysis of the symbolic meanings of this parading of foreign attendees later in this chapter

⁹¹ In October 2013 OMG launched a 24 hour Free To Air television channels that broadcast religion themed films, music and other content. Sermons and activities of OMG are carried on the channel and form the bulk of the content. The offices of OMG TV are located in South Africa.



Chateta, 2014; Mlevu, 2015). Such attacks have made OMG members to point to Robert Mugabe's failure to steer the nation off murky economic and political waters. A comparison of Robert Mugabe and prophet Ben is drawn by devotees of the prophet with the aim of showing that the latter is a better leader. As was highlighted by some OMG members, persecution is a form of confirmation of God's presence⁹² (see Chitando, 2009: 33). As Rocha (2017: 15 and 27) has argued, charismatic leaders benefit from coverage in media. Indirectly, news on them points to miracles and 'awe' associated with them, reaching out more potential followers. Let us focus on prophet Ben's calling before returning to issues of legitimation.

4.2.2 Aesthetics of Persuasion: Becoming a prophet

The phenomenon of prophets has a long history in Zimbabwe stretching from the pre-colonial times. Charismatic prophets are reinventing African prophetic systems centred on the person of diviners and spirit mediums (Lan, 1985). The authority of the diviners came from their ability to transcend and link the spiritual and the material world. The emergence of AIC brought with it prophets (Chitando, 2009; Chitando, Manyonganize & Mlambo, 2013; Gunda & Machingura, 2013: 15). The term *muporofita* is applied to anyone whose divination is inspired by the holy spirit. Through the holy spirit, *muporofita* can deal with illness and misfortunes that bedevil clients. Pentecostal charismatic prophets have refined and polished their taste when it comes to consumption. For Mangena and Mhizha (2013) Pentecostal Charismatic prophets constitute a category of white collar prophets whose ways are different from AIC spirit-type prophet. Despite differences in taste, Pentecostal and spirit-type prophets experience persecutions as a way of confirming divine selection. The calling narrative of prophet Ben resonates with other calling narratives of spirit type prophets discussed by Daleen (1987), Dillon-Malone (1978); Engelke (2007) and Gunda and Machingura (2013). Both spirit-type prophets and charismatic prophets such as prophet Ben emphasize the 'live and direct' communication with God (Engelke, 2004: 78).

⁹² In an article titled 'i own no ministry' published in OMG Magazine pg9– The Family volume 1 of 2013, the prophet expresses this also. Chitando (2009: 33) notes that in both the Old Testament and African Traditional Religion, a prophet/medium has to go through trials and tribulation as a sign that the divine has chose him



The narrative of how prophet Ben was called to serve God is well-known by the majority of OMG adherents I encountered during fieldwork. The narrative is like catechism, with most churchgoers highlighting similar events and processes. Most respondents noted that they had come to know of this narrative through teachings at OMG, the prophet's parents and prophet's colleagues as well as church literature and websites. A recorded sermon titled *Ndinowane*⁹³ was the most referred to DVD in which the prophet chronicles his journey to become a prophet. His mission is similar to those of Moses, Joshua and Paul combined. In this section I combine data from interviews and some secondary data from newspapers, CDs and magazines.

Prophet Ben is introduced as a prophet, teacher, apostle, businessman and televangelist in a CD⁹⁴. The prophet and the prophetess are brands⁹⁵, commercial brands with commodities such as CDs, t-shirts and caps under their labels. Apart from the commercial side to their brands, the brands advertise their characters as models for emulation to followers and believers⁹⁶. As a brand the prophet has a mission to "inspire people sharing life" while the prophetess is "...inspired to love."⁹⁷ The brand was launched on 3 June 2016 a few days before I commenced my fieldwork. Pomp and opulence characterized the launch. Prophet Ben's spiritual father Prophet Mark⁹⁸, foreign Pentecostal delegates and local business executives attended the launch.

⁹³ I had a chance to listen to the sermon on a DVD one of the interviewee had. There is an abridge version of the sermon on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxqlQJcT2aY>

⁹⁴ A CD titled Who is prophet Ben?

⁹⁵ OMG members use the term brand, there is an organization called Brand Ben, which markets prophet Ben as an exclusive product.

⁹⁶ www.emmanuelmakandiwa.com

⁹⁷ These lines are captioned on the social media handles and pages of the prophet and prophetess.

⁹⁸ Pentecostal Charismatic prophets have mentors whom they call spiritual fathers. The spiritual father trains and imparts a portion of his spiritual gifts to his spiritual son (mentee). Prophet Mark is from Ghana, I discuss more about spiritual fatherhood below in section titled Charismatic Genealogies.



Prophet Ben was born to parents who were AFM adherents. According to some congregants, prophet Ben's birth was not a surprise, it is alleged that an angel had notified his parents about his conception, stature and calling. Miraculous activities such as a star descending and settling on a tree in his father's compound, and honey that flowed from the walls of hut⁹⁹. Nyasha noted that prophet Ben's childhood was characterized by wonders and miracles. God and angels taught prophet Ben about the bible. On the radio, he would hear instructions from God. At times he saw visions of what occurred to the Israelites during their journey from Egypt to Canaan¹⁰⁰. During ANNP prophet Ben told the gathering that OMG pastors had visited his rural home in 2015 and witnessed the miracle firsthand as honey flowed from the walls of the same house. OMG Pentecostals noted that "the God of Moses spoke to *baba*" instructing him to lead "God's people to the Promised Land." On 26 August 2016 Prophet Ben retold the same story that his "mission is to take people from one place to another!... and to deliver those that were desperate¹⁰¹". Prophet Ben's main mission is to help people move out of poverty and servitude. These narratives clearly illustrate the relational nature within 'charismatic communities' (Csordas, 1997). The prophet has to lead his followers out of poverty. This presents him as a fatherly figure, shepherd, a leader and someone who cares and is concerned with the lives

⁹⁹ The story of honey flowing down the walls of a hut is well-known by OMG congregants, prophet Ben has referred to it more than three times during my fieldwork. There are interesting symbolic synergies to here with regards to this event. Honey is known to be among some of foods with lots of health benefits. The association with honey may imply that the prophet will bring better to his followers. Linking this to his prophet mission, prophet Ben is called to lead his followers out of poverty and misery that they live. In essence, his mission is to lead his followers to the land of 'milk and honey' (see Exodus 3: 17). On another level, this event is a metaphor that represents the relationship between OMG and the state. As the honey flows down the rugged wall of a hut, the honey fills the cracks and crevices in an organic way. OMG is filling the space and places that are left open by the state. in the process, the honey flows following and at times reproducing the contours of the walls. OMG is in the process of both filling the gaps state is not focusing on, resulting in the creation of state-like system and structure.

¹⁰⁰ I heard about it in 26 August 2016 during an OMG event, as the prophet introduced his mission and calling

¹⁰¹ During the 2016 AANP



of his followers' suffering under government's mismanagement. Relations between prophet Ben and his followers resembles the paternal-filial relations in which the latter benefit from the formers 'protective benevolence' (Janzen (1976) cited in Fernandez, 1978). Similar relationships are found between chiefs and subjects. The chief assumed a fatherly role over his subjects.

Growing up in a rural area, in a peasant family, prophet Ben was involved in agriculture. One Wednesday in 1996 whilst in a makeshift hut in his father's field, it is said that prophet Ben saw a vision of the exodus of the Israelites. Those who were working in the field saw the roof of the hut burning and they rushed to rescue him. They found him there unharmed (Christ TV, 2015). He later embarked on a 70 days prayer and fasting exercise. Techniques and technologies of the body such as fasting and praying are meant to bring an aura of the divine and social authority on the prophet (Mauss, 1935: 85; Foucault, 1994; Pieterse, 2016: 4). During the 70 days, prophet Ben had a vision of Apostle Paul, and learnt Pauline approach to ministry (*Testimonies Magazine* published by ISSU, 2016)¹⁰². The combination of motivational speaking, Mosaic and Pauline missions complicates prophet Ben's theology. It touches on deliverance from slavery to prosperity, freedom, building solid church structures, encouragement and expanding Christianity. The eclectic theology is typical of PCC preachers, Gifford (2015: 84) makes the same observation with regards to Nigerian Pentecostal preacher David Oyedepo.

Prophet Ben unsuccessfully sought a place at a bible school. His father had to leave him in the care of the dean at the bible school. In 2000 he was admitted at AFM's Living Water Bible College. After graduation he conducted his pastoral work in Matabeleland provinces before moving to the capital. It was in Harare that the interdenominational fellowship was established. The story of prophet Ben's calling follows a scheme similar to that developed by van Binsbergen (1977). Prophet Ben's story starts "out of state of crisis" when he fails to secure a place at bible school (Lan

¹⁰² *Testimonies* is a Zimbabwean Christian Magazine. The article is a transcription of prophet Ben's interview.



1985: 49)¹⁰³. Regardless of his failure, the divine continues to communicate with him. Lastly, he secures a place and gets back on track. The story illustrates ways in which crisis, misfortune and challenges are transformed into social order through the holy spirit (Lauterbach, 2010: 268 – 269; Janzen, 1976 cited in Fernandez, 1978). The story is instructive of ways Prophet Ben will transform collective crisis and problems faced by believers into social order and stability.

While the bulk of the congregants knew the official version of prophet Ben's history, most of them were not aware that he had changed his name (cf Herald Op-ed, 2011). Pentecostal leaders weave an 'official' dominant narrative that believers often accept uncritically (Maxwell, 2006, van Wyk 2014a: 62). These hagiographical accounts serve similar purposes as patriotic history, that is, to legitimize current leadership's position and to thwart dissent and opposition. In probing about the name change, often adherents were defensive and at times visibly annoyed with my inquiries or 'insinuations.' Regardless of all this, prophet Ben has evolved into an authority on political, economic, social financial, spiritual and sexual issues. His role and scope as a prophet are broadening beyond Zimbabwe (for other examples see Lauterbach, 2010: 260; Meyer 2005: 282). Through his books and television channel prophet Ben is claiming OMG's place in the public sphere by reaching a wider audience. To achieve this, there is need for a system of governance and structure that allows for all this.

4.3 OMG bureaucratic system

OMG is rearticulating a complex political machinery of chieftainship and a highly bureaucratic post-colonial state that are based on charisma, ritual expertise, lineage system and complex bureaucratic system. Chiefs are connected to sub-chiefs and head-men through exchange of services and material commodities. In the chieftain system, tribute flowed up the hierarchy to the chief, while the chief protected those within his orbit of power and control, this is similar to what I observed at OMG. I will

¹⁰³ David Lan notes that spirit mediumship starts from a crisis in the form of mishaps and ailments whose remedy is in accepting the calling. The same scheme is evident in prophet Ben's narrative.



further develop this argument in chapters five and six where I discuss in detail the systems of exchange to illustrate ways in which Pentecostal charismatics appropriate repertoire of chieftaincy to their advantage. Below I discuss components that hold OMG together and how they resonate well with the institution of both chieftaincy and the state.

4.3.1 Theorizing Sacral Power, Status and Authority

Sundkler's (1961) seminal work on church polity continues to shape ways scholars deal with the exercise of power and authority in African Independent Churches (AIC). Two types of leadership emerged from Sundkler's study. AIC either developed a chief-type of leadership or a prophet-type. The former was found in Ethiopian movements whose leadership was firmly established with a leadership style that was similar to that of African chiefs. Zionist churches promote prophet-type of leadership. Subsequent studies have continued to make use of this distinction in categorizing leadership types found in religious movements. A number of scholars have shown close resemblance between leadership of AIC and the chieftaincy (Sundkler, 1961; Wislade, 1965; Maxwell, 1999b). Leaders of AIC have judiciary functions and are assisted by acolytes in the same way chiefs performed similar duties with the assistance of *dare*¹⁰⁴ (Daneel, 1987).

Despite the rigidity of Sundkler's typology, I adopt it and treat the two types of leadership not as exclusive but as a broad continuum to allow for religious movements that exhibit both chief and prophet features. (Kopytoff, 1964; H. W Turner, 1968; La Barre, 1971). The system of governance at OMG leadership combines 'chief's' duties and charisma of the prophet. However, the analogy of a chief brings is productive in analysing ways in which religious denominations scale up and interact with the state. Chiefs in Zimbabwe are functionaries of the colonial state (Maxwell 1999a: 36-37). Africans in reserves accessed state-provided services via the local chiefs. Pentecostalism may be one way of reproducing aspects of the state and bringing those aspects within the reach of ordinary believers in times the some state institutions are weak (Hart, 2007: 16).

¹⁰⁴ A council



Sundkler's approach because resonates well with the broader historical context of Zimbabwe. The institution of chieftainship is common in Zimbabwe. Chiefs are at the centre of elaborate system of exchange with their subjects. Framing my discussion around the institution of chieftaincy I can explore ways in which honour, power, status and wealth are delicately balanced by Pentecostal leaders. In the following chapters I will illustrate ways in which prophet Ben acts as local level leader to some communities providing socio-political influence to their followers. Framed in this manner, religious leadership can be paralleled to chiefs who used to create value through distribution and exchange of protection, goods and loyalty with the laity. Exchange and distribution signal an entry point into the economic, political and religious lives of people involved (Sahlins, 1963). I now turn to the system of leadership at OMG.

4.3.2 OMG Leadership Hierarchies

In this section I provide details on the administrative positions in OMG, without hierarchizing them. What I present in Fig 4-1 below is not the official organogram of OMG but what I derived from the explanations provided by OGM members. OMG structure shows "bureaucracy in the Pentecostal-charismatic mode" (Kirsch, 2008: 184). OMG has a complex bureaucratic structure that brings together hierarchized offices and charisma. Pentecostal charismatic movements in Africa are innovative and eclectic when it comes to organizational structure, combining missionary Pentecostal model, Old Testament prophet model, mainline churches, and secular political structures (Fernandez, 1978: 209; Haynes, 2012b; Van Wyk, 2014a: 68). In conversations with believers, most of them noted that OMG is owned and directed by God through prophet Ben¹⁰⁵. Below God's ceremonial position is another ceremonial position, that of prophet Mark¹⁰⁶. Prophet Mark offers mentorship to prophet Ben. Prophet Ben and prophetess Jane are the visionaries at OMG . Apart from being the overall leaders, prophet Ben leads the evangelism department whose

¹⁰⁵ In an transcribed interview featured in OMG magazine of 2013, prophet Ben remarked that he did "not own a ministry but God is the owner of OMG"

¹⁰⁶ Prophet Mark runs his own ministry in Ghana, OMG is not a subsidiary of prophet Mark's movement, OMG is an independent entity in its own right.



major preoccupation is spreading the word of God through crusades and conferences. The prophetess is the leader of all female congregants. She is affectionately known as *mhamha*¹⁰⁷. She also doubles as the head of Compassionate Hand¹⁰⁸. The prophet and the prophetess are the spiritual parents to OMG members. Adherents refer themselves as *vana vemuporofita*¹⁰⁹. The adoption of familial hierarchies at OMG serves two purposes. Familial hierarchies are pointer to the ladder of respect and authority between ‘spiritual grandpa’ ‘spiritual parents’ and their ‘spiritual children’ as well as ‘spiritual grandchildren.’ The hierarchies also expose the intimate and stable relationships that Pentecostalism forges between the clergy and the laity, and among the laity itself which identify itself as *vana vemuporofita*. These relations are fostered among believers whose relation and connection to the state are marginal and loose (Katsaura, 2017: 7). In the following sections I unbundle these connections and discuss them separately

The position of the administrator is manned by a pastor who oversees the day to day running of the ministry. Prophet Danny is OMG’s spokesperson. He is the conduit through which the ministry interacts with the wider society. Press briefings and all correspondences are handled by him and or his deputy¹¹⁰. He is the gatekeeper to both the ministry and to the prophets. He grants access to the prophet and prophetess not only to outsiders but also to other pastors and members of OMG. I encountered the calm, reserved and soft-spoken but matter-of-fact-spokesperson several time during fieldwork. As I mentioned in my introductory chapter, he facilitated the issuance of the consent letter for my research. Prophet Danny is the director of ceremonies during OMG events and functions.

¹⁰⁷ Mother

¹⁰⁸ Charity department of OMG

¹⁰⁹ Sons and Daughter of the prophet

¹¹⁰ At the time of fieldwork, the deputy spokesperson of OMG was also the deputy spokesperson of ZANU PF



OMG is run by an executive board. The executive committee is the main decision-making organ¹¹¹. It consisted of the prophet, the prophetess, the administrator, director of department, the spokesperson, other senior pastors. I failed to establish the frequency of its meetings or to attend any of the meetings¹¹². The executive board meets for strategic-planning purposes and to review OMG events and activities. At 2016's Annual All Night Prayer, prophet Ben told the gathering that when the board met to review the 2015 AANP, in a vision he saw the city of Harare wrapped in a blanket of mist and smoke. It was this vision that informed OMG's decision to abandon the National Sports Stadium. The day we attended the 2016 AANP, there were demonstrations in Harare, the city had been barricaded and the anti-riot police had unsparingly sprayed tear gas to disperse the protesting crowd (see Madhomu, 2016)¹¹³. The executive board is composed of people who hold university degrees and most of them are employed as executives at their places of employment. The inclusion of educated individuals into the clergy is an acknowledgement of hierarchies of knowledge, and the hierarchy indirectly legitimizes the charismatic authority (Rocha, 2017). Lawyers, doctors, CEO and engineers are viewed by congregants as pointers to the greatness of the prophet's charisma and as silent confirmation that terrestrial knowledge needs guidance from the divine¹¹⁴.

There are a number of pastors who man branches across Zimbabwe and in other countries. All these pastors are spiritual sons to prophet Ben. The pastors are

¹¹¹ I first knew of its existence when I read a birthday message the committee had flighted in newspaper- NewsDay Weekender of 03 September 2016 on page 3. It was a birthday message for prophetess Jane.

¹¹² When I applied for the consent letter, Prophet Danny had told me that chance of meeting prophet Ben were slim due to his busy schedule, and that I must focus on congregants as I had indicated in my letter.

¹¹³ Zimbabweans were expressing their discontent with Zimbabwean government. The CBD was turned into a war zone. It took me more than two hour to reach the place about 1.5 km away where five OMG members were waiting for me.

¹¹⁴ The inclusion of educated personnel partly explains why OMG does not emphasize the need to produce wealth from nothing, what the Comaroffs (2001) have called occult economies.

enrolled in Prophet Ben’s Discipleship class in which they receive instructions from prophet Ben. Apart from instructions from prophet Ben, OMG pastor go through theological training at a bible school owned by prophet Ben’s a friend¹¹⁵. The pastors form a clique of what Weber (1978: 1119) calls charismatic aristocracy whose main purpose is to assist prophet Ben run the movement. Pastors’ charisma is relational and backed by educational certification. This forms the basis of priestly charisma enjoyed by some the pastors (Weber, 1978).

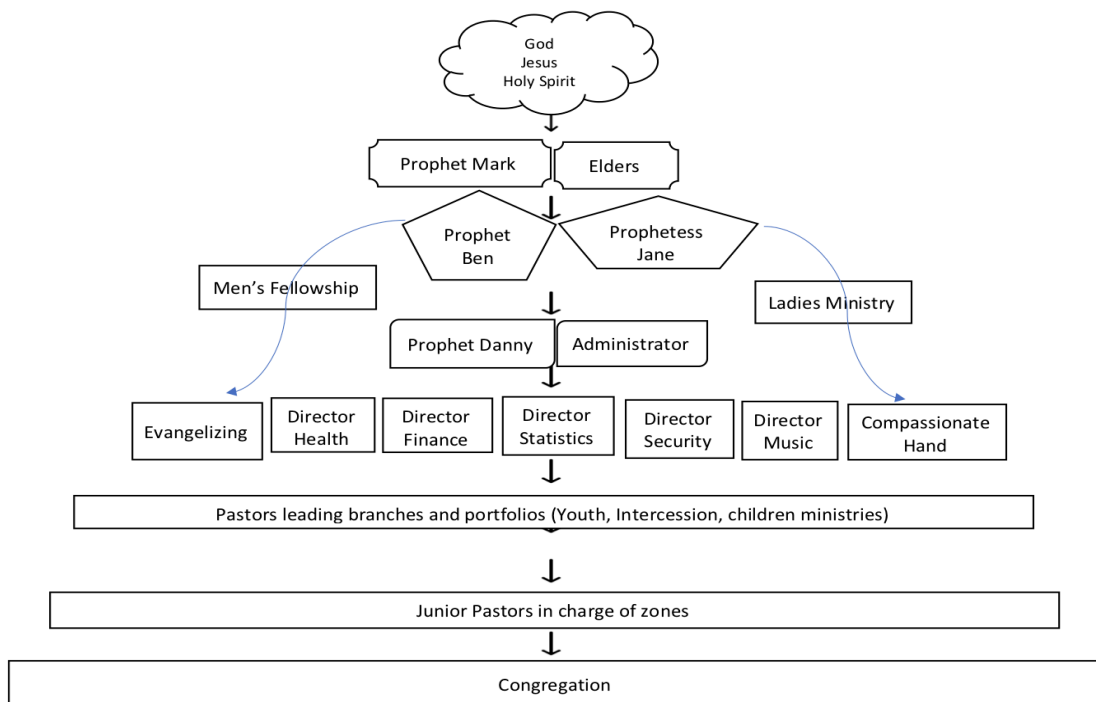


Figure 4-1 Sketch of OMG organogram

Source: Author's creation

4.3.3 Branches, Departments and Ministries

OMG members are parcelled into various groups for the sake of tailor-making the teachings and events to suit different age groups and social standing amongst its

¹¹⁵ Pastor Ben and the friend broke away from AFM at the same time. Prophet Ben has his own ministry and has found a theology school. Prophet Ben is an instructor at the theology school.



members. Broadly there are zonal groups, Men's Fellowship for all married men¹¹⁶; Children's Ministry, Ladies Ministry for all married women and Youth Ministry for young unmarried adults. There are members who provide OMG with funds to engage in charity activities. These members are referred to as Partners¹¹⁷. The structure of OMG resembles that of ZANU PF¹¹⁸.

Ladies Ministry led by the prophetess. The Ladies Ministry has a number of activities going on. The ladies have organized and held a number of prayer vigils during the period I conducted fieldwork. Every September, the ladies go for a camp meeting. Ladies are active members in the charity arm of the movement. Compassionate Hand¹¹⁹ is headed by prophetess Jane and runs a number of charity activities such as scholarship programme¹²⁰, support orphanages, prisons, children living on the streets, widows and the less privileged. In the next two chapters I will discuss the charity activities in detail illustrating ways in which OMG capitalizes on the absence of the government in some aspects of citizens' lives.

¹¹⁶ I have attended two of its meeting where we were taught about improving our sexual lives. The men pay subscriptions for being members.

¹¹⁷ The members partner the prophet and prophetess in the charity activities. The partners are part of a Partnership programme in which members are grouped on the basis of the contributions they make to OMG. I discuss the Partnership programme categories and charity activities in chapters six and seven respectively.

¹¹⁸ ZANU PF organizes its members into cells, branches, districts, provinces units determined by places of residence. Furthermore, members are subdivided along sex and age into Women's Leagues, Youth Leagues, Central Comittess and Politburo. OMG has zones and sections based on residence. OMG also has Women's Ministry, Youth Ministries, Men's Fellowship and the executive. The structure of OMG shares a lot with the organization and structure of political parties. The elders and partners enjoy special treatment such as having a service dedicated to them, the Partners' service on Tuesday, though everyone is now allowed to attend.

¹¹⁹ This is the charity wing of OMG headed by prophetess Jane. Compassionate Hand is mainly dominated by women. Its activities can be seen as motherly services, for example taking care of OVC, helping the sick and those in need.

¹²⁰ This is important particular in Zimbabwe where scholarship opportunities are limited. Zimbabweans now have limited access to scholarship after the imposition of sanctions and its withdrawal from the Commonwealth.



OMG machinery consist of many departments with different functions and mandates. The Department of Statistics is concerned with counting the number of attendees. Clad in their uniforms, the personnel move from one sitting bay to another counting congregants head by head, row by row. Some of the personnel's have machines that they use to count row by row. OMG's interest in legibility through records and registers is similar to that of the state (cf Scott:1998:2). Both need records and registered for simplification of control of members and citizens. The Sales and Marketing department is the retailing arm of the ministry. Religious merchandise and OMG paraphernalia such as devotional booklets, bracelets, literature, clothing, food, recorded sermons and stationery is sold through the department. The itinerant personnel's move around the crowd peddling the ware. At every entrance there is a Sales and Marketing desk displaying the ware. The Media and Anti-piracy department is responsible for recording and capturing all proceedings at OMG events. This department works closely with staff from OMG TV. During services, at the Prayer Resort, conferences and crusade the media team captures and recording proceedings. The machinery they use gives them a heavy presence. The department consist of photographers, videographer, Information Technology Communication technicians, and electricians for setting up the system. They often come in black golf t-shirts with OMG TV inscribed on them. The team is itinerant also as it seeks the most conducive position to capture proceedings. The team in collaboration with the Security and Ushering team also enforces the 'no recording rule,' by monitoring the activities of the congregants.

OMG has established a Health department manned by state registered nurses and doctors who are members of OMG. The head of this department is practicing surgeon. Personnel in the department attend to patients who come seeking divine solution for their medical condition. The nurses and doctors assist the general public in explaining the medical conditions patients have, and also assess patients after undergoing the healing process. There is a makeshift clinic at OMG services and crusades. There is also a department concerned with catering. The department prepares and sells food during events. There is a department of cleaning, which cleans and decorates the venues. The personnel in the department wear t-shirts



written 'Cleaning Department' and often sit on bay 16 during service. The personnel come early in the morning before everyone else to clean the venue.

A Chief Executive Officer of a local company heads the finance department. Personnel from this department are found on all entrances. On their desks one finds mobile point of sale machines, laptops and receipt books. Congregants queue to make donations to the ministry. Proof of donation (tithing or offertories) is issued as evidence of payment. By merely stating your name or mobile number, the system picks one's account number. From interviews with Munya and Tendai¹²¹, who are members of this department, I managed to gather more details on the operation of the department. This is one of the few departments that requires congregants to submit resumes if they have interest in joining. On the basis of dexterity and being nimble-fingered, individuals are recruited especially congregants who work in banks and in retailing sector. At the start of the service a supervisor logs cashier into the OMG server and network, once logged-in cashiers accept payments. By the time prophet Ben walks to the podium, most finance desks would have cleared the long queues of tithers and donators. The notes and coins are sorted according to currency type, and denominations before surrendered to the supervisor. The finance desks are also manned by security personnel under the cash-in-transit unit. The activities of the Security and Ushering department are discussed below under militarization of charisma.

4.3.4 Charisma¹²²

The leadership at OMG is complex and fuses various aspects that have been discussed above. Prophet Ben and his acolyte possess the type of charisma which is based on "special gifts of the body and mind... believed to be supernatural, not accessible to everybody" (Weber, 1946: 245; 1978: 1112). Prophet Ben's charisma

¹²¹ Munya was in his mid 20s, married and had a son. He was self-employed, selling construction materials. Munya holds a diploma in bookkeeping from a polytechnic . Tendai was in his 30's married and with three children. H operated a small grocery shop in his rural areas and another in Harare. He holds an Advance Level certificate.

¹²² My usage of the term charisma is for conceptual purposes, never was it mentioned by any of my respondents.



stems from his special gifts of healing, prophesying, impartation of part of his spiritual and physical gifts and blessings, interpretation of visions and tongues, exorcism, oneiromancy and preaching (see Pieterse, 2016; Gifford, 2015: 89). The spiritual gifts inform believers decision to “recognize him as their charismatically qualified leader” (Weber, 1946: 247). Foucauldian versions of charisma place more emphasis on power and exposing the manipulation strategies at the disposal of the clergy. In Foucault’s version, the laity has limited agency of action.

Weber’s focus on authority shifts attention to believers and brings to the fore believers’ ability to legitimize a leader. Charismatic communities, in our case OMG members, have the power to legitimize the quality which they consider ‘supernatural’. OMG believers noted that prophet Ben possesses ‘a portion of God.’ Stories of greeting the prophet, receiving prophesy or seeing him in a vision or dream are well-kept treasure-troves among OMG believers, with time, date and place recalled with ease. Sten narrated to me how the prophet gave him a handshake. Sten marveled as he narrated the incident, he confided in me that he felt a bout of electric force run through his body. “It was divine, awesome” he remarked. The acceptance of spiritual gifts as genuine by OMG believers elevates the prophet and his acolytes to the rank of ritual specialists. Similar to Rocha (2017: 59), I found that charismatic authority is based on relations the clergy forge with the laity. While all believers noted that they had access to the holy spirit in their individual capacity, prophet Ben mediated that access to the holy spirit. Prophet Ben is a spiritual gateway through which his followers access the divine and the holy spirit. In February of 2017, in a conversation one of OMG’s junior pastors told me that he hears the voice of prophet Ben giving him instructions on what to say during prophesies. He remarked to me that:

I hear the voice of *baba* often, telling me what to say and do, even to stop prophesying to unbelieving persons¹²³

¹²³ I had accompanied a respondent who was delivering a chair he had bought for the pastor. After congregant introduced me and the purpose of my visit, the pastor gave a prophesy to the congregant. I waited for my turn, he was reluctant to give a prophesy upon my life, instead he shared with us how he prophesy. His reference to unbelieving persons left me puzzled, for I was eager for the prophecy.



The belief by OMG members that Prophet Ben is a spiritual gatekeeper to a larger extent props his charisma. It is this gatekeeping that congregants seek and, in the process, retain their allegiance to prophet Ben. On the hand, several testimonies by members of OMG point to prophet Ben's charisma. Charisma provides the scaffolding upon which hierarchical relationships and authority between leaders and with followers emerge (Haynes, 2012b: 114). However, whilst Weber has argued that charismatic authority is sustained by the special gift and extraordinary abilities of the leader, at OMG – as I will now proceed to demonstrate – charismatic authority is fused with economic resources, bureaucracy and militarization.

4.3.5 Charismatic Genealogies

Haynes (2012b: xviii) has long noted that Pentecostals create hierarchies of charisma on the basis of spiritual gifts. The hierarchies of charisma inform relations between mentors, leaders and followers. Charisma shapes the flow of honour and influence in Pentecostal movements, giving rise to hierarchical structures that resembles a genealogy - charismatic genealogies (Lauterbach, 2010: 268-271). OGM's close relationship with Ghanaian Pentecostal movements creates charismatic genealogies and hierarchies that extends OMG structures, influence and charisma beyond Zimbabwe.

Pentecostal networks and relations are not organized on the basis of the Zimbabwean unpredictable economic and political structure¹²⁴, charisma provides a stable basis upon which new relations and organizing structures emerge among OMG Pentecostals. Prophet Ben and his acolyte form a category of ritual specialists whose authority exude from the 'spiritual gifts' they possess in particular ritual processes and contexts (Csordas, 1997). I discuss a system of charismatic genealogies within the context of spiritual fatherhood and sonship. A spiritual father nurtures his spiritual sons and imparts some of his spiritual gifts to them. Undergirding this system is the belief that the spiritual father has greater anointing,

¹²⁴ Relations based on political affiliation have been unstable in the last decade, characterized by factional feuds and splits. These faction wars occurred in two major political parties - ZANU PF and the MDC



experience and spiritual gifts than the sons¹²⁵ (see also Haynes, 2012b; Christerson and Flory, 2017).

At OMG, prophet Mark - the spiritual father to prophet Ben - is highly honoured and respected by congregants. He has mentored, blessed and placed a spiritual coverage¹²⁶ upon prophet Ben and his ministry. Prophet Mark's higher position was seen in the ways he is honoured at OMG. In April of 2017 prophet Mark graced an Easter conference at OMG. The hierarchical ordering of the prophets was evident from protocols during proceedings. Prophet Danny introduced and invited prophet Ben to the stage. Prophet Danny thanked God for giving Jesus, and then Jesus for the Holy Spirit. Lastly, The Holy Spirit gave them a father in prophet Ben. Prophet Ben in turn introduced prophet Mark. In his introduction, prophet Ben showered his spiritual father with praises, introducing him as "a general of God who sits in heaven's board(room) ... and angels record what he says." Prophet Ben explained that God consults prophets before he does anything, he alluded to the story of Moses in Exodus 32: 10 -14¹²⁷. As Prophet Mark took to the stage, prophet Ben kneeled and handed him the microphone. In kneeling down, prophet Ben's body became a site of power in the Foucauldian sense¹²⁸. For the rest of the Easter Conference the same procedures were followed. A person of lower stature precedes that of a higher stature. When I inquired from some congregants, their explanations for prophet Ben's kneeling and prophet Mark's ritualistic laying of his hand on prophet Ben, I was told that kneeling was a sign of submission to a superior or greater man of God. It was a way of soliciting impartation of gifts from prophet

¹²⁵ This takes the form of an apprenticeship or a mentor-mentee relationship.

¹²⁶ OMG Pentecostals seek after a spiritual protection and security which they call spiritual 'covering'. In this case, prophet Mark is considered more powerful and can offer effective protection. The concepts of spiritual coverage and fatherhood is similar to that of being placing your territory under a stronger political ruler for the sake of protection.

¹²⁷ 14 April 2017

¹²⁸ Kneeling in this case is a 'technology of the self' in Foucault's theoretical model. Technologies of the self are device deployed to socially construct one's identity within given power matrix.



Mark's¹²⁹. OMG members noted that prophet Mark had far greater prophetic, healing, preaching and singing abilities than prophet Ben. During the same Easter conference proceedings, prophet Mark had joked that he would impart a portion of his singing gift to prophet Ben who lacked the gift. OMG members referred to prophet Mark as 'grandpa' – the spiritual father of their father.

Charismatic genealogies act as a way of linking OMG to the wider global Pentecostal movement as links to prophet Mark also place OMG in relation with other prominent black African Pentecostal bishops and prophet such as Archbishop William Duncan and Benson Idahosa¹³⁰. Charismatic genealogies are constructed as a way of tapping into 'established tradition' of charismatic preachers and prophet. The same can be said of chiefs, whose relationship with departed and great chiefs increase their popularity and control. OMG charismatic genealogy is extended beyond national borders, something chiefs cannot do. Despite the differences, charismatic genealogies achieve the same purpose. In a way such links between Ghanaian and Zimbabwean Pentecostal movements confirms the hierarchies of charisma and widens the claims of legitimacy and charisma for both prophet Ben and prophet Mark beyond their respective countries of origin and operation¹³¹ (Lauterbach, 2010: 268-270; Haynes, 2012b: 143; Christerson and Flory, 2017).

Furthermore, by invoking charismatic genealogy the two prophets are building their charismatic authority by association to popular west African clergymen (Lauterbach, 2010: 269–270). Association with west African prophets comes with respect and

¹²⁹ The stories of Jacob in Genesis 32: 22-32 and Elijah and Elisha in 2 Kings 2: 2 are often quoted as the source of this practice.

¹³⁰ Prophet Mark referred to these two as his spiritual father and grandfather respectively. Charismatic genealogies are constructed in a similar way to lineage relations. Benson Idahosa was William Duncan's spiritual father and prophet Ben considers the former as his spiritual grandpa.

¹³¹ Literature of traditional healing show that healing objects and even healers from foreign land are considered more powerful when compared to local objects and healers. The choice of the Ghanaian spiritual father over locals reproduces the same effect associated with anything foreign. Also see footnote 141 below of queuing sequence.



reverence in Zimbabwe. Most Zimbabwean charismatic prophets are under the tutelage of Ghanaian and Nigerian prophets. Most Zimbabweans consider West Africa as a region that produce powerful spiritual and ritual experts. Nigerian and Ghanaian movies are popular in Zimbabwe, most of them portraying powerful Pentecostal pastors exposing and defeating opposing spiritual forces (see Meyer, 2005: 282–287).

As captured in the vignette, OMG members kneel down when Prophet Ben or prophetess Jane entered the auditorium as a sign of respect and submission. This honour is given unto the leaders because of the protection and ‘spiritual coverage’ drawn from the prophets. Furthermore, most congregants place notes and coins on altars, thanking God for the prophet and prophetess who guide and protect them. Other pastors and prophets at OMG were respected and honoured also, but not to the same extent as prophet Ben and the prophetess. Other pastors’ honour and position in the religious structure was derived from the prophet and the prophetess. The gifts of the spirit they possess, were nurtured and shaped by prophet Ben. The pastors are spiritual sons to prophet Ben and are part of his discipleship class¹³². Prophet Ben had ordained and groomed them. It is through prophet Ben that the pastors enjoy the honour and respect. Prophet Ben instructed his followers that every leader represents him, the same way prophet Ben represent God, if any OMG member disrespected a leader, s/he would have disrespected the prophet and God. These instructions serve to reinforce the charismatic genealogies within OMG.

4.3.6 Militarization of Charisma

The charismatic authority exercised by prophet Ben is buttressed by his control and access to the means of violence. The inclusion of security details, and an elaborate motorcade parallels that of the head of state. While cars, clothes and electronic gadgets are a form currency in religious economies, motorcade, designer clothes and bodyguards are symbols of power and wealth associated with the presidium in

¹³² Prophet Ben instructs a class of his disciples/son who are usually OMG pastors and administrators. The dates and venue of this class are only sent to those who are part of the class



Zimbabwe. Ostensibly, the security details are there to protect prophet Ben's family. Nyasha's younger brother is a member of the security team, manning the prophet's residence and business premises, especially his gold mines¹³³. He revealed that when he joined the team, he was sent for fire-arm training. The security detail also has a symbolical role to mystify Prophet Ben, his children and prophetess Jane by symbolically setting them apart from other pastors and members of OMG (see Rocha, 2017: 26). The vignette above confirms this, the security team ensures that no one gets close to the prophet by limiting movements and clearing his way just before his entry into the main auditorium.

The set-up of the Security and Ushering department makes evident the militarization of charisma. The department is headed by a former military officer, who doubles as one of the attachés to the prophet. He has a firm grip on the department, and well known for his no-nonsense stance. The department has a number of serving and former police, military and state security personnel¹³⁴. The department is subdivided into units namely, escort unit, crowd control section, Ushering and VIP protection unit (VIPPU). Its mandate is to provide security, protection and enforce OMG rules. Through one of my interlocutors I managed to attend some of the meetings held by members of this group¹³⁵. I attended two planning meetings that

¹³³ The young brother was economical with information, however, in bits and piece he also revealed the close-circuit camera system at the residence and some of the security procedures involved when one visits the residence.

¹³⁴ Some were employed in the military, police force and the state intelligence. During one security meeting at OMG headquarters, the head of OMG security a retired soldier casual revealed this when he divulged that at times he and other security guys (in the police force) we differ on security strategies and procedures because of our training. One congregant showed me someone in security whom he said was a member of CIO but was also a member of OMG. There were two pastors who had no state security background who were also part of the security team. One of the pastors was prophet Ben's young brother.

¹³⁵ There was heavy screening of people who attended the meeting, my interlocutor provided me with information of a security detail whom he knew will be absent from the meeting and possible answers to some of the questions that might be asked. I was questioned twice by different people on our way into the venue. The first person asked the pastor and the head of security department at branch I had claimed to be from. Later on, another person came to



deliberated on security situation for the Annual All-Night Prayer¹³⁶. The department has a WhatsApp group which serves as the channel for communication. Through the WhatsApp group, personnel in the department is informed of meetings, dress code and other developments concerning the department. Security and ushering personnel are positioned strategically in every bay during services monitoring the security situation with the aim of eliminating perceived threats¹³⁷.

The crowd control unit is concerned with managing, organizing and controlling the attendees' movements. The ushering unit guides and show attendees their seats or seating positions. The ushering unit is composed of mainly females. It serves and ushers the prophet, the prophetess their acolytes, partners¹³⁸, government officials and international delegates. The ladies often hold the delegates bible, hand-bag and walk the delegate to their sitting positions. The escort unit recruits heavily built individuals, especially bouncers and body builders. The escort unit provides the security detail that constitute the prophet and prophetess' motorcades. Clad in dark suits and glasses, hyper active, the security team always reminds me of the dreaded Zimbabwe's state security operatives under former President Robert Mugabe¹³⁹.

where we were sitting and asked to see my phone because he thought I was capturing images and also asked if I had been inducted. As we sat in the second row from the makeshift stage, I saw some of the leaders pointing at me. The elaborate security screening must be understood with the context of rivalry between OMG and another Pentecostal Charismatic movement that I gave in chapter 3. Members of the other movement are perceived as threats and saboteurs aimed at tainting OMG image in the eyes of the general public. The leader of the department issues out military-type of commands. His address focused on perceived threats from unnamed enemies. Whenever I recall about this meeting, I always conclude that the leader of the department is a great conspiracy theorist who imagined that there are people bent of tarnishing the image of OMG. While there are ethical issues concerned here, I had to conceal my identity to access the meeting which I would otherwise have not accessed.

¹³⁶ On 30 July 2016 and on 20 August 2016

¹³⁷ This must be understood in the context of Pentecostal rivalry I discussed in chapter three

¹³⁸ Congregants who donate certain amount to the ministry. Partnership comes in different levels. Some of the partners automatically qualify to be VIP, those who sit close to podium. I will discuss the Partnership programme in detail in chapter six.

¹³⁹ The Central Intelligence Officers were neutralized after Emmerson Mnangagwa took over.



Members of the escort unit are known for their heavy-handed treatment of perceived 'intruders' (Masvingise, 2013). For example, my encounters with personnel in the security department were eventful and memorable. During the time I was seeking for consent letter, the personnel security had more than twice barred me from meeting with prophet Danny. One guy was rude and told me that they only take orders from their superior when I had asked him to confirm my appointment. Later on, as I narrated my experiences to some congregants, I learnt that the personnel in the unit had a reputation of being stubborn and heavy handed. One congregant called them 'human durawall¹⁴⁰.' I have had images I took during a church service deleted by the personnel in this department¹⁴¹. The means of violence at the disposal of the prophets has for long been the preserve of state in Zimbabwe. Weber's (2004: 33) claim that the state is the only institution with legitimate claim to the use of physical violence has been overtaken by events. OMG is increasingly becoming militarized and embracing means of violence in its operations.

Another area in which OMG has mimicked and challenged the state is in the control of media. OMG has control of what the world sees and hears about it. OMG media house has the sole rights to record proceedings, the rest of the world access the proceeding through OMG TV. The Zimbabwean state muzzles private sector journalists as a way of stifling alternative voices in the public sphere. State owned media houses often peddle the dominant voice of the state. OMG TV channel has opened up an alternative public sphere to the state's established public sphere. Despite being an alternative to the established public sphere, OMG's alternative public sphere mirrors that of the state. Both are highly restrictive to alternative voices and dissent. Security personnel are employed to achieve this by both actors (OMG and the state). OMG, and other Pentecostal Charismatic movements are organizing themselves in the same way as states do and are usurping some of the rights from the state, OMG is structuring itself as a 'state' in waiting.

¹⁴⁰ A precast concrete wall for securing premises.

¹⁴¹ This is a common occurrence. In June of 2013 OMG security details seized cameras and recorders from journalists covering an OMG event. The security details even asked for accreditation letters from journalist. There is similar with what occurs during presidential pressers where state security agents insist on accreditation and no photograph.



4.3.7 Pentecostal Bureaucratic Establishments

As the discussion on hierarchy and departments shows, OMG has developed an elaborate bureaucratic structure. OMG is registered with the state. On OMG's website, the ministry's registration number is included. While I failed to access these documents, its registration number is a clear pointer to the existence of a constitution¹⁴², hierarchized position and duties associated with each office (Haynes, 2012b: 114). Furthermore, prophet Ben has gone through the bible college in order to be recognized and registered by the state as a minister of religion and marriage officer. OMG pastors also go through training at a theology school in Harare.

The co-existence of charismatic and bureaucratic authority entrenches the position of the prophet, in the event of the loss of charisma, his position is guaranteed through the bureaucratic system. OMG has a structure that allows simultaneous co-existence of these two types of authority complementing each other. The simultaneity produces a "bureaucracy in the Pentecostal-charismatic mode" (Kirsch, 2008: 184).

OMG congregants seem to be comfortable with this type of structure. Respondents told me that the prophet had taught them that the Holy Spirit guides everything. Prophet Ben did not dismiss the idea of enrolling at a bible school, but one had to be taught by someone who receives instructions from the Holy Spirit. The respondents considered bible school training as of secondary importance because it was done to satisfy the laws of the land¹⁴³. The tension between Holy Spirit

¹⁴² There is no specific law governing the operations of religious groups in Zimbabwe, making it difficult to trace the growth and increase in religious denominations. Religious organization may affiliate with Zimbabwe Council of Church; Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe and Union for the Development of Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe. Most religious groups register under Private and Voluntary Act or as Trusts, some of the requirements for registration are a constitution and a secretary of the organisation. In South Africa and Botswana there are laws that require religious movements to register.

¹⁴³ The respondent shared with me personal notes he jotted down during a Youth Question and Answer session in which this issue was discussed. The notes were dated 19 May 2013



inspired leadership and theology degreed leadership characterizes most Pentecostal movements in Africa. Englund (2007: 486) and Adeboye (2004: 147) made similar observations among Pentecostal movements in Chinsapo township, Malawi and in Nigeria respectively.

4.3.8 Pentecostal neo-patrimonialism and lineage-based relations

OMG system of governance is reproducing familial and lineage-based structures that are similar to those found in chiefdoms. Chiefs were respected and honoured by their subjects in relations that mirrored that of father and children. The ancestors of the chief owned the land that sustained the lives of the people and their livestock. Furthermore, the ancestors made the land fertile and provided the rains for crops, animals and people (Bourdillon, 1991: 260). To some extent, chiefs were ritual experts whom their subjects looked up to for guidance and protection. In this sense, a chief was a father, a provider to his subjects and followers. OMG has adopted the similar familial relations between prophet Ben and his followers. Pentecostals refer to themselves and each other as *vana vababa* or *vana vamai*¹⁴⁴. The adoption of familial hierarchies at OMG serves two purposes. Firstly, familial hierarchies are pointer to the ladder of respect and authority between 'spiritual parents' and their 'spiritual children'. Secondly, familial relations points to stable and intimate relationship that OMG cultivates among its members and between the laity and the clergy. Similar to the chief-subjects relationship, clergy-laity relations are undergird by the symbolic and ritual protection and spiritual coverage that chiefs and prophets as ritual experts provide to subjects and followers. The appropriation of rituals and their meaning by Pentecostals is similar to what David Lan (1985: 167) discusses as the replacement of chiefs by guerrillas during *Chimurenga*¹⁴⁵. By performing the same functions that were used to be associated by chiefs, guerrillas were slowly replacing chiefs. OMG is reproducing relations that mirror the complex relationship found in chiefdoms.

¹⁴⁴ Sons and daughters of the prophet(ess). The prophet assumes a fatherly role while his wife takes that of a mother to their followers.

¹⁴⁵ War against colonial imperialism



Chieftainship is based on lineage system as the chief is selected from specific families. The *dare* (council) was composed of person from the chiefly lineage and those handpicked by the chief to assist in the governing of the subjects. At OMG, lineage partly informs the structure and hierarchy. Prophet Ben and prophetess Jane's biological parents play instrumental role in OMG. These persons form a coterie of elders who advise prophet Ben and his executive. The parents are respected and honoured by OMG members¹⁴⁶.

Apart from the parents, some of prophet Ben's siblings hold key positions in OGM. One of prophet Ben's brother is a pastor leading a branch in South Africa, while the other brother is a security attaché to the prophet. Prophet Ben's friends, sister and brother in law hold positions within the OGM. The polity at OMG is tied together by a number of factors which result in a stable system of governance when compared to institutions such as political parties and state where mistrust is common.

4.4 Politics of Encounters and Sacred Space

In this section I discuss the encounter I had with prophet Ben, revealing how such encounter is similar to how chiefs and politicians are treated. I also look at issues a memorialization and remembering that between chiefs, state and OMG.

4.4.1 Meeting the prophet

Access to Prophet Ben is minimal due to the heavy presence of security details. During fieldwork I came close to prophet Ben on few occasions. I first came close to him when I responded and participated in prayers and rituals of hope that he conducted in June 2016 for all 'first born children' present. It was a collective prayer and rituals in which all 'first born children' in the gathering were called to the altar. Prophet Ben laid his hand on our heads as he prayed for us. Prophet Ben prayed for such children during a service conducted on the first Sunday of 2017. The prayers were meant to protect his followers from misfortunes. After ten months of failing to access to prophet Ben and prophetess Jane I decided to check-in at OMG Prayer Resort (see Appendix D). It was the only way I could meet with the

¹⁴⁶ They are referred to as granny and grandfather also



prophet(ess). There are many OMG members who have not personally met the prophet(ess) in the last eight years. I understood this well. I checked in on Thursday 13 April up to Sunday 16 April 2017.

Visiting the Prayer Resort presented several challenges for me. There were ethical dilemmas which troubled me before I decided to be a guest at the Prayer Resort. Was I going there as a researcher or as a person seeking spiritual guidance? Was I deceiving those I stayed with and exchanged stories with? Informed by the methodological choice I had made to privilege ontological claims and to take beliefs seriously, I decided to visit the Prayer Resort and participated fully in all the activities organized during my stay. I prayed with other guests at mid-night, early in the morning, shared true stories about my life situation and problems. The other challenge was financial. To book into the less expensive facilities, I had to pay USD 300. The cost was too high. The low-cost facilities were more popular among OMG members, resulting in a long waiting list. There was a three months backlog for the low-end facilities.

Prayer Resort facilities came in four categories. There are low-end dormitories with bunked beds¹⁴⁷. There were family units which cost USD 900; Deluxe option going for USD 1000 and Presidential option costing USD 1200 per three days. The high-end facilities are air conditioned, with ensuite bedroom, Wi-Fi and furnished lounges. At high-end facilities, prophet Ben visited guests in their housing units and spent time with them¹⁴⁸. On the contrary, at the low-end Prayer Resort I checked in, we queued to meet prophet Ben at his office. The time was limited due to large numbers of guests. OMG has a data base of all persons who visit Prayer Resort. Once you checked in, a photographer takes pictures of the guest. We were told the picture will be placed in our personal files. OMG's interest in biographical information shows its

¹⁴⁷ For methodological reason, the low-end prayer resort was the most productive, I interacted with a number of guests whom I shared the dormitory with. Most of the activities we engaged in were collective and this gave me room to observe, participate and interact with many guests. I learnt of what happens at flashy Resorts through a family that had once checked-in there. I will refer to this in chapter six when I discuss consumption.

¹⁴⁸ These facilities are located at plush suburbs in Harare



keenness in surveillance (Foucault, 2010) and legibility (Scott, 1998). This allows OMG to do a quick background check on guests. I will further develop this idea in the next chapter, linking OMG interest in personal data to state processes.

The pastor responsible for intercession, Pastor James¹⁴⁹ welcomed us and came every day to drill us and align our souls and minds with the place. He taught us the expected behaviour, took us through prayers and informed us of the schedule. He spent most of his time teaching us about expected behaviour in the presences of the prophet. What should we do, say and expect from the prophet when he comes¹⁵⁰. The day prophet Ben came to meet us, we woke up early in the morning had our breakfast early and gathered at the makeshift chapel. Pastor James led us in prayer and informed us of the procedure and conduct during one-on-one session with the prophet. We queued starting with international visitors, followed by Zimbabweans in the diaspora and locals saw prophet Ben last¹⁵¹.

¹⁴⁹ OMG pastor who inducted those who came to the Prayer Resort.

¹⁵⁰ We were told to tell the prophet that we were expectant and ready for him, that we must donate a seed to him. The curiosity and anxiety I witnessed in some guest, I believe, was partially due to the stories, incessant drilling on expected behaviour and the presence of security details. It constructed the prophet as extraordinary that at times some guest became tongue-tied before him or that one guest missed the prophet and went to address his reflection on the mirror.

¹⁵¹ The symbolic analysis of the ordering of guests in this particular sequence is laden with meaning and offers insights into OMG worldview. Foreigners were seen first before Zimbabweans in diaspora and lastly locals. This sequence attests to the hierarchization of guests as well as Prayer Resorts. Why would foreigners go first? There are many possible explanations to this, foreigners pay a lot to visit OMG Prayer Resorts, some of them require visas and airfare. Foreign visitors are a form of currency for prophet Ben and OMG. They point to the extent of OMG reach and boost prophet Ben's charisma by extending it beyond Zimbabwe, the same way having a foreign spiritual father does. This explains why guests are paraded during services, and are instructed to bring national flags and state their country of origin. Foreigners and Zimbabweans in the diaspora are possible funders of OGM.

Literature of traditional healing shows that objects from foreign land are considered powerful when compared to local. The ordering of the queue with foreigners in front is a reproduction of the importance associated with anything foreign.



As believers went through his office, some came out vomiting, some fell on the ground, some came out speaking in tongues, wailing, and some exhibited demonic manifest. At the entrance was pastor James and security details. When I entered the office, prophet Ben was sitting on a bar stool while prophetess Jane sat on a couch, “interceding for us” as pastor James had told us. Prophet Ben extended his hand to greet me. He thanked me for coming and assured me that he would come later to address my problems and challenges at the makeshift chapel. I placed a proof of payment for the USD 50 I had transferred into OMG account at the altar¹⁵², as pastor James had taught us. I left through the exit which was manned by security details and prophet Ben’s younger brother. About an hour later, Prophet Ben came to the makeshift chapel and laid his hands on every one of us. I witnessed some busting into tongues, some just collapsed while some got frenzied. I felt tipsy, idyllic, buoyant and relaxed. When we later gathered for lunch, I solicited what others had experienced. Some attendees noted that they had not seen the prophet’s face as it was shiny and bright; some remarked that a surge of electric power-like gushed through them; some felt renewed, some got healed through the encounter.

I have shown ways through which pastor James elevates prophet Ben through the ways he prepares attendees to meet him. Furthermore, he presented prophet Ben as a mystic individual who knows prophetically before one can tell him his problems. On the other hand, prophet Ben’s charismatic authority is relational, it depends more

Lastly, the historical process of colonialism entwined African states to former European colonizers creating lasting effects upon inhabitants of the colonies. The asymmetrical power relations between Africa and Europe has shaped ways in which Africans perceive people, commodities, foods, ideas, education and medicine that originate from Europe as superior and modern. Modernity for most Africans continues to be something foreign, introduced from metropolitans. This belief informs the value attached to anything regarded or associated with Europe. This partly helps to account for the symbolic capital that most foreign ideas, people and commodities carry among people in the global south. I interrogate this line of thought widely in chapter 7 when I discuss consumption of foreign goods and commodities among OGM Pentecostals Charismatic.

¹⁵² The donation i made was a seed in Pentecostal terms. Seed a form of solicitory gift to attract prophet Ben’s spiritaul coverage upon my life



on attendees who experience such surges of power flowing from him. The stage-managed entrances and departures¹⁵³, hectic schedule and heavy security presence confirm and re-emphasize his extraordinariness. In prophet Ben I see a mixture of absolute power over OMG and compassion shown to followers when he prays and heals people in public. The slow and emotional songs that play when he heals the sick, his serious and thoughtful look convey his compassion for his followers. Such a mixture is common among charismatic ritual specialists such as John of God (Rocha, 2017: 28), the *oba* at Olowo (Barret, 2006) and Charles Wovenu of New Tadzewu in Ghana (Fernandez, 1970).

The Prayer Resort is a place where prophet Ben's followers "experience God's kind of life¹⁵⁴." It is a sanctuary where guests are supposed to forget about their challenges and problems they experienced in society, in chapter seven I will further explore this idea. The Prayer Resort acts as a platform for prophet Ben for showcasing the type of life prophet Ben has in mind. Simultaneously, the prayer resort creates an OMG community of sentiment among locals, diasporas and international visitors. During our stay, we often engaged in conversation, sharing our problems, illnesses, dreams and hope. Most of the attendees at OMG heard stories of how prophet Ben had healed someone, how they had seen prophet Ben in a dream or vision whilst at Prayer Resort. The Prayer Resort is one strategy of legitimizing the charismatic authority exercised by prophet Ben. When we checked out, we were paraded during Sunday service. Some of the guests shared their experiences and testimonies, that as usual, inspired others. There was one devotee who had received an email confirmation that he had secured employment in Dubai earlier that Sunday. In his narrative, it was the prophet's prayers that had unlocked that job. Another young lady narrated that her parents had called her, informing her that there was oil flowing down the walls of her bedroom¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵³ He is the last to enter and the first to leave. This protocol is similar to that of Robert Mugabe. He is the last to arrive and the first to leave at a gathering.

¹⁵⁴ Reads the billboard on OMG prayer request entrance

¹⁵⁵ Oil represents anointment, it was used by prophets to anoint kings. See footnote 94 for the symbolic synergies that may be drawn for these 'miracles' of substance flowing on the walls. I will refer to these 'miracles' in the last chapter.



The Prayer Resort is of importance to prophet Ben's followers. Sacred places and spaces are "supremely transcendental and essentially social." (Chidester & Linenthal, 1995: 5). As space, the Prayer Resort is considered to have an aura that is different from its surroundings and other places. Several OMG members collected pebbles, soil and seeds from tress at the Prayer Resort. They believed that these items would act as a point of spiritual connection between their homes and the Prayer Resort. The space has been consecrated and sacralised through rituals and tales told by those who once visited it (Kankonde & Nunez, 2016; Lanz & Oosterbaan, 2016). After visiting the Prayer Resort, most of the guest left inspired, spiritually empowered and ready to conquer the world (Kankade and Nunez, 2016:66). The Prayer Resort is perceived as a place where the spiritual lives of believers materialize; their belonging and allegiance to OMG firmly asserted and a model of the world God prophet Ben will lead them to¹⁵⁶. Land plays similar role in chiefdoms, sacred sites of land were linked to social reproduction of life. Pilgrimages to sacred caves and mountains revitalized members of chiefdoms (Bourdillon, 1991).

4.4.2 Of prophets, presidents and chiefs: charisma, hope and temporal strategies

Foucault (1994, 2010, 2012) draws parallels between the state and religious institutions as agents concerned with controlling the lives of subjects. Pastoral power is achieved when believers submit their lives to the gaze of pastors, prophets

¹⁵⁶ Staying at the Prayer Resort is different from everyday life in a number of ways, I will focus on food and Wi-Fi. The food is served at Prayer Resort for example English breakfast (bacon, eggs, sausage and bake bean, bread and tea or coffee) are unaffordable for most Zimbabweans. The Prayer Resort represents the lifestyle most Zimbabweans desire but cannot lead due to the economic hardship. In the narratives of local guests, Prophet Ben's model of lifestyle is portrayed in the Prayer Resort. Data Bundles are expensive in Zimbabwe, at the Prayer Resort there was a stand-alone family unit lodging with a Wi-Fi running. At our dormitory, the Wi-Fi was erratic, some of guests gathered in close proximity to the house to access free wi-fi. Such experiences of free wi-fi and foodscape at Prayer Resort had a lasting imprint on most guests who made it clear that this was the lifestyle they longed and desired. I will discuss more on foodscapes in chapter seven.



and prophetess who shepherds their souls and lifestyle through a number of strategies. As agents of God, prophets and pastors have omnipresent power that extends into every facet of believers' lives. Prophets derive the power from their roles as agents of God governing souls on earth, in the same manner chiefs derived their power from their close relations with ancestors and territorial spirits that oversee the territory of every chieftom. Despite the 'charismatic origins' of their authorities, Pentecostal leaders buttressed their authority through temporal strategies. The strategies employed at OMG resemble those employed by local politicians to strengthen the presidency of the then president Robert Mugabe and the current president Emmerson Mnangagwa. Pentecostal charismatics carve a cult out of the leader, transforming his personhood into an object of worship endowed with awe and adoration by followers (Bailey, 2001a: 42, b: 57). The person of the leader is revered and acts as a symbol of the divine anointment and temporal hope for the followers. David Martin (2011: 65) has long observed that Pentecostal movements "deliver enough to be the most immediate vehicle of hope for the hopeless." Some of the membership of OMG consider Prophet Ben as a beacon of hope in times the state ignores about their welfare and security.

Maxwell (2006: 138) and Gifford (2015: 90) lament the emergence of a 'cult of the leader' among Zimbabwean and Nigerian Pentecostal movements, a development absent in UCKG as the clergy is constantly rotated among branches (Van Wyk, 2014a). Hyperbole and personalization of the divine come into play. As I will show in the next chapter, testimonies are narrated in ways that make prophet Ben prominent. Epithets such as 'Man of God¹⁵⁷', 'God of prophet Ben', 'The prophet of our time' and "the general of God, herald of God who sits in the committee of heaven,... knows secrets of God, when he (prophet Ben) speaks God is speaking¹⁵⁸" brings mysticism on the prophet and sets him apart. To solidify the 'leadership cult' his calling narratives portray prophet Ben as the only servant of God. In his narratives, prophet Ben links his person to three biblical figures Moses,

¹⁵⁷ *Munhu wa Mwari* in vernacular

¹⁵⁸ Prophet Danny introducing prophet Ben during funding raising programme held in February 2017



Joshua and Paul- sacralising himself by situating himself in the narrative of prophetic and apostolic succession (cf. Engelke 2007). Furthermore, respondents viewed Prophet Ben as an ambassador and emissary between the divine and human. DVD, CD, television programmes and church literature have furthered the engineering of the leadership cult. On social media, prophet Ben and prophet Jane pose for pictures, the images are well-choreographed to portray awe and adoration. Meyer (2005: 283) argues that PCC engage in the practice of mediation which 'aggrandize' and portray the clergy as larger than life. Mediation aids in adding awe to the clergy. Miracles, prophecies and events are recorded as evidence of the sacral power of prophet Ben. In most believers' homes and offices a portrait of either prophet Ben or the prophetess or both hung gracefully on the wall, in the same manner the portrait of Emmerson Mnangagwa hangs against the walls in government offices. OMG systems of optics and representations systems are modelled around those of the state

Apart from aiding the sacralisation of the leader, DVD and literature also aid the processes of memorialization and remembering (Maxwell, 2006: 140). Places and events made reference to in narratives are elevated to sacred geographies that are crafted so that they appear to be worth remembering. The prophet's rural homestead is revered and identified as central in the rise of the prophet. Early miracles took place there. The touring of the homestead, showing pastors the wall from which honey oozed, and the field prophet Ben saw a vision transforms ordinary place into places of worship and reverence. I came across congregants who had collected soil, pebbles and seed from prophet Ben's homestead or Prayer Resorts. Such paraphernalia became part of home altar, connecting the home altar to the place associated with the divine. Zimbabweans are familiar with certain places that the government constructed as shrines and places of significance in the history of Zimbabwe. OMG provides alternative places for some Zimbabweans to forge strong relations with.

Memorialization is a way of creating a dominant narrative of the church and of raising the status of the leader. Furthermore, memorialization and remembering of prophet Ben's calling is one process in the 'production of hope' (Miyazaki, 2004). Knowing



and constantly remembering that prophet Ben is called to deliver his followers from poverty, endowing followers with a sense of hope and giving direction to their lives and place in the world. In prophet Ben, as with other prophets, there is a conflation of hope, certainty and expectation (Blanes, 2014: 29).

The leadership cult is perpetuated by pastors, prophetess Jane and OMG officials who constantly remind the congregation of the wonders and awe associated with prophet Ben. Sermons conducted by pastors from other branches are more of panegyric sessions. The pastors use such opportunities to eulogize the prophet and the prophetess. A pastor from Kwekwe began his sermon by acknowledging that he was a product of the prophet(ess)¹⁵⁹. In the second service, another pastor from Chinhoyi noted that prophet Ben had direct access to God¹⁶⁰. On 14 August 2016 another young pastors invited to preached adopted prophet Ben's gait, dressing and manner of talking. The pastor acknowledged that the prophet was a God-given role model for Zimbabweans. One pastor from Mutare boasted that

I don't preach about God, I preach about the man I know... I have a car and a house that I received them from a man, He is my God¹⁶¹.

Such messages coupled with the well-choreographed image of prophet Ben buttress the sacral power associated with the prophet. Prophet Ben's calling narratives, stories of miracles, testimonies of healing and deliverances and appearances in followers' dreams are the scaffolding upon which his charisma is built (Lambek, 2007). "Charisma is not only used as a trope to understand and classify the prophet's personality and leadership qualities, but also as theological configuration of spiritual experience and activity, directly connected to the notion of remembrance" (Blanes, 2014: 28-29).

The above discussed strategies parallel the ones ZANU PF employ to sacralise its leadership. ZANU PF through state media and hagiographies portray former

¹⁵⁹ Other pastors who preached on 28 June 2016, 13 December 2016 expressed the same sentiment.

¹⁶⁰ 31 August 2016 service

¹⁶¹ A pastor from Mutare preaching on 26 July 2016



president Robert Mugabe as Zimbabwe's Moses or archangel Gabriel¹⁶². During Mugabe era, state media aired films and programmes that portrayed Robert Mugabe's heroic deeds¹⁶³. Ministers and ZANU PF members praised Mugabe as an infallible leader, Mugabe's oratorical skills have worked to his advantage, giving him an aura of charisma (Meridith, 2007). ZANU PF has entrenched itself in power through memorialization and sacralising of places and persons. The National Heroes Acre, provincial heroes acres, Nadzonia camp, Chimoio camp and late vice presidents such as Simon Muzenda and Joshua Nkoma are commemorated, celebrated and remembered annually. The narratives associated with the places and persons is situated within the narrative of the nation of Zimbabwe.

OGM leadership is immortalizing itself in similar ways to those of former president Robert Mugabe. The president's and the prophet(ess)'s birthdays are celebrated with children. Supplementary editions of newspapers publicize the events¹⁶⁴. Furthermore, OMG has a scholarship programme targeted at the less-privileged students. These strategies are similar to the Presidential Scholarship Programme run by the Zimbabwean presidents. The hagiographies of the prophet, chiefs and the national president are intricately steeped into the histories of the communities they lead. The Pentecostal and political leadership in postcolonial Zimbabwe depend on memorialization and sacralisation of persons, events and places to sustain its power and authority. As I have shown, Pentecostal leaders' authority clones, compliments and at times challenges that of political leaders (Katsaura, 2017: 6).

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the organization of OMG and the role of charisma with aim to show that the appeal enjoyed by the religious movement can be explained by its appropriation of some aspects from the state and some from the repertoire of chieftaincy. Prophet Ben and his acolyte enjoy popularity at a time

¹⁶² Mugabe's middle name is Gabriel

¹⁶³ The same is true for Emmerson Mnangagwa, the films were few during the time of write up because he had just assumed power.

¹⁶⁴ I discuss this parallels in the following two chapters



national political leadership and chiefs has declined, their legitimacy fiercely questioned by most Zimbabweans. OMG structure consist of a delicate combination of charisma, lineage relations, bureaucratic structure and some aspects of chieftainship. The combination of these features brings a stable system and structure. Following Haynes (2012: 146-147) I argue that Pentecostal hierarchical relations based on charisma endure in times of economic and political crises that is experienced in the wider society. Hierarchies of charisma are stable and intimate when compared to factional political and ethnic bonds characterizing Zimbabwean political landscape. Hierarchies of charisma and familial relations “represent a social framework” through which OMG members interpret and understand their position in society, regardless of other organizing structures in the wider society. OMG congregants’ ordering system is not modelled around the state and chieftainship. OMG gives hope to the members. From this perspective, we can partially explain the growth in membership of OMG. OMG activities parallels those of the state, yet OMG’s welfare system is more solid. The leadership mimics aspects state institutions and chieftainship. Lastly, OMG projects and activities have wider buy-in from congregants and other members of society, as I will show in chapters six.



5. TAXES, TITHES AND MORALITY

You provide the fire
I'll provide the sacrifice
You provide the spirit
And I will open up inside
Fill me up
'Till I overflow
I wanna run over
I wanna run over

[A medley of Tasha Cobbs songs '*Fill Me Up*' and '*Overflow*' performed at OMG on 16 April 2017 at Passover Conference]

Two years ago, I supplied a client with goods worth \$600 and he refused paying, though painful, I wrote off the debt, when I went to OMG Prayer Resort on the expectation list. I wrote that bad debt as something God of the prophet must assist to recover. The minute I stepped on OMG Prayer Resort, I received a text confirming transfer of \$640 from a client I had last communicated with six months ago,
[Nicky 29 July 2016]

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I focus on money with the aim of showing how prophet Ben and OMG appropriate and incorporate money in the construction of identity and morality. OMG presents itself as a morally better entity than institutions of the post-colonial state. Furthermore, the way in which money is appropriated by OMG Pentecostals serves as a critique of the post-colonial state which most Zimbabweans consider to be corrupt and greedy. To achieve this, I will focus on ways in which money plays an important part in congregants' religious and everyday lives and the morality it fosters. I argue that money facilitates the process of construction of personhood among OMG Pentecostals and OMG community. The state has weakened its claim to sovereignty by abandoning the local currency for a multi-currency monetary system. OMG has played on the lack of national currency to criticize and expose the shortcomings of the ZANU PF government. For example, during the 2016 ANNP prophet Ben told the gathering that national currency was a prerequisite for the economic development of Zimbabwe. A weekly state-owned newspaper carried a



story title 'Bond Notes way to go' in which it purported that the prophet had given a nod to 'bond notes' (Ncube, 2016). From my understanding of his teachings that day, the prophet had supported the introduction of local currency and not the pseudo-currency which the government was foisting on its citizens. OMG members were quick to dismiss the newspaper article as misquoting prophet Ben.

Money and the morality associated with it provides the scaffolding upon which OMG constructs itself as a stable and morally good entity, simultaneously presenting itself as the opposite of the corrupt and dirty state. As I develop this idea, I also show ways in which money sustains, strengthens and gives logic to the structure and organization of OMG that I discussed in the previous chapters. Furthermore, I place money within OMG beliefs systems. OMG members' interaction and encounters with money are discussed in the context of a postcolonial state characterized by uncertainty, distrust, fear, and the use of multi-currencies. I frame ethnographic data within Marcel Mauss' Gift exchange model and Simon Coleman's ideas on sacrificial economy and co-constitution.

5.2 Some conceptual issues

In this section I discuss conceptual issues that inform interpretation for ethnographic data below.

5.2.1 Religion and Economy: Dismantling Analytical Hierarchies

The unprecedented proliferation of Pentecostal movements in Sub-Saharan Africa has been met with a resurgence in the interrogation of their operations. Comaroff and Comaroff (2001a) suggest that neo-liberalism has a hand in shaping emerging Pentecostal movements in Southern Africa. Pentecostalism is portrayed as but one of the many ways of generating wealth through "magic means for otherwise unattainable ends" (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2001: 26). The argument claims that Pentecostalism, like witchcraft and zombification of labour, is one way through which esoteric occult economy manifests. Furthermore, the Comaroffs note that Pentecostalism addresses the problems of neo-liberal capitalism by projecting the problems to the supernatural realm without offering any practical solutions. This line of thought is compelling and runs through a number of studies on African



Pentecostalism (cf Lindhardt, 2007). While this line of thought provides answers to why many Africans turn to Pentecostalism, it fails to account for other aspects such as issues of spirituality and beliefs that shape Pentecostals' worldview. The macro-level analysis fails to explore the pervasive nature of Pentecostal rituals outside of the frame of neo-liberal capitalism, paying less attention to ways in which Pentecostalism is retooled within local socio-cultural contexts and responding to operations and activities of the government.

The study of religion is characterized by an “incommensurability between Christian and anthropological sense-making practice” (Gariott & O'Neill, 2008: 386). Scholars have begun to appreciate that some anthropological tools and theoretical lenses may not be the best in understanding and explaining religious experiences (Asad, 1993: 27–54; Harding, 2000; Robbins, 2003: 192, 2004b: 136; Gariott & O'Neill, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Coleman, 2011; Marshall-Fratani, 2014). This realization has informed my methodological and conceptual selections that privilege ontological over epistemic issues. Reducing religion to an object of anthropological gaze misses the nuances of the donation system found in Pentecostal movements and ways they respond to local context rather than to global neo-liberal systems. Following Garriott and O'Neill (2008) I discuss Pentecostal donation system “on their own terms.” I graft Garriott and O'Neill's ideas onto Coleman's (2011: 33) “complex model of co-constitution.” In adopting this model, I aim to move beyond Western discourse that do not accommodate other realms and states of being. Coleman's model of co-constitution places religion at par with other realms of society such as politics and the economics. The strength of this approach lies in its inherent ability to dismantle the ‘analytical hierarchies’ which privilege the economic and political sphere at the expense of religious sphere (Marshall, 2009; Maurer, 2010: 149; Coleman, 2011: 33). In privileging the economic sphere, the rationality found in the economic sphere is extrapolated to explain religious processes and activities, thus rendering religion as indexical. As I will show below, OMG aims to create wealth and prosperity for its members in a rational way through instilling entrepreneurial and financial literacy skills that mould Pentecostals into particular beings.



5.2.2 Sacrificial Economy

Simon Coleman (2011) developed the concept of sacrificial economy as an analytical model for understanding exchange and rituals performed by Pentecostals. The concept of sacrifice applies differently to all categories found in Pentecostal movements. What constitutes a sacrifice differs with the circumstances of persons involved. Furthermore, sacrifice denotes a “mode of submission and a means of engaging in goal-directed spiritually charged action” (Coleman, 2011: 39). Sacrifice in general and the sacrificial economy¹⁶⁵ is about constructing the self and the forms of relations that emerge with others who participate in the same sacrificial economy. Coleman (2003: 197) notes that sacrifice of money “is oriented towards future, potentially unlimited reward; it permits assessment of the effects of one’s action on the world; and it helps to render material one’s inner state of faith.” The exchange of money under sacrificial economy is not informed by market principles. A different set of principles and rules guides the sacrificial economy (Daswani, 2015: 122). OMG Pentecostals frame some of their actions on the basis of a sacrificial economy operational among members, thus constructing themselves differently from non-members.

The systems of donation I found at OMG forms an elaborate network of exchange and obligations governed by religious doctrines and beliefs. The foundations, morality and principles of the sacrificial economy differ from those found among non-members. Though the two system differ in principles and values, money, commodities and faith/trust act as bridges that combine the two. The drive for self-sufficiency undergird sacrificial economy I observed at OMG. The sacrificial economy is constituted by actors who enter into a covenant among themselves and with the divine. The covenant is characterised by exchange of (in)tangible goods and services. In partaking in the sacrificial economy, congregants enter into an alternative system that enables them to achieve self-sufficiency, prosperity and material expectations outside state’s intervention (Coleman, 2004). OGM members I interviewed noted that what I call the sacrificial economy has its origin in the

¹⁶⁵ Coleman borrows the term spiritual economy from Doromir Rudnyckj



Abrahamic covenant¹⁶⁶. OMG Pentecostals consider themselves as Abraham's descendants and heirs to his spiritual and material blessings¹⁶⁷. The covenant forms the foundation of the sacrificial economy. Apart from the Abrahamic covenant, the sacrificial economy is derived from other biblical scriptures such as Matthew 6 verses 19-20 and Malachi 3 verse 10¹⁶⁸. In seeking reasons why Pentecostals participated in the sacrificial economy, most respondents noted that it was a way of safeguarding their finances from *hudyi*¹⁶⁹ and keeping an intimate relationship with God. Self - sufficiency and relationship with God are the bedrock of OMG sacrificial economy.

Situating Pentecostal Charismatic exchange of commodities and donations of money within the sacrificial economy illustrates that these acts are not merely materialistic or driven by individual desire to dominate those they consider of lower status and less privileged. Giving consumption and donations are form of sacrifice that show love and caring to others (Miller, 2005). As the data I presents below will show, donations, sharing and giving of commodities to OMG members and non-members acts as a way of creating relations and trust among those that exchange these gifts. Exchange of commodities constitutes objectified relationships of love and caring. In this regard, gifting systems are central among OMG members as gifting facilitates the exchange of love and caring through commodities.

¹⁶⁶ Genesis 17

¹⁶⁷ OMG Pentecostals insert themselves into the Abrahamic covenant via Genesis 12 verse 7, traces of the dominionist theological I referred to the previous chapter can be found in this verse.

¹⁶⁸ These were the most cited by interviewees when I inquired about the origins or reasons for participating in the sacrificial economy.

¹⁶⁹ Pests and anything the wastes one's resources. This word was used by one responded from Hwange congregation in a discussion. *Hudyi* may be spiritual, when one loses money due to rituals associated with *n'anga*. Symbolically it points to the government that failed to address the cash shortage and most people lose out when they get cash from cash barons who charge 10% for transaction. For Nyasha, the government is *chipfukuto* (weevil/grain-borer) that has destroyed citizens future through its mismanagement of economy. Furthermore, most people lost their saving when the government introduced multicurrency system. In this chapter I expand on these ideas and ethnographic material.



5.2.3 Gifting System

Ethnographic material presented in this chapter is also framed along Marcel Mauss (1990) seminal essay on *The Gift*. Mauss' main argument is that despite the prevalence of capitalist calculative rationality, not every aspect of life follows this rationality. Gifts that are exchanged among people and groups are not structured by market logic but by religious and cultural values of people and groups involved. To illustrate, Mauss noted that gifts that are exchanged among the Maori carry a component of the giver, what is called the *hau*¹⁷⁰. The *hau* in the gift is what motivates the receiver to offer a counter-gift in return. Tying the giver and receiver in a web of obligations. The tithing systems at OMG can best be explained through the Maussian gift exchange framework. OMG Pentecostals whom I interviewed told me that in tithing, they are returning to God what God had blessed them with or what he would give in a near future. OMG Pentecostals noted that God is always the initial giver and provider: He gives life, health, family, spiritual gifts and even Jesus Christ. Whilst offertories are a way of returning and acknowledging that God is their provider, they act also as ways of trapping God into a debt which must be returned later. Whenever OMG Pentecostals give, they expect a counter-gift.

5.2.4 Sacrificial economy and Zimbabwean context

The sacrificial economy at OMG is more complex and more elaborate than what 'occult economy' allows. Sacrificial economy that I observed among OMG members accommodates rational ways of accumulating wealth and achieving prosperity. The avenues to prosperity are not all based on supernatural strategies. The composition of OMG provides fertile grounds for explanations to why OMG has dropped encouraging supernatural accumulation of wealth¹⁷¹. OMG is not a religious

¹⁷⁰ The spirit of the giver.

¹⁷¹ When Federico Settler and I conducted a study among OMG Pentecostals in 2011, we found that there was an emphasis on supernatural ways of achieving prosperity. For example, the use of wiping mantles as means of achieving material prosperity (Taru and Settler, 2015:126). I do not propose an evolutionary scheme here, but the composition of OMG plays a role in the dispelling supernatural ways of wealth accumulation. Furthermore, there is time factor to consider, the Comaroffs wrote their analysis at the turn of the millennium and Pentecostalism in Southern Africa have diversified over the past two decades. I do not



movement of the poor. Its membership cuts across the cross-section of the Zimbabwean society. The inclusion of professionals such as lawyers, medical doctors, politicians, teachers and business executives in the leadership of various OMG departments may have influenced the shift towards rational and pragmatic approaches to wealth creation and accumulation.

OMG is grooming astute entrepreneurs amongst its members. since 2014 OMG has been inviting financial services advisors from Old Mutual to teach congregants about financial literacy, business management and the art of investment. Congregants are equipped with information that is relevant for both household and business budgeting. As I scanned through a set of books in the Moyos makeshift library, I came across a number of Old Mutual booklets and pamphlets that the family had received at the seminars and workshops. The leadership at OMG understands that financial services providers such as Old Mutual have better understanding of money and the prevailing economic situation in Zimbabwe to instruct their Pentecostals on such issues. Most Zimbabweans are faced with meagre earnings in a nation-state whose cost of living is high. The information provided by Old Mutual of budgeting and investment is handy as it equips congregants with information and skills that enable them to live within their means.

Furthermore, OMG organises a number of business and empowerment¹⁷² conferences and business luncheons, golf tournaments and dinner galas throughout

completely dismiss the idea that people attempt to prosperity through supernatural means in Zimbabwe, there has been an increase in radio programmes (Radio Zimbabwe and Star FM) and newspapers especially *Kwayedza* in which stories are covered and people call or come for live programmes, claiming to be suffering from the after-effects of *zvikwambo* and *duma* (goblins that bring cash to owners while causing impoverishment and death to close relatives). Most of these people who call seek spiritual assistance to rid *zvikwambo*. What is interesting is that most of the people seek assistance from the Pentecostal prophets to rid of *zvikwambo*. In the Zimbabwean context prosperity from nothing has been associated with *zvikwambo* and *n'anga*. Pentecostalism has responded to this local cultural milieu by claiming that *zvikwambo*, *duma* and *n'anga* derive their powers from the devil or are agents of the devil.

¹⁷² The emphasis that OMG places on 'empowerment' has to be understood within the Zimbabwean context. ZANU-PF government over the past two decades has been



the year. Prophet Ben, local and regional Christian business owners and executives as well as motivational speakers are invited to give talk at the workshops. During these events OMG Pentecostals are taught practical ways in which they can run their households and business enterprises. Furthermore, the events link OMG entrepreneurs to established businesses and the events provided opportunities for business deals to be established. The government has mismanaged the national economy and most businesses have closed. OMG is breeding entrepreneurs well connected and with sound financial and investment information than most entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe. In a way OMG is remedying the ills that came with the mismanagement of economy by the government controlling state apparatus.

Most Zimbabweans eke-out a living in the informal sector characterized by uncertainties and risk. OMG encourages and at times financially assists its members to formally register their businesses. Registered businesses have more prospects when compared to unregistered businesses. Registered businesses qualify for tenders and financial assistance from financial institutions. Furthermore, OMG prints business directories that advertise and market businesses and enterprises owned by members. The Moyos always first searched the directory before giving a job to non-members. OMG is an incubator of entrepreneurs during a time the unemployment rate is at its peak in Zimbabwe. These pragmatic ways of wealth accumulation form part of the OMG sacrificial economy.

OMG believers also participated in sacrificial economy through tithe and various donations in money and in kind. Tithe is a form of a religious tax that is deducted from earnings. A tenth of all income is returned to God as tithe. Apart from tithe, OMG congregants participate and insert themselves into the sacrificial economy

emphasising on 'black empowerment'. Programmes such as FTLRP, IEEP and Command Agriculture have all been formulated 'with the aim to empower' Zimbabweans. In reality these policies and programmes have enriched political elite and well-connected ZANU-PF members. The majority of ordinary Zimbabweans are yet to benefit from the government driven empowerment projects. OMG has organized its own Empowerment Summits as it seeks to empower its members with knowledge, skills, information and other forms of assistance to improve their lives and means to manoeuvre the Zimbabwean economic terrain.



through various offertories. For swift donations, OMG has opened bank accounts locally and in South Africa to ease this process. Furthermore, OMG congregants make use of mobile money to make their donations. There are specified and motivated offerings aimed at “connecting to, unlocking or activating a particular blessing in one’s life¹⁷³.” Such donations and offertories are also referred to as seed offering. “Sowing of seed”¹⁷⁴ can be initiated by either the clergy or the laity. In December 2016 during a cross-cover vigil prophet Ben asked congregants to give specified amounts of money as donations to trap God into giving counter-gifts in year 2017 (Droz and Gez, 205). The amounts ranged from USD 77 to USD 77000. In Christian circles the figure 7 in 2017 and the amounts to be donated was considered holy and fullness of divinity while 6 represents the devil¹⁷⁵.

Framing tithing and offertories within Mauss’ model of gift exchange allows us to move away from portraying the system in cold market-logic of symmetrical exchange and immediacy of returns (Hart 2007; Droz and Gez, 2015). As I shall show below, at conversion, OMG member develop personal relationship with God whom they accept as a personal saviour¹⁷⁶. Through Eucharist rituals, members embody Jesus. The journey of knowing Him begins. The exchange of gifts in OMG sacrificial economy is between actors (Pentecostals and God) who have developed intimate knowledge of each other and have solid social relations, removing anonymity (Droz and Gez, 2015:303). Mauss (1990) emphasised prior social bonds as the basis of gift exchange. As the intimate relationship with God develops, other forms of relations are subsumed. Ethnicity, nationality and race are pushed to the background, allowing Pentecostals to overcome these hurdles. In this respect, OMG

¹⁷³ Interview 14 July 2016

¹⁷⁴ The imagery of sowing is vividly from agriculture when a seed has the potential to produce more later. God is considered as a fertile ground from which congregants can realize more after sowing (cf Heuser, 2015)

¹⁷⁵ This maybe the reason why Christians regards 666 as the Mark of the Beast.

¹⁷⁶ A popular musician cum pastor at OMG has released a trilogy of music albums under the name “Getting Personal with God,” this illustrates the importance of personal relationship with God. His music encourage and cultivate intimate relations with the Creator and the prophet is a mediator.



has done better than the current government in uniting Zimbabweans from different ethnic and tribal groups.

A number of studies on Pentecostalism do not emphasize prior bonding and intimacy of relations, portraying exchange and donations as a fundraising scheme among strangers (Ukah, 2005, 2007c, 2013; Hasu, 2006; van Wyk, 2014a,b). Congregants create intimate relations through the act of exchanging gifts with God. Ukah has largely focused on monetary value without ‘suspending’ the act of giving with the ‘web of significance’. Furthermore, money and commodities donated contains the ‘essences’ of the giver: sweat, blood and time. This ultimately makes the gift inalienable from the giver (Mauss, 1990; Van Wyk, 2014a: 199).

Mauss’ analysis partially explains reasons why congregants remain faithful even in the absence of prosperity or counter-gift. Pentecostals have a firm belief in gifts of the spirit (tongues, prophecy, healing) as well as material (money, wealth and health). OMG congregants believe that God is the initial giver, the Creator who gave them life, “his only begotten son” and the Holy Spirit. Such gifts are considered great and cannot be undone. God’s gifts are ultimate gifts that believers cannot match or return. This upsets the idea that counter-gifts have to be greater than the initial gift. In tithing, believers are returning part of what God has already entrusted them with. Like Pentecostals in America (Bialecki, 2008) and South Africa (Van Wyk, 2014a: 182), OMG congregants understand tithing within the broader framework of stewardship. In giving, they are just returning to the Provider. The idea of being given life, employment in a nation experiencing high unemployment rate, being healthy when the health delivery system has crumbled, having a family or lack of pressing challenges is explained as gifts from God. In situations that God does not return a gift, congregants quickly find solace in pointing to other gifts that God has already availed to them (Rey 2015: 340 – 553; Lindhardt, 2015: 310; Robbins, 2004b: 263). The believers’ trust is kept alive through retooling of the expected gift into what they already have. Furthermore, congregants may explain ‘failure’ of the counter-gift as mere delays. Baba John told me that

God’s time is the best time, had I got a job five year ago, it could have led to my death or divorce. I was still immature and lost...



Already we see that Baba John gives an alternative explanations to the ‘failures’, keeping his trust and expectations alive. This is what the government has failed to do. As Rey (2015) Droz and Gez (2015) have argued, giving to God triggers ‘constant expectations’ and anxiety that makes one constantly review relationship with God. As congregants focus on their relationship with God, the prophet and OMG are at times pushed to the background. OMG Pentecostal rarely blame the prophet or OMG for unanswered prayers, they focus on their relationship with God. In the long run, OMG as the mediatory role between Pentecostals and God remains intact. This plays out in a similar way to how chiefs operated. In times of droughts and famines, people evaluated their relations with the territorial spirits. Rarely were chiefs held accountable for the lack of rains. In the long run chiefs’ reputation remained solid unaffected by the occurrence of droughts.

Tithing and other offertories among OMG Pentecostals are technologies of the self for unlocking and activating particular blessings from God (Van Wyk 2014a: 183). OMG Pentecostals donate with the aim of receiving something in return and as portrayal of moral purity and trust. The story on Cornelius in Acts 10: 4 is often cited to illustrate that offerings and tithe unlock counter-gifts from the heavens. Pentecostals visualize a heavenly bank in which their gifts are deposited. In a service pastor Danny once told us that our ‘tithes are accounted for correctly into one’s heavenly account through the efficient heaven-accounting system.’ The blessing and spiritual coverage Pentecostals receive are a result of what we have deposited. The issuing of receipts for all donation acts as an earthly way of knowing how much one has returned to God¹⁷⁷.

5.2.5 Money, Testimonies and the Sacrificial Economy

‘Money is what it does’ drawing different meanings in different contexts. Money is the medium through which OMG congregants show gratitude to the prophet and the God he represents. It is a sign of their gratitude, honouring and a way of reinforcing the hierarchy of charisma that I discussed in previous chapters. In tithing congregants are accepting the role of prophet Ben as the mediator between

¹⁷⁷ The story of Cornelius mentioned above easily conveys the sense of an account.



congregants and God. Testimonies and receipts are ways of conveying the acceptance of the charisma and mystic nature of prophet Ben. Hanging against the wall in Mai Chipo's office are portraits of the prophet, the prophetess, certificate of incorporation, municipal issued operator's license and receipt of \$2400 in a frame. The congregant hung the tithe receipt among business documents as a way legitimizing the prophet(ess) as the force behind her business' success.

Mai Chipo told me that she responded to a tender advertisement in a local newspaper. Before submitting her application, Mai Chipo placed the papers on the altar during a church service and uttered prayers stating her expectations. She then 'seeded' money to the prophet on behalf of her business, with the aim of attracting divine blessings. Her application was successful and her business was awarded a tender worth USD 24000. She confided in me that the deal produced huge profit for the business. Upon receiving payment, Mai Chipo's business enterprise paid a tenth as tithe. I had access to other tithe and offering receipts that she keeps. On most receipts she narrated stories of how 'seeding' to prophet Ben facilitated profitable deals. Her business paid tithes to attract prophet Ben's spiritual coverage, and is an active 'actor' in the sacrificial economy. For Mai Chipo and her business, tithing is a way of honouring the prophet and OMG in the same way taxes are a way of submission to and "honouring governments¹⁷⁸." Receipts do not only show relationship and exchange, but tend to be associated with certain stories and events in 'actors' life. As Mai Chipo narrated the 'religious biographies of different receipts', the histories and the meanings she attaches to the figures printed on the receipt illustrates that money is as much a sign of gratitude and honour to the prophet as it is a way of remembering congregant's transactions, rituals, miracles, identities and connection to OMG. The figures on the receipt summarizes Mai Chipo's business enterprise's relationship with prophet Ben while confirming Mai Chipo's membership (see Hart, 2001: 318 - 319 and 234). Money is a form of remembrance (Hart, 2007:15; Hart, 2001) a memory bank that easily condenses various facets and events of life (Hart, 2001, 2005, 2007, Hart, 2011: 7; Guyer, 2017).

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Nyasha 16 June 2016, the same ideas were also expressed in a sermon preached on 08 October 2017



Money has a place to play in all OMG congregants' lives. Participation in sacrificial economy opened new opportunities for OMG congregants. Early January of 2017 I interviewed a couple that stayed on the south-western suburbs of Harare. Both husband and wife were self-employed. The husband was an electrician while the wife was a fruit and vegetable vendor. The couple chronicled their transformations after joining OMG. Both noted that God is faithful to those who were faithful to Him. The couple were AFM members previously, and the great difference they observed at OMG was the importance of tithing. During their early days at OMG, the couple did not return tithe. The family had experienced incessant challenges, the wife had been sick and the ailment drained the little that they earned. It was after a teaching on tithing that the couple decided to participate in the sacrificial economy. Since joining the sacrificial economy, the ailments that troubled the wife disappeared. The husband noted that the ailment was God's way of whipping them to participate in the sacrificial economy. In tithing the couple claimed that they safeguard its finances by reducing problems that drain finances. The couple noted that it had managed to construct a five roomed house in the rural area, and manages to send their last born child to a better school¹⁷⁹. Furthermore, tithing brought the family closer to God.

5.2.6 Failures and the reputation of OMG

Participation in the sacrificial economy does not produce the same results for all OMG Pentecostals. As congregants participate in their individual capacity, their relationship with God, the prophet and other spiritual agents is important in determining the outcome of believers' insertion into the sacrificial economy. Some congregants failed to realize financial proceeds from participation. For such congregants, they search for reasons to explain the failures. I intend to show that Pentecostal sacrificial economies are organized in a way that the exchange system continues to enjoy legitimacy even in situations believers fail to reap intended benefits. Those who derive benefits like Mai Chipu, their case solidifies the hierarchies of charisma and the reputation of OGM. Those that fail to received

¹⁷⁹ Schools located in the CBD and low-density areas are associated with prestige and status.

Most of the schools are former group A school reserved for the whites.



expected outcomes, as I show below, still produce narratives that strengthens OMG as an institution.

In September 2016 Nyasha introduced me to Baba John - a OMG congregant - whom he had developed friendship with over the years. I met Baba John in CBD where he was selling perfumes and deodorants. Baba John told me that before conversion he led a life of partying, drinking binges and extra-marital affairs. His wife converted to OMG first. Baba John converted later. When he converted to OMG, Baba John was working as a bookkeeper at a multinational corporation in Zimbabwe. Two years after converting, Baba John lost his employment of ten years. Baba John explained to me that he was a faithful tither and often donated to the ministry. Despite tithing he lost his job and was now an itinerant body spray vendor. When I sought for his explanation for losing employment while under the spiritual coverage of prophet Ben, Baba John told me that losing a job was the initial stage in his transformation into a true Pentecostal. He had spent money from his previous employment on 'ungodly' things such as beer binges, partying and extra marital affairs. In losing his employment, Baba John reasoned, that God will reward him with a new job whose foundations are holy. As an itinerant hawker, baba John continues to tithe and donate to the ministry, treating each donation as thanksgiving for good health, life and family, and as a supplication for employment. I followed up on Baba John in May of 2017, he had secured employment with an insurance firm. In times of unemployment, Baba John had continued to believe in prophet Ben despite the challenges Baba John was going through, he interpreted the situation in way that buttresses the sacrificial economy and OMG.

During fieldwork, there was a family suing prophet Ben over 'fake prophecy' (Laiton, 2017). The story was published in local newspapers and is in the public domain. As we discussed the court case with OMG members, most of them noted that the family in question had itself to blame for the financial losses the family incurred. Some adherents argued that if one gets closer to the prophet(ess) but does not follow their instructions, "*nyasha dziripavari dzinokudonhedza*"¹⁸⁰. Some believers opined that

¹⁸⁰ the level and type of anointing the prophet(ess) possess will ruin the unfaithful



the family had converted to OMG seeking miracles only and when this failed they turned against the prophet. The Pentecostal charismatic rumour mill is a source of conspiracy theories, some believers noted that the family in question had switched to a rivalry Pentecostal movement and they were being used to make personal scores by the head prophet at the rival Pentecostal movement¹⁸¹. Newspaper articles aided in the creation of mysticism by quoting prophet Ben's response to the lawsuit. Through their lawyers prophet Ben and prophetess Jane argued that the secular courts of positive laws were incapable of handling matters of faith, the divine and doctrine. By claiming that such issues were the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts, the prophet(ess) were elevating themselves beyond secular systems¹⁸² including earthly governments and state. This strategy of trying to escape secular courts by invoking 'otherworldly institutions' does not always work. Robbins (2004: 233-4) notes that crimes committed by Christians in New Guinea do not go away by being confessed or attributed to God. Offended parties seek recourse through secular courts, as did this couple.

Lastly I will discuss the story of Sten. Sten was self-employed, he owned a five tonnes truck and supplied granites for interior décor. His truck was involved in an accident and this affected his business activities. He sold his personal car but failed to acquire a new truck. When I interviewed him, Sten was looking for employment. Sten converted to OMG after prophet Ben healed him. Chronic abdominal pains had dogged him for several years. Sten saw prophet Ben in a dream, pouring water on him as he lay on the floor in pain. When prophet Ben stopped pouring water on him, the pain was gone. When he woke up in the morning, he was healed and never experienced the pains again. Despite the vicissitudes, other miracles have helped Sten keep trust in prophet Ben and God. As I highlighted in chapter four, Sten's claim to have felt an electric bolt during a handshake with prophet Ben is one such miracle. He also told me that he had not been a faithful giver and that could have exposed him to the machination of the devil. OMG adherents' interpretation of success and failure is central in maintaining prophet Ben's charisma as well as faith

¹⁸¹ See footnote 71 in chapter 3

¹⁸² see note 16



in God. In the event of failure, Sten searched for other ‘miracles’ or his unfaithfulness to justify lack of prosperity. This creates an infallible system that highly depends on ‘secondary elaboration.’ Writing on instances of failure in the use of magic, Evans-Pritchard (1937: 330) notes that the Zande would first canvass for all possible criteria and prerequisites not met to explain the failure of magic without questioning the efficacy of remedy, diviner or system (see also Graeber, 2001: 244–245). This constitutes the ‘secondary elaboration’ whose function is to accentuate prophet Ben’s position by exonerating him. Gifford (2015: 96) aptly terms this ‘escape clauses’ in situations of failures. In times of mishap, believers look up to God seeking reasons for the failure, this leaves prophet Ben and his charisma intact.

The sacrificial economy operates in a way that allows it to justify, legitimize and bolster OMG. Trust and testimonies of successful tithing are meant to confirm the charismata of the leadership¹⁸³. As such congregants such Mai Chipo ostensibly displays receipts next to the portrait of prophet’s image and OMG posters. As I pointed out in chapter four testimonies ultimately point to the hand of prophet Ben and prophetess Jane. Those cases of failures also achieve the same by locating the reasons for failure on the person’s relationship with God. Both cases bolster the position of the prophet and OMG as the chosen ones.

On a general level, the ethnographic data I presented illustrate the fluidity characterizing the boundaries between religion and economy, gifting and market economy, formal and informality as well as rationality and irrationality. After following the laid down tender procedures, Mai Chipo took the application documents to the altar, sacrificed to God through donations to influence the outcome of the application. The selection of the best supplier, as we are made to believe is based on due diligence and rationality. For Mai Chipo, it was the prayers and donations that influenced the decision to award her the tender. When I stayed with Nyasha’s family, documents such as contracts and certificates of incorporations, coins and

¹⁸³ Such testimonies are recorded in OMG literature, DVD and OMGTv website <https://www.christtv.co/testimonies>



notes were oftentimes placed in the war room¹⁸⁴ to attract God's attention to the business. Money facilitates the breaking of boundaries between market economy and the sacrificial economy, simultaneously confirming participation in a specific OMG community or network (Hart, 2001). The sacrificial economy seems stable and based on secure relations as compared to prevailing national economy characterized by instabilities.

The sacrificial economy is linked to market economy though the two are governed by different principles. Hart's (2007) reading of Marcel Mauss has long showed that the intersection between gift exchange and the market economy. Sacrificial economy is structured on personal basis, the exchange is between humans and spiritual actors, via the prophet. The notes and coins carry personal requests, prayers and petitions. This removes the anonymity associate with notes and coins in the global capitalist economy. While market economy is associated with immediacy and calculative behaviour, the congregants in sacrificial economy do not seek immediate returns, often their donations are supplicatory aimed at attracting more gifts from God. The term sacrificial also points to the lack of market logic in the system, congregants sacrifice the little that they have in order to attract divine blessing (cf Van Wyk, 2014a). The idea of sacrifice is central in creating OMG personhood. Despite ones' economic situation, Pentecostals donate on their basis on their income. This explains why prophet Ben had to instruct believers to sow a seed of amounts ranging from USD7 to USD 77 000. Congregants chose the appropriate category they fall under. I was told by a congregant that if the donation is too little to be felt or remembered, then God would not honour it. The sacrifice is not a mere act of donating any amount of money. Congregants give beyond their means (Van Wyk, 2014a: 188). The biblical story narrated by Jesus in Mark 12: 41

¹⁸⁴ The name War Room that Nyasha's family use to refer to their dedicated place of prayer is derived from a 2015 christian movie directed Alex and Stephen Kendrick. Nyasha's family war room is a backyard room reserved for praying and meditations. An executive desk with four drawers served as an altar. The walls of the room had prophet Ben's pictures and some prophetic declarations containing scriptural texts, for example, one poster was written Numbers 23:23 while another contained message from John 10: 10



of a widow who gave all that she had is instructive to most OMG congregants when it comes to giving.

5.3 Money and Pentecostal personhood

Money plays an important role in shaping the construction of personhood and self among OMG Pentecostals as they participate in the sacrificial economy. OMG member claims that their sense of belonging is rooted on OMG sacrificial economy rather than on aspects related to the nation-state.

5.3.1 Constituting a Pentecostal Person

OMG theology falls under post-millennialism. Congregants strongly believe that they will create their desired kingdom of God on earth. From congregants I learnt that God wants them to lead a successful life on earth, this would be achieved through dominating in all aspects of life. One congregant told me that acceptance of Jesus guaranteed access to eternal life. But before that eternal life, believers must enjoy life before death. Life is lived in abundance through access to material prosperity. OMG members do not read material wealth as signs of salvation per se in the same way that Calvinist studied by Weber did. Wealth and consumption are just add-on that come with accepting Jesus. OMG members, like Calvinists are methodically in their approach. Bialecki (2008: 379) found similar theological orientation among Vineyard Pentecostals in America.

Narratives of conversion told by OMG members illustrate vividly that conversion is not a simple act of affiliating to a religious movement. The decision to convert is a decision to accept to fight and be a victor over challenges one faces in life. Most of OMG congregants I interviewed noted that they joined OMG when they were bedevilled by problems of miscarriages, death of close relatives, sickness, unemployment and divorce among other things. In African societies, conversion results from both internal and external struggles against a number of forces (Marshall, 2009: 45). The narratives of conversion are standardized and schematic, with the aim to situate individual experiences within the broader Pentecostal worldview of spiritual warfare. Furthermore, the narratives bring to the fore ways of constructing Pentecostal identities, personhood and what is gained through



conversion (Lindhardt, 2015: 260). Pentecostalism produces its own regimes of practice, thought and worldview that aim to act as a grid in guiding congregants' behaviour. Pentecostalism is a strategic programme that triggers transformations in individuals and in group of adherents (Comaroff, 2009: 25; Marshall, 2009; Robbins, 2009: 58; Marshall-Fratani, 2014: 345). New Pentecostal values are etched on the convert through technologies of the self (Maxwell, 2006; Engelke, 2010: 179).

In the conversion narratives of OMG Pentecostals, the first step was giving one's life to Jesus and be 'born again' or get 'saved.' In making this personal decision, one places oneself under the spiritual covering of Jesus Christ whose blood and name never lose power¹⁸⁵. The holy spirit is activated to guided one's life. Once 'covered by the blood of Jesus' through embodying the blood, believers supposedly gain sense of control over their lives (Daswani, 2011; Swidler, 2013). By embodying the omnipotent and omnipresent Jesus, OMG Pentecostals receive an impetus to spring into action and address those areas of their lives that need the corrections. OMG Pentecostals are what we call 'dividualized' person consisting of holy spirit and the blood of Jesus¹⁸⁶. Jesus is embodied through a number of rituals such as Eucharist service, impartation and the use of anointed oil. In partaking consecrated bread and wine, applying anointed oil and in impartation rituals, Pentecostals embody Jesus and the holy spirit that will transform them into new beings, empowered and ready to face the world. On New Year's Eve, there was a cross-over service in which the Eucharist ceremony was conducted. We participated in the Eucharist ritual. As we waited for the 'body and blood of Jesus' I observed a number of congregants visibly in deep thoughts. I later learnt through conversations and interviews that congregants take introspections of their lives before accepting to participate in this ritual. In accepting to participate, one attaches specific changes, growth and transformations expected. As one respondent told me, at OMG the

¹⁸⁵ There is song which claims that the blood of Jesus never loses its power, Ruth Marshall has also shown that Nigerian Pentecostals invoke the name of Jesus to ward off any danger.

¹⁸⁶ Dividuality describes constitution of persons removed from the western conception of persons as autonomous individuals. There is a rise in scholars who view persons as dividuals, that is, personhood is constructed through obligations made to other persons and deities. Persons are relational rather than autonomous (Swidler, 2013: 684-692; Daswani, 2011: 257).



Eucharist service is open to all - poor, sinners, children, the weak, the old and the rich – because Jesus came for them so that they too can live life in abundance¹⁸⁷. So, in giving their lives to Jesus, converts also receive ‘abundant life’ from Him. This exchange is central in the construction of Pentecostal beings and agency that is associated with conversion.

Baptism is another technology of the self in the transformation of the converts (Mauss, 1935; Englund, 2007: 486; Pieterse, 2016). After accepting/receiving Jesus as a personal saviour, a convert is immersed in water symbolizing the death of the old weak self. Baptism signals the death of the old person, a rupture from the past as Meyer (1998a) would put it. While I agree with Meyer that conversion is marked with discontinuities in the life of the convert, I did not find some of the markers she highlighted. As Engelke (2010: 191) has shown rupture takes many forms depending on the history and local cultures. Among OMG believers, rupture entails abandoning old habits, spiritual forces and certain associates. Drastic changes are seen, and this acts as the basis of imagining and creating the new self. Upon conversion, converts abandon profligate habits such as elaborate sexual networks, beer drinking and funding unnecessary activities (Maxwell, 2006). The case of Baba John I discuss later in this chapter brings this out in detail.

As converts emerge from the water during baptism, a new empowered self also emerges. In evaluating their current state, OMG members noted that baptism equips them with the power to redefine their lives on the basis of the new relationship with Jesus rather than the state. While the state fails to provide for them, they make use of the ‘power in Jesus’ and the disciplinary practice to fashion their lives in a way accessible to them. The government’s empowerment initiatives are not inclusive. Programmes such as FTRLP and IEEP have been rolled on patronage basis, benefiting only those connected to the political elites. OMG Pentecostalism offers strategies that are closer to adherents’ everyday realities, when compared to state’s initiatives that are distant and mediated by cronyism.

¹⁸⁷ A paraphrastic version of John 10:10, this is also OMG thematic verse for 2017. Most converts were quick to memorize the verse.



As I have shown conversion into Pentecostalism leads to the reconstruction of the self whose identity markers are divorced from the state-based citizenship and nationality. The holy spirit is the guiding force. In my reading of the situation, OMG Pentecostals rely less on the state, which may be an agent of the devil. The challenges associated with the post-colonial state are dealt with through the power of Jesus. In an interview one male interviewee told me that

there is power that comes from conversion, there are many issues that troubled me before I switched to OMG. I used to experience bad dreams, restlessness, being financially broke and was fighting someone at my workplace. When I switched to OMG I managed to overcome these challenges through prayer and also teachings that help me ...I had some problems at my workplace... I confronted the person who was giving me troubles at workplace and I told him that I will fight back till I overcome. The person just left unceremoniously... on earth God gave us the power of attorney...

Accepting Jesus as the personal saviour and the belief in the power attached to his name, OMG take control of the world and their situations (see Christerson and Flory, 2017: 92; Lindhardt 2015: 259, Marshall, 1993). OMG Pentecostals are ready to fight for what they believe it theirs or desire.

Congregants identify OMG as the source of their primary source of identity, dismissing and neglecting other sources of identity. OMG members view themselves in religious terms as *vana vemuporofita* and offering unwavering allegiance to prophet Ben and not the state. During, a discussion on WhatsApp platform, some members noted that the nation of Zimbabwe and its leadership were cursed because of ignoring, disrespecting and mocking prophet Ben. Some members on the same WhatsApp group expressed that the current regime of leadership will come to an end as politicians from OMG would enter the political fray. I have witnessed a number of OMG members who had expressed interest in public offices receiving prayers and anointing to make them succeed in their career path. After the anointing they were encouraged to pursue politics¹⁸⁸.

¹⁸⁸ In the 2018 elections known OMG members did not run for offices



5.3.2 Money and Pentecostal personhood

As indicated above, OMG Pentecostals are constituted by a number of elements. Apart from these embodied elements, money is central in the creation of an OMG Pentecostal charismatic Christian. The sacrificial economy of exchanges between the laity, the clergy and deities plays a significant role in fashioning Pentecostal persons. Harding (2000) notes that donation to a religious movement is one way through which believers are fashioned into due-diligence selves who are aware of their financial standing. In giving to OMG, it is a sacrifice, made in times of lacking (see Van Wyk, 2014a). To some extent, donations and gifting offers OMG Pentecostals a sense of control and self-worthiness through the sacrifice made in donation to OMG in times of lack and state-induced uncertainties. Unemployed OMG members and those in casual and informal employment donate to OMG the same way as those employed do, re-enacting the idea of sacrifice.

Some of OMG Pentecostals pool together money for donation to OVCs and assist other members of OMG in precarious situations. Money given as donations is a means through which OMG members self-construct themselves as victors. In giving others and assisting the less privilege, money is equally a sign of power and a marker of a higher standing as well as a way of objectifying relations of love and caring. Donations in terms of money and kind to the less fortunate emphasize power over the beneficiaries. The sense of worthiness and of being in control is achieved through pooling of resources to address particular challenges faced by other members of society. Graeber (2001: 225) notes that in giving to the poor, we simultaneously acknowledge their vulnerability and our better standing in society. In such exchanges with the less fortunate, reciprocity is not direct. One female congregant boasted of how she, through donations to the church, had managed to assist less privileged members of OMG and society. In her narrative she presented herself as someone with the capacity to spare for the less privileged.

I was watching OMGTV the other day and I saw students who had benefited from our contributions, some of the students had enrolled for law, medicine and engineering degrees. I realized that our contributions meant a lot for the students. One of the beneficiary was an orphan with no one to pay for her fees. Only God, through *mhamha* identified her, she received the scholarship. Her life will never be the same again. Its



God using *mhamha* to improve lives. God will never come and help the students He does it through us! I will give the little that I have, it goes a long way in changing lives

...

Donations made to OMG and participation in the sacrificial economy is one way of fashioning OMG Pentecostals who do not perceive themselves as lacking agency (cf Comaroff, 2009: 30). Money donated is a symbol of power and higher standing than the beneficiary. The money donated is central in the construction of Pentecostal self. Money assists OMG Pentecostals transform from the mind-set of victimhood to that of victors who take control of their life situations and that of others who are less fortunate. A number of OMG members I interacted with derived satisfaction from giving and assisting others. In giving money they constructed themselves as ethical and responsible persons. It is the act of giving money that allows them to positively 'represent the importance of their own actions' (Munn, 1992; Graeber, 2001: 12).

I have emphasize the ways in which money link the individual congregant to the OMG community. I now turn to ways OMG members organize their life, hopes and aspiration around money. In order to clearly bring this out, I employ Zelizer's (2011) concept of earmarking. In adopting the concept, I intend to illustrate ways in which religious coding of money has a bearing on congregants' perceptions and understanding of money. Most of the decision pertaining money are not only derived from market economy. A number of OMG members I spoke to and interviewed made reference to a religious model of organizing their finances. A model some OMG Pentecostals called 'Kingdom Prosperity Model'. For every dollar earned, 10 cents is for tithe, 20 cents for saving, 20 for investment and income generating projects and the remainder is for immediate and personal use. The way money is earmarked for particular use reflects the religious principles and values in the understanding and categorization of money. Each dollar earned by the congregants in question, at least a tenth is channelled towards OMG as a way of soliciting for more blessings and protection. This model for managing finances and understanding money is derived from the religious sphere. The Kingdom Prosperity Model forms part of a grid that organizes financial activities of members. It has a rationalizing effect on how money is spent by adherents. A portion is reserved for investment and income



generating projects. This offers avenues for OMG Pentecostals to start enterprises that increase their income. Peel (1968: 113) found the same rationalizing present among the Nigerian Aladura. Such models instil ‘financial discipline’ that shapes the construction of Pentecostal personhood and community (Bialecki, 2008: 379).

Among congregants in Masvingo I observed that notes and coins, ranging from USD \$1 to \$100, were placed at ‘home altars’. One congregant noted that the notes were prayed for by the local pastor, and each note represented particular wishes and desires of a congregant. In his petty cash box, which acted as an altar, he had a dollar which represented his desire for a car, another one for a happy marriage and a \$5 for a house. The congregant told me that when he starts raising money for purchasing a vehicle, he would place it in the altar for blessings and spiritual coverage against other mishaps that may lead to diversion in use of the money. The earmarking of notes is not new to Pentecostals, Van Wyk (2014a: 199) narrates about ‘drachmas’ which UKCG members viewed as ‘special’ if they make contact with one’s money. What interested me is that I was told that some of the \$1s and US \$5s do not leave the altar, other notes may be placed in and taken out. For the OMG Pentecostal the notes and coins are not seen as similar even if the denomination are same (Zelizer, 2011). The notes are prayed over by the pastor and represent the wishes and desires of the Pentecostal, while other notes are a means of realizing the desire. Money is a tool that OMG members employ to earmark and compartmentalize their desires. It is a remainder of the desires that most Zimbabweans have but fail to realize due to the prevailing economic conditions. The notes are constant remainder of the wishes, expectations and hope for a good life that OMG may bring at a time the Zimbabwe government is failing to improve the lives of citizens. Money is a vehicles that enables OMG believers to transcend between “impersonal abstraction and personal meaning, objectification and subjectivity and analytical reason and synthetic narratives” (Hart, 2007: 15). The separation of money as token and remainder of believers’ wishes and desires, and the contact with money intended to bring to fruition the wishes is a clear illustration of how money bridges the gap between abstractions and realities.



As argued in chapter two, life for most Zimbabweans is characterized by hopelessness, uncertainties and precarity. The post-colonial government's mismanagement of the economy has pushed most Zimbabweans into precarious conditions. Most Zimbabweans do not know when and where their next meal will come from. Tagwira's (2007) portrayal of the hopelessness in Zimbabwe is not far from the realities that most Zimbabweans are accustomed to. Most Zimbabweans have suffered from the vagaries of a mismanaged national economy. OMG introduces the sacrificial economy which provides alternative ways of being and of constructing the self. The little that OMG Pentecostals donate goes a long way in assisting the less-fortunate, allowing the Pentecostals to perceive them as 'victors'¹⁸⁹ and to salvage something within the poorly performing economy. Furthermore, spiritual economy give prospects of returns at a later date. There is hope and prospects of success in OMG spiritual economy at a time the national economy looks bleak. To some extent OMG provides providential guidance to members neglected by the Zimbabwean government and whose suffering is linked to mismanagement and or unwillingness of the government to run the economy and other public institutions for the benefit of all Zimbabweans.

The institution of chieftaincy is still present in rural areas but operates as a pale shadow of itself. The security and stability the institution brought to people in rural areas has declined as laws and elected political leaders continue to undermine chiefs and headmen's authority. In such times when chiefs are losing their influence, OMG is spreading into rural areas and growth-points availing itself as the institution that brings direction, order and stability in congregants' lives and activities. As indicated in chapter two, OMG is gaining popularity and membership in rural Zimbabwe where chiefs authority is on the decline. As I will show in chapter seven, OMG sacrificial economy is slowly reproducing a welfare system that replicates the now defunct *zunde ramambo*¹⁹⁰. The person of the prophet Ben is at the apex of the

¹⁸⁹ OMG members perceive themselves as conquerors and fighters who rise above the prevailing multi-layered Zimbabwean crisis.

¹⁹⁰ Apart from the decline in chieftainship, droughts, climate variability and lack of resources have negatively affected agricultural productivity. *Zunde ramambo* depends on bumper harvests as granaries are stocked from harvested agricultural produce



sacrificial economy the same way chiefs controlled the *zunde ramambo*. While money participates in the construction of personhood, it equally participates in the construction of OMG community.

5.3.3 Community and the organization of life

Money provides ways through which OMG Pentecostals organize their everyday life and relations. Notes and coins assigned for certain purposes or exchanged frame the “social network and forms of associations” that OMG Pentecostals are part of (cf Hart, 2007: 16). Money that is donated to OMG, prophet Ben and his acolyte by followers lays the foundation of the community that emerges through exchange of money. On several occasions, during offertory sessions pastor Danny instructed congregants to check if those close-by had something in their hands. Attendees standing next to attendees without any notes or coins were asked to give money to those without. Prophet Danny often remarked that God responds to the desire and efforts made towards giving, even borrowed money is accepted. This in a way strengthen bonds among the laity and produce a sentimental community that is absent in other Pentecostal movements such as UKCG (see van Wyk, 2014a: 174). In assisting each other with money intimate relations emerge. As I highlighted in chapter two, I gave some notes and coins to congregants close-by, who later became some of my respondents and interlocutors. Money fosters intimate relations among OMG Pentecostals.

While at OMG Prayer Resort, I met a number of OMG members based in the diaspora who explained their membership as mediated by money. On our way to OMG Prayer Resort I sat next to Aki¹⁹¹. During our conversation Aki noted that there are no OMG branches close to his place of residence. He follows OMG proceedings through YouTube and live streaming¹⁹². Most importantly, Aki noted that he had remained a member of OMG through tithing. Aki deposited tithe in OMG South

¹⁹¹ Aki is a Ghanaian male based in South Africa’s North West province. I met him when we sat next to each other in a shuttle that took us to the Prayer Resort.

¹⁹² There is ethical dilemma associated with every website and newspaper article I cite as the cover of OMG is blown. I plead with examiners to assist on how I can keep the identity of OMG unknown.



African bank account, in the same way two other congregants based in Australia and United States of America did¹⁹³. Aki noted that in tithing, he attracted prophet Ben's spiritual blessings, coverage and protection. When prophet Ben prays or utters prophetic declarations, the blessing and coverage would locate Aki and his family due to the money Aki deposits in OMG account. The money acts as conduit through which blessings trace back to him. Money, for most OMG members whom I conducted my study with, is a conduit for blessing and divine favour. Notes and coins are personal as they represent the giver and attract blessings back to the giver. As the same time, in pooling resources into OMG coffers, OMG Pentecostals are unified together into a community. Money is one factor that is facilitating the expansion of OMG into a global network and community. Money is transforming OMG into both community united by pooling of money and into an 'imagined community' whose members may never develop face to face relations.

The government of Zimbabwe abandoned national currency in February 2009 and replaced the Zimbabwean dollars (Z\$) whose value had been eroded by inflation. In the process of demonetizing the Zimbabwean dollar and adopting the multi-currency systems most Zimbabweans lost their savings in banks, pension funds, insurance policies and investments in local currency. There was general lack of trust in the government that failed to protect depositors' funds, pension funds and investments. The abandonment of the worthless local currency for the multi-currency system points to ways in which the state failed to forge a sense of monetary community among Zimbabweans. Furthermore, the Zimbabwean government's attempt to introduce a pseudo-currency¹⁹⁴ called the Zimbabwean Bond has been resisted by

¹⁹³ OMG opened a Rand Bank account with Standard Bank (RSA) for members in South Africa, and a USD account with the same bank for members in the diaspora. I shared a table during breakfast with the two female OMG diasporas. The two were Zimbabweans based in Australia and the other in America

¹⁹⁴ The governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe is on record expressing that the Zimbabwean Bond is not a local currency but an export incentive facility. The Zimbabwean Bond is officially equivalent to the USD, though in the streets people peg the Bond note lower than USD. Despite claims that it is an export incentive, the Zimbabwean Bond widely circulate in Zimbabwe and are issues to everyone by banks regardless of whether one is an exporter



most people as they fear losing out in the same fashion of 2008-2009 (Herald Business Reporter, 2016). Hart (2005b) and Wariboko (2008: 106) argue that modern state's claim to authority is partly derived from the monopoly they have over issuance of money in a given territory. National currency circulates and is accepted as legal tender in territories that fall under the control of any given nation-state. In other words, national currency helps the nation-state mark territory and forge monetary community among people who use the notes and coins issued by the central bank (Hart, 2012). In the case of Zimbabwe, distrust has ruined the establishment of monetary community.

Lack of trust in the government-issued currency is prevalent among Zimbabweans, pointing to lack of trust in the government. For OMG Pentecostals rituals such as praying over money, earmarking and tithing in local and foreign notes and coins bring stability and a sense of what Ashford (2005:156) calls spiritual security¹⁹⁵. Some of OMG members I interviewed felt secure when dealing with notes and coins that had been prayed over or placed in home-altars. The government failed to instil trust in the Zimbabwean Bond and it is resisted by most Zimbabweans. For OMG members the notes and coins become acceptable and stable because of the rituals performed on the notes. By and large, the acceptance or rejection of notes and coins issued by the government points to issues of distrust and lack of faith in the government and the state. Zimbabweans have rejected any attempt to introduce local currency by the government, yet the same notes and coins are acceptable to OMG member once the notes have been prayed over. The prayers are believed to endow the money with some sense of decency and acceptability.

As I have alluded in the second chapter, the cost of living in Zimbabwe is quite high when compared with other countries in the region. Furthermore, the collapse of industries and scarcity of local commodities push the prices of most commodities

or not. Zimbabwean Bond come in different denominations of coins (1cent, 5cents, 10cents, 25cents, 50cents, \$1) and notes (\$2 and \$5).

¹⁹⁵ Ashford (2005) writes about spiritual insecurity as a result of exposure to both invisible and visible forces. Rituals that deal with the spiritual agencies and forces protects and bring about spiritual security.



beyond the reach of most Zimbabweans. The situation is exacerbated by cash shortage and little disposal income for most people. Under such circumstance, money is never enough to meet the needs of most people. For OMG Pentecostals rituals assist in bringing a sense of stability and guide against 'unnecessarily' losing money. Despite an inhibitive environment, the spiritual security brought by rituals acts as a source of hope for most OMG Pentecostals. Notes and coins placed in home-altars were earmarked and indexed the aspirations and desires OMG Pentecostals hold. As argued in the previous chapter, prophet Ben is perceived as a source of hope and security for his followers. The failure of the state to provide financial security has opened up chance of OMG to anchor Pentecostals lives through rituals and the sacrificial economy. Most OMG members still have hope that OMG will assist them to own houses, vehicles and decent lifestyle despite the economic crisis at hand. In the next chapter, I will fully discuss ways in which OMG projects attempts to bring these hopes into realities.

5.3.4 Insecurity and the process of entrusting

The appeal and popularity that OMG enjoys depends on trust that most of its members have in prophet Ben and the sacrificial economy. Anthropologists have been cautious in their usage of the concept of belief and faith in religious studies. The terms have western connotations and often fail to portray the obtaining situation among Christians (Englund, 2007: 481 - 482). The concept of belief compartmentalizes Pentecostals into a 'distinctiveness' group aloft from the rest of society (Ruel, 1997: 59 cited in Englund, 2007: 482). This is not correct, Pentecostals are part of society and are affected by the prevailing broader political and economic conditions. OMG members, like many other Zimbabweans, live under conditions of uncertainty, precariousness and dangers resulting from high prevalence of HIV and AIDS, spiritual and physical warfare, famines, political and economic crisis (Haram & Bawa Yamba, 2009). In situations marked by uncertainty and distrust, suspicion is ubiquitous (Englund, 2007: 479, 487; Pieterse, 2016: 8).

OMG is cultivating identities and relations built on trust. The construction of trust among OMG Pentecostals provides but one way of explaining why OMG Pentecostal movement has attracted many followers in Zimbabwe. OMG



Pentecostals are concerned with stability and security obtained through the spiritual coverage and guidance of the prophet, and Jesus Christ (Marshall, 1993; Lindhardt, 2015. Englund, 2007). OMG Pentecostals trust their fellow members as well as the clergy. Fellow Pentecostals serve as the conduits of stability and protection against the obtaining uncertainty and insecurities in Zimbabwe.

Trust is central in keeping the congregants together even in the absence of breakthroughs and success (Lindhardt, 2015: 310). Trust in God and in prophet Ben binds the clergy and laity in relations of expectations and obligations as I have shown above. Uncertainty that characterize the timing and nature of counter-gift is toned down by trust. The act of giving implies trust and continued giving shows the trust congregants have in the prophet and God. Furthermore, 'transparency and accountability' on issues of money is one way prophet Ben construct himself as a trustworthy person. He 'explains ways in which he put' some of the money donated to OMG and leaves the door open for congregants to trace how their donations are used. To some extent, this dispels distrust associated with financial 'sacred secrecy' in some Pentecostal movements (cf Ukah, 2005: 202, Rey, 2015: 352). Trust points to the quality and nature of relationship that exist between the clergy and the laity, bringing to the fore the 'shared commitment to Jesus' (Englund, 2007: 489).

Lastly, trust is a concept that help us understand ways in which prophet Ben unites his followers and make them loyal to OMG. In situation where distrust and hopelessness are rampant in Zimbabwe, trust is a 'alternative organizing principle' at the disposal of prophet Ben (Englund, 2007: 90). Citizens in Zimbabwe have lost trust in politicians and government's ability to deal with existential challenges faced by most citizens. OMG Pentecostalism cultivate relations based on trust vertically with God, the clergy and the laity; and horizontally among other Pentecostals. On the other hand, the government has neither united nor cultivated stronger sentimental relations among citizens in Zimbabwe. Citizens remain polarized on racial, political and ethnic lines. There is distrust among member of different ethnic groups, political parties and citizens. In addition, there is suspicion surrounding chiefs because some of them collaborated with the colonial administration through the Native Commissioners (Mapedza, 2007). Furthermore, chiefs and headmen



have been accused of siding with ZANU PF government, intimidating people to retain the ZANU PF government during general elections and attending ZANU PF congresses¹⁹⁶. There is discontent with chiefs, with calls being made for them to not participate in elections and not to campaign for ZANU PF. As Nyasha remarked in the opening vignette, prophet Ben has managed to rise beyond party politics, race and ethnic divisions. He accommodate followers from different political parties in Zimbabwe. As Nyasha remarked, prophet Ben unites Zimbabweans from all walks of life. OMG has cultivated close, intimate relations based on trust in prophet Ben and God. Trust among OMG Pentecostal Charismatics is important in showing Zimbabweans an alternative basis of relations, organization and lifestyle. OMG is reaping a wider followership and loyalty where the government is failing due to lack of stability and trust in relations. Furthermore, OMG is symbolically recreating relations of trust and reverence that once characterized interactions between chiefs and their subjects or the state and citizens in the 1980s.

5.4 Money and Morality

I discuss various dynamics associated with money. in this discussion I bring forth the way in which money structures relations between OMG members and the state. Money facilitates the creation of morality that gives OMG a better image in people's eyes. On the other hand, corruption and mismanagement of funds give the state a bad reputation.

¹⁹⁶ Despite section 280 (2) of the Constitution call for chiefs to be non-partisan, several chiefs and headmen campaign and openly support ZANU PF government. on 16 May 2018 the High Court reiterated this call as chiefs were campaigning for ZANU PF ahead of the general election in July 2018. Chiefs are seen as ZANU PF functionaries that their inclusion in senate is read as a way of outnumbering senators from opposition political parties. While some of the chiefs in the colonial times were blamed for siding with the colonial state, current chiefs are blamed of siding with a post-independence government that has lost any pretence of a developmental state. During 2018 ZANU PF annual conference Fortune Charumbira, president of Chief's Council publicly claimed that "ZANU PF is the party of chiefs". He went on to attack the 16 May 2018 High Court order.



5.4.1 Zimbabwean Bond, Greenbacks and Negotiating Entry

When I arrived in Harare in June of 2016 cash was in short supply and plastic and mobile money was not popular. Long queues formed at all banks in the city, often people were turned away without being served. Banks were dispatching paltry amounts of less than \$20 per week, an amount insignificant considering that the cost of living is expensive in Zimbabwe (Chiriga, 2017). I had set an interview for 20 June 2016 at 1000hrs with Nyasha Moyo. While on my way to his office, I received a Short Message Service (SMS) from Nyasha instructing me to wait for him at his office¹⁹⁷ as he was still queueing for cash at a bank. I saw it as good opportunity to join him and immerse myself in the everyday life routine of most Zimbabweans and my interlocutor. I joined Nyasha at the bank. He had joined the already long queue around 0800hrs and was number 209¹⁹⁸. Some of the people had joined the queue as early as 0400hrs¹⁹⁹. As we conversed, Nyasha was frustrated, lamenting that he loses productive time queueing for \$15 issued in 50 cents denominations. Nyasha noted that the state was useless, only effective in collecting taxes which it does not deserve²⁰⁰. Later in the afternoon, I offered to assist him with USD 80 I had on me. He later transferred the same amount into my bank account. I had easy access to cash in US dollars through a friend who works at a bank. We settled for this arrangement in which Nyasha transferred money into my account and I would get greenbacks for him. I got greenbacks for his family free of charge, at a time when 'cash barons'²⁰¹ and those with easy access to cash charged at least 10% or more of the cash requested.

¹⁹⁷ The interview venue

¹⁹⁸ He had a tag made from a Cerevita packaging bearing the number. This is used to maintain order and reduce queer jumpers.

¹⁹⁹ These times are general estimation given by people during conversations.

²⁰⁰ Nyasha remarked that if it was not the case income tax is deducted before salary payments, he would have neglected payment of tax because for him, the government was as good as absent.

²⁰¹ A term used to describe individuals or groups that sell hard cash. They charged exorbitant prices for USD while Bond Notes attracted a lower charger. I will return to controversies surrounding cash barons later in this chapter.



Money played a mediatory role in facilitating relations between the Moyos and myself. Through easy access to money and willingness to assist Nyasha, I managed to construct myself as a good, honest and trustworthy person in the eyes of Nyasha and his family. Nyasha had often expressed his resentment for unscrupulous ‘cash barons’ who capitalize on the plight of the general populace by “claiming a tenth from people’s earnings as if they were God”²⁰². Easy access to money in this case facilitated creation of social relations and creation of a morality, value and trust (Bloch, 1989; Bloch & Parry, 1989; Toren, 1989)(see also Hart, forthcoming, Hart, 2017²⁰³; Hart, 2017²⁰⁴). When I moved in to live with the Moyos, remarks such as “*You are a blessing Taru*” were common. At first I thought Nyasha and his wife were being manipulative and patronizing me. With time, I realized that they meant it, in prayers they thanked God for sending me at that particular time into their family. When I met Nyasha’s parents two months down the line, they already knew of me and the assistance I had given the family. I then realized that the Moyos saw my easy access to money as a prayer answered and a solution for them to the problem of cash shortages. To me, the acceptance and blending-in was psychologically fulfilling. The act of assisting the host family during fieldwork is both an ethical and moral act in which ethnographers start to view themselves as “responsibly socially connected and maintain obligations towards host family and informants” (Bornstein, 2012: 8).

Money participate in the creation of morality. Issues of trust and honesty where money is involved were central. When I gave notes to Nyasha, he would place them in his pocket or wallet, mixing them with other notes he already had. I often heard him instructing his wife

Isa mari yabva kuna Taru pane imwe iya²⁰⁵

This shows ways in which money is categorized according to the person who brought it and the identity of the person has a bearing on the rituals performed on

²⁰² Tithe is a tenth of earnings. Cash baron were blasphemous and immoral in Nyasha’s eyes.

Nyasha uttered these words during a conversation.

²⁰³ In Press Greyback shared via personal communication 02 May 2017

²⁰⁴ Personal communications via emails 05 May 2017

²⁰⁵ Keep this cash from Taru with other savings.



the notes and coins. I had observed that when Nyasha received notes from persons he was suspicious of, he often separated those notes from the ones he already had. He would either pray over the notes or sprinkle some anointed oil which he kept in the glove compartment of his vehicle. When I inquired about sprinkling of the anointed oil, Nyasha told me that non-Christians insert money into non-Christian rituals by applying snuff and other concoctions from *n'anga*, thus inviting satanic spiritual agents to the notes and coins. Sprinkling of anointed oil, was a way of cleansing and inviting divine agents to guide ways in which the money would be stored and used (Lindhardt, 2009). Nyasha believed that once committed to God the notes and coins would be used productively. The exchange of money among Pentecostals is steeped in morality and trust. If the bearer of the notes and coins is suspected of association with non-Christian spirits, the Holy spirit and Christian spiritual agents are invoked and invited to change the spiritual composition of the notes and coins.

OMG Pentecostal Charismatics are chary when it comes to exchange of money. The act of giving or lending someone money depended on trust. Relatives suspected of consulting *n'anga* and 'other non-OMG prophets' for help are not given money. A number of congregants noted that in giving non-Christian money, one always gives away his or her essence. Money for OMG members is a representation of one's essence: blood, vitality and sweat that goes into earning it. Most interviewees were suspicious that relatives may take the money to a *n'anga* for extraction of the essence of the giver. This resonates well with Mauss analysis of the gifts that contains the spirit of the giver. OMG Pentecostal believe money carries their social (re)productive potential which others may reduce or appropriate through rituals. Once money given out is incorporated in *n'anga* rituals, the giver's ability to earn more is reduced. For Nyasha, he preferred buying groceries or pay for the services on behalf of some of his relatives who sought money from him. He believed that in giving them groceries, he is not directly giving them his essence but a by-product which could not be used to harm the giver. Yet lending money to fellow OMG congregants and friends was done without such considerations. Nyasha once transferred money via Ecocash to one of the department leader who had mistakenly



sent a text asking for \$20. Such transfers to fellow OMG members were considered harmless.

The notion that money flattens relations and removes intimacy runs through a number of ethnographic studies (Bohannan & Bohannan, 1968). In my case money was a way of expressing condolences and comfort. When my father passed-on on 25 October 2016, Nyasha and some of OMG congregants I had acquainted in the past four months gave \$230 to my family. It was a way of showing sympathy, of comforting the family during the period of bereavement. Nyasha and another congregant drove over 700 kilometres to and from my rural homestead. In a way, money donated to my family was a way of constructing Nyasha and OMG in general as caring and considerate, more importantly, it triggered a system of reciprocity between our families. My mother and siblings, up to this day, continue to ask me how Nyasha and other OMG members who attended my father's burial were doing. Up to this day, every time I leave for Harare, my mother always instructs me to pass her regards to Nyasha and at times sends pumpkins, maize cobs, round and ground nuts to Nyasha. Money donated to my family formed the bedrock for the intimate relationship between our families (see Bloch, 1989:166). Most importantly, the money brought out the caring nature of Nyasha and other OMG Pentecostals. When Nyasha informed me that he lost a close relative, I felt obliged to reciprocate by donating money in turn, this bring us back to the Mauss' concept of reciprocity. Gifts compel the receiver to exact the gift accepted.

Our prior relations and the gift of money compelled me to reciprocate on a later date. This formed the basis of a generalized reciprocity between our two families. As Parry and Bloch (1989) have argued, money and objects exchanged by people with prior relation is often not read using market logic, new meanings are drawn from the context. The money Nyasha donated to my family acted as a mean of evangelizing and proselytizing. He mentioned OMG in introducing himself. Long after he had left, my relatives associated his good behaviour with OMG. They started doubting some stories they had heard about OMG as a 'bad' or 'divisive' church. The love and compassion shown to non-members, such as my family, had made them reconsider stories from rumour-mills about OMG. The donations to my family portrayed OMG



as a caring entity composed with morally good persons. And money was one of the things that swayed my relatives opinions.

Morality is at the centre of exchange of notes and coins. Money is considered as a source of danger and vulnerability if it comes into contact with non-Christian rituals and persons. Money presents the avenue through which ones essence and vitality is sucked away through *n'anga* and satanic rituals²⁰⁶. The suspicion that is placed on relatives and business competitors and lack of trust in them points to structurally conflictual relations in a nation characterized by shortage of money. On the other hand, the easiness with which Nyasha and some of my interviewees exchanged money amongst themselves illustrates trust within the religious community. Within given communities the exchange of money conveys trust and horizontal relations that exists among members of a community (Hart, 2001:252).

5.4.2 Trust, Power and Surveillance

While money acts as a way of submission to the clergy, in tithing, money is a mechanism of surveillance in the Foucauldian sense. Records of a tenth that congregants donate to OMG are kept by the OMG finance department. Every tithing member has an account number that acts as an identifier. Through the receipts and the OMG tithe and offering database, a tenth of congregants earnings is captured and probably monitored. Data on estimates of incomes can be deduced from the amounts of donations congregants give to the church. The issuing of receipts is one way in which the church monitors and keep in touch with the income and as well as its membership. By implication, OMG may track the changing fortunes of certain congregants over time as well as their commitment to the ministry. This is similar to the way in which the state monitors income of citizens through the taxes. Recently the government announced that it had created 60 000 new jobs. This figure was provided by the National Social Security Authority (NSSA), exposing close

²⁰⁶²⁰⁶ As Christianity responded to local cultural worldview, *n'anga* were considered satanic as they did not derive their power from the Christian God. It is part of a process that Meyer (1998) calls diabolisation



monitoring of citizens' contribution from their income by respective government departments²⁰⁷.

For long, exchange of money and the direction of the exchanges has been known to convey power relations among those involved (Hart, 2001: 252; Laum, 2006:40 cited in Dodd 2014:43). At OMG money is a way of expressing submission to Prophet Ben, when given to the clergy it confirms the subordinate position of the giver. In this sense money is a form of a tribute to religious leaders (Laum, 2006 cited in Dodd, 2014: 43, Bloch 1989: 182). At OMG, money gravitated towards the leadership. The laity donates and make payments as a way of confirming subordination to the clergy. In paying tithes and offertories money is one way in which the laity elevates the clergy. I observed several times that Nyasha and Nicky gave different pastors money when we met them in town. Once Nyasha gave prophet Ben's young brother US \$10, the last note he had in his wallet. We had to later on borrow money for petrol from Nyasha's neighbour. Nyasha quickly shared with the pastor his business plan. Nyasha later expressed that in giving money to pastors, he was seeking the pastor's anointing and spiritual coverage. Furthermore, he noted that it was not permissible to approach the clergy empty-handed.

In January 2017 at OMG Basilica²⁰⁸, I had a rare opportunity of meeting pastor Danny. We exchanged friendly greetings and he asked how my research was progressing. When I shared the incident with some congregants later they chastised me for failure to take the opportunity to attract pastor Danny's anointing into aspects

²⁰⁷ NSSA manages pension funds for most employees in Zimbabwe. The government may have acquired those figures as it monitors new contributions being made by the newly employed.

²⁰⁸ The histories of Basilicas show that they form part of exchange system. They are usually constructed and dedicated to deities or prominent religious persons. The OMG Basilica is a building whose construction is financed by prophet Ben and dedicated to God. OMG members hold church services at the Basilica while the OMG constructs its headquarters in Mount Hampden (proposed new administrative capital for Zimbabwe). Prophet Ben's financing of the construction of the Basilica is a public demonstration of power, spirituality and authority. On the other hand, it places him in a system of exchange with God. The Basilica once completed, will be dedicated to God, in return, I suspect prophet Ben expect more spiritual gifts and power.



of my life. Everyone present wished if such a chance would present itself to them. In giving to prophets, one benefits from the spiritual coverage and protection (Gifford, 2015: 88). Laum 2006 cite in Dodd (2014) argues that money is a form of religious tribute paid to the clergy for atonement and protection. As this illustrates, money continues to play its tributary role as the laity reaffirm their subordination and membership to OMG through tithing, and offertories.

The hierarchies of charisma are reinforced through money donated to prophet Ben and his acolyte. Money is a tool of power as it expresses the “vertical relations between the unequal, rulers and ruled” the clergy and the laity (Hart, 2001: 252). There is a close resemblance between OMG system and the tributary system under chiefs and the government’s system of taxation. Chief used to receive tribute in the form of valuable goods, commodities, grains and rare animals such as pangolin²⁰⁹ from their subjects. In return the chief provided physical and spiritual protection to their subjects and livestock. The chief is linked to the territorial spirits that influence the fertility of the land, in honouring the chief in grains and meat, subjects will be acknowledging his spiritual and ritual role and coverage in that given territory. This system is on the decline, rarely do people honour payment to the chiefs and other tribal leaders. OMG system has a close resemblance to this system as the followers seek protection and covering from the leader by donating money to OMG.

The morality associated with money is also important in developing the image and charisma of prophet Ben and OMG. Prophet Ben portrays himself as a leader who has less interest in squandering money from congregants. In an interview Tinotenda²¹⁰ noted that prophet Ben had told the congregation that he does not put to use the money they gave to him for his birthday. He had once brought the envelopes still sealed. Tinotenda shared another story of an OMG member who ‘seeded’ to prophet Ben but prophet Ben did not put the money to use. Tinotenda

²⁰⁹ A preserve of Chiefs and the President in Zimbabwe. If ordinary Zimbabweans come across pangolin, they submit it to the chiefs. It is a taboo for ordinary citizens to eat the meat from pangolin.

²¹⁰ A female OMG member I interviewed in 2017.



alleged that holy spirit had shown prophet Ben of the bad intentions of the congregant who was donating the money. When the congregant in question left OMG, he demanded his money back and the prophet gave him back the money in the very envelopes he had submitted, still sealed²¹¹. Such stories are shared among congregants with the aim of constructing prophet Ben as a trustworthy prophet not eager to spend money donated by his followers. These stories of how prophet Ben is not eager to spend money 'seeded' portrays prophet Ben as a caring and honest leader. His followers trust him and often compare him to government officials, politicians, ministers and members of parliament who often fail to account for Constituency Development Funds (CDF) they receive from the government. Furthermore, these stories of prophet Ben were referred to during discussions as the opposite of the former first lady Grace Mugabe who had a penchant of financing her extravagant lifestyle from taxpayers money. Prophet Ben has established a religious movement that mirrors and critiques some aspects of the state's operation. The government is condemned by most Zimbabweans for mismanagement of public funds and misplaced priorities²¹². Despite collecting taxes and excise duty from citizens, the government has failed to give matching services and infrastructure to the citizens. National roads are in bad state²¹³, government schools, hospitals and clinics need rehabilitation.

5.4.3 Inviting the divinity: Money, morality and the creation of value

Money facilitates the legitimization of the charisma and upholds the hierarchies of charisma among OMG Pentecostals. In the process of upholding and maintaining hierarchies of charisma it creates value and solidify relations among Pentecostals and the clergy. OMG congregants I interviewed and those I held discussions with

²¹¹ Interestingly, towards end of 2017 a couple left OMG and demanded its tithes and offertories but prophet Ben refused to pay back the money because the couple had voluntarily donated to OMG.

²¹² In September 2018 Emmerson Mnangagwa chartered a private plane for Grace Mugabe to and from Singapore at a time the government was requesting citizens to crowd fund a programme to combat Cholera epidemic that was spreading in urban areas.

²¹³ Zimbabweans have expressed their unhappiness when the government increased toll fees because the roads are not rehabilitated despite money collected for that purpose.



noted that God's anointing attracts money and wealth upon Pentecostals. In an interview one respondent - a university student - noted that it was unthinkable to be led by a pastor who had less money and wealth than most of the congregants. The interviewee told me that without money, it would be a challenge for the pastor to convince and appeal to the laity. He noted that OMG pastors dotted across Zimbabwe drive Mercedes Benz E class and stayed in low density areas within their respective towns of operations. His observation is correct, I observed this in branches I visited outside Harare. Money enhanced the charisma and is instrumental in creating value for the clergy. The money at OMG's disposal is money that comes through donations and OMG related businesses. In essence it was congregants' money that was used to strengthen and prop-up the hierarchies of charisma. When it came to prophet Ben, congregants agreed that his anointing had enabled him to acquire vast wealth and money in short period of time. Most of his wealth and money manifest in terms of properties and estates he owns, dressing, vehicles, and his lifestyle. I will pursue this issue when I discuss consumption, value and hierarchies in the next two chapters.

Money is a means through which the laity create value and connect with the clergy and the divine. Money achieves this in subtle ways. There is a Partnership Programme at OMG. The programme is a vehicle for furthering God's work on earth through the prophet and the prophetess. Money donated is the conduit through which OMG congregants forge intimate relations with the divine as the monetary contributions are read by OMG members as a way of furthering divine will on earth. The money goes to various charity activities that OMG runs across Zimbabwe. In the following chapter I will discuss in detail the partnership programme and the charity activities. Money is the basis upon which congregants engage, draw closer to and harness the charisma of prophet Ben and the divinity. The privileges that the partnership programme bring reinforces the hierarchical structure of OMG. Partners sit closer to the stage and the Tuesday service is dedicated to the partners. At UKCG, Van Wyk (2014a: 192) notes that congregants who donated highest amounts of money were referred to as 'elders.' Money informs the organization and position and benefits congregants enjoy within Pentecostal movements.



Hart (2007: 15) argues that money is the vehicle through which abstract and infinite potentials are realized and transformed into concrete realities. For OMG congregants money is a mechanism through which the divine mission can be concretized into a reality. OMG congregants depend on money in their efforts to create a society of choice. The post-millennial doctrines at OMG does not promote delayed gratification in the otherworldly. It aims at transforming congregants' lives in this-worldly and money is but one way of achieving this.

5.4.4 Fiscal Matters: Tithes and Taxes

I now turn to the funding of OMG and government to provide evidence on how OMG is mimicking the latter and now looks like a replacement for some aspects of the state. As I indicated in the previous chapter, OMG has a data base of its members and those who visit the Prayer Resort. Personal information data base is one of the technologies of statecraft (Scott, 1998). Collection of personal information allows for collection of taxes, avoidance of rebellion and subtle control of members. This creates what Scott (1998: 2) calls legibility. OMG is reproducing same metaphors of the state by keeping data base of members with images of the members. For OMG legibility allows for easy collection of tithes, identification of journalists and perceived threats. OMG, like the government is funded from funds provided by individuals who are part of the community. Both entities depend on taxes. The government derive its funds from income tax, corporate taxes, customs and excise tax, Value Added Tax (VAT), fines and other levies that it imposes on citizens and corporations. OMG heavily depends on tithe which is a form of tax levied on a member's income. OMG members openly expressed that tithe is a compulsory tax of all members regardless of the nature of employment. Religious institutions and the state claim portions of what members and citizens earn. For OMG, tithe is a tenth of the gross income while the income tax levels depend on the salary scale involved²¹⁴.

OMG diversifies its sources of funding through a number of programmes and projects. The Partnership Programme I introduced in chapter two is one of OMG

²¹⁴ 2018 Income tax levels range from 0% for those who earn less than \$300 per month to 50% for those who earn more than \$20000 per month.



sources for funds. Partners are members who donate money to OMG with the aim of financing charity activities run by Compassionate Hand. Partners who donate \$1000 monthly were categorized as platinum partners, gold partners donated between \$500 and \$ 999 each month. These are the most prestigious partnership categories. The lower categories of the partnership consisted of silver and bronze partnership. The former is composed of congregants who donated \$100 – \$499, while the lowest level had those who afford up to US\$99 (Taru and Settler, 2015, OGM website²¹⁵). OMG raises funds through this programme. OMG also relies on free-will offertories from its members. On top of tithe, most member donate money as offertory. There are special calls that are made for members to donate certain amounts for particular projects. For example, as I have noted earlier in this chapter, during the 2017 New Year's Eve we were asked to donate varying amounts ranging from \$77 to \$77 000 as offertory and thanksgiving to God as we enter into a new season. OMG raises funds through dedicated donations. From 20 to 25 February 2017 OMG embarked on a fund-raising project for the construction of head office and studio for OMGTV and construction of a secondary school in a community that the government failed to provide one. There are aspects associated with the developmental state of the 1980s Zimbabwean state, that the contemporary government fails to achieve. OMG is slowly assuming some of the responsibilities that are usually associated with the state in Zimbabwe.

Both OMG and government receive funds from the public. OGM differentiates itself from the government on moral basis. On 15 January 2017 during Sunday service, prophet Ben informed the gathering that:

I will receive millions from the poor and I will use the money in a way that benefit people...if you don't donate anything don't go out lamenting that I am fleecing

²¹⁵ The website had the categories and amounts. The version of the website in August 2015 had this information, when I rechecked in 2017 the categories had been removed. Despite this, interviewees still referred to the categories and associated amounts.



money from the poor, *ndinokutsvaira*²¹⁶. I invite government and ZIMRA²¹⁷ officials to come and audit all our money and books... No money is sent to heaven, it is used here on earth. I am the man of God on earth and we decide how to use the money: in our projects. We decide what we use it on so that we keep God's work going... government takes tax, we take tithes, we can show them how to manage peoples' money... I call government departments, ministries and parastatal to come and learn from us how to manage and use public funds ... anyone who has given a seed, can come and ask how his or her money was used, you're free and we will show you. For those who tithe, you can come with your receipts and we will refund you in an hour. If you placed it in an envelope, check your (notes') serial number... Media has been on us but also look at what we have done as a ministry... ²¹⁸

Prophet Ben paints OMG as a movement characterised by accountability and transparency when it comes to public funds. Congregants are portrayed as free to investigate how their money is used. Prophet Ben constructs an identity and image of a 'Godly', honest and transparent ministry in which the congregants have knowledge of how their funds are put to use. The invitation of ZIMRA to audit and of other government departments to come and learn from OMG is strategic. The Zimbabwean government is known for lack of transparency and accountability. Prophet Ben portrays OMG as an example of an honest 'public institution' accountable to its members. OMG is bearing witness to the government on how public funds must be used in improving the lives of people. In collecting tithes and offertory money OMG channels some to the construction of schools, water borehole drilling, eye cataract operation and construction of houses for some chiefs among other activities which I will discuss in detail in the following chapter. In one interview, an interviewee told me that government ministers who attend OMG were better performing because prophet Ben instils in them values of being responsible and

²¹⁶ This is an unspecified veiled threat to those who portray prophet Ben as fleecing the poor. I will not proffer possible meanings to the expression.

²¹⁷ Zimbabwe Revenues Authority. The activities of some of the employees at ZIMRA are widely considered corrupt, especially at national borders.

²¹⁸ My own translation the message was delivered in mixed Shona and English



accountable²¹⁹. The appeal to media to publicize ‘the good we have done’ is an attempt to outwardly extend his credibility as a responsible leader to the wider society. In calling his followers to inquire about their donation, prophet Ben aims to achieve the same, strengthens trust amongst his followers.

The narrative of OMG as trustworthy is also portrayed in a story I heard from a number of OMG members. The story has it that ZIMRA audited OMG for two consecutive years and failed to find any anomaly, fraud or misappropriation of funds. Such story of how the ‘taxman’ failed to unearth anomalies provide fertile ground for both the prophet and his followers to project OMG as a morally and legally upright when compared to government departments and ministries. Regardless of prophet Ben’s remarks, none of my interviewees or other congregants I met had visited the OMG finance office to inquire on ways in which their money was being used. When I asked Nyasha why he does not follow-up on money he donates to the ministry, he rhetorically retorted

why would I go and inquire? It’s the prophet we are talking of here my brother, why would he abuse the money?

Such failure to follow-up may in a way concealing misuse and mismanagement of funds. In their failure to follow-up, the image of prophet Ben remains intact as an accountable and transparent leader. With such a reputation, prophet Ben is painted as leader who is more accountable and reliable leader to be emulated by-politicians.

While there are many miracles interviewees and congregants highlighted in discussions, the bulk of OMG members I met made reference to what has been dubbed ‘miracle money’ (ZBC, 2013; Herald Business Editor, 2013)²²⁰. It is alleged that in 2013 during a services congregants found their pockets stashed with US dollars while some had their bank accounts balances increased. The production of this money in a nation experiencing cash shortages shocked government officials.

²¹⁹ There are claims that the former minister of tourism between 2012 and 2014 was named as the best performing minister, when he was attending OMG. During fieldwork, the former minister was no longer attending OMG services

²²⁰ Note that this miracle occurred in the early years of OMG before pragmatic approaches were in place.



The governor of Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) summoned prophet Ben and prophet Teddy²²¹ for clarification. During a press conference, prophet Ben noted that he was not producing new money but was restoring money that their followers lost through spiritual means²²². The prophets noted that they could trace and restore money that congregants had lost. To convince the governor, they quoted an incident when Jesus instructed Peter to retrieve money from a fish²²³. The governor had previously expressed his reservation about such miracles which undermined the central bank's role of producing and monitoring money in circulation, and that increasing bank account amounts eroded confidence in the banking system.

Since the late 1990s the Zimbabwean government has constantly been strapped of cash. Prophet Ben 'restored' money for his followers. When the then minister of Finance Patrick Chinamasa tasked the prophet to produce money for the cash-strapped-government, prophet Ben noted that the money was meant for his followers and not for the corrupt and immoral politicians and government officials (Samukange, 2014)²²⁴. This portrayed prophet Ben as a morally upright leader and as a caring leader providing for his followers at a time government failed to cater for the citizens in general. This happened at a time most Zimbabweans believed that government officials were supplying cash barons with Zimbabwean Bond to mop up the remaining US dollars in circulation. When prophet Ben refused to 'fund' the government, His followers supported his stance. To prophet Ben's followers, their leader was superior because he had the spiritual power to summon US Dollars while government could not produce any (Heuser, 2015: 151). While this appears to be

²²¹ Prophet Ben's friend who head another ministry based in the United Kingdom

²²² As noted earlier in this chapter, OGM Pentecostals believe they can be victims of *n'anga* rituals which result in loss of money through spiritual means. From the OGM Pentecostal perspective, what the Comaroff call the occult economy is widely associated with non-Pentecostals.

²²³ The story is found in the bible on Matthew 17: 27

²²⁴ During these days prophet Ben also taught his followers that silence/*kunyarara* was golden, he warned them against commenting on issues they were less competent on. In a veiled manner he attacked "the degreed and the learned" yet ignorant of their own inability to be authorities in such matter. This was directed to cabinet ministers who had attacked the prophet.



similar to what the Comaroffs have called production of wealth from nothing, the explanations given by prophet Ben points to a different phenomenon. The prophet was not producing money, rather he was restoring money that had been lost through spiritual means by his congregants. The bulk of OMG Pentecostals I met noted that not everyone present received the money, only those that had lost some money to relatives and competitors through supernatural means had their money restored.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed ways in which OMG is symbolically replacing and representing the institution of chieftaincy and the state to its members and extending this to the wider society. OMG collects funds from its members in same way the government collects taxes and chiefs collected tribute. The collected funds are reciprocated by physical and spiritual protection. Money provides the fertile ground for OMG to construct itself as a better entity morally when compared to the post-colonial state and government. OMG runs a sacrificial economy that is parallel but hinged upon the realities of the poorly performing national economy. OMG sacrificial economy is more stable and based on trust that comes from sharing and exchange of commodities . The two qualities are lacking in the cut-throat national economy. The popularity of OMG can be explained by its ability to reproduce and even imitate repertoires and relations of chieftaincy and those of its state. OMG does not seek to replace the state, it finds space within the decline of the chieftaincy and the failures in the operation of the post-colonial state to project itself as a better and morally good social formation.

The sacrificial economy is organized in a manner that makes prophet Ben infallible. This internal logic within OMG provides a solid ground from which the movement builds its image to the wider society. It is important not only to focus of monetary value of amounts donated but to shift our attention to value. As Graeber (2001: xii, 2005: 450) notes action become meaningful to the actor by contextualizing it within the larger framework. Gifting, if understood within the Pentecostal 'social totality' produce new way of understanding the reason behind tithing and offertories as well as explaining the popularity of OMG Pentecostal movements in Zimbabwe. Money, charisma and trust remain at the centre of OMG mission of transforming society and



bringing a 'God's Nation on earth'. The well-oiled organization, stable hierarchies, trust and control over money provide the launch-pad from where OMG launch its mission to show the Zimbabweans and government departments and ministries how they are supposed to be run and managed. I now turn to some of the social welfare activities that bear witness of what OMG offers its members and by extension what it can offer the wider Zimbabwean society during the economic and political crisis.

Despite the above, one can be forgiven for drawing certain symbolic parallels between OMG processes and clergy and the operations of global neo-liberal capitalism. Both are shrouded with and undergirded by some mysterious laws and forces known to a selected few. Indeed, OMG activities mirror neo-liberalism, as a form of opportunism and self-aggrandizement regulated by some general laws. Despite the generality of the laws, only a few who understand its inner working prosper while the majority fail. Prophet Ben's wealth is wrapped in mysteries, the wealth is understood by followers to be a result of a combination of following God's laws, principles and hard work. While he teaches his followers these principles and practice involving tithing and entering into a covenant with God, not all member have managed to amass vast wealth. Only a few strategically positioned within OMG are building vast business empires. The wealth is read by OMG members as concretizing and legitimizing OMG's spiritual economy. At the centre of the spiritual economy is the ideas that money is a mystery, perhaps magical, and it can be acquired or lost through manipulation of the spiritual realm. The ability of the clergy to easily transcend the material and spiritual realms, gives the clergy the power to summon and attract money. Most OMG members believe that their inability to manipulate, access and control the spiritual realm reduces their ability to summon, attract and lure money in the physical world.

In this sense, OMG and its spiritual economy resembles the operation of global neoliberal capital which rewards the few who understand the hidden and mysterious arts behind it. The story of George Soros is one of the best examples that depicts this. On 16 September 1992, Soros made a profit of a billion by betting on the British sterling pound. While the operations of neo-liberal capitalism are known and can be applied universally, only a few such as George Soros and Warren Buffett cream off



the proceeds while the rest of humanity live in abject poverty. In 2016 an Oxfam report noted that 1% of the world population controls more than half of the global wealth. 99% of the world population controls less than 40% of the global wealth (Oxfam, 2016). The global financial sector is mysterious, and rewards those who have mastered the laws of the neo-liberal capitalism in the same way spiritual economy rewards a few.



6. **MIMICKING THE STATE: ON THE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OMG AND STATE PROCESSES**

I'm the salt of the earth
I'm the salt of the earth
I carry the flavour of God
I season the earth

I'm a city, built on a high hill
Like the yeast, I leaven the world
I am rich, I am prosperous, I am blessed.
I'm a city, built on a high hill
Like the yeast, I leaven the world
I am rich, I am prosperous, I am blessed

I'm the light of the world
I'm the light of the world
I shed the light of God upon the earth

...

I live to dominate,
Surely there is no enchantment against me
No divination against me
I am covered

I'm highly favoured
I'm highly favoured
I'm highly favoured
I'm highly favoured
In Jesus' Name

[Artist: Michael Mahendere
Song: Salt of the Earth 2017
Album: Getting Personal with God 3]

Giving Back to The Community

As part of our mission to Build A God Society For All People And All Nations and Reaching Out To The Lost, The Broken-hearted And The Less Privileged, we engage in transformational projects and charity works for our communities, those in dire need and the less privileged; allowing the Love of God to flow through us to the world.

[OMG website accessed 06 September 2017]²²⁵

Jesus gave the church the keys to the kingdom, meaning the church is not the kingdom, the kingdom is out there. We must create and live in that kingdom, conversion leads one to the church and not the kingdom, the kingdom is out there. We dress, eat, sleep and live like kings... through my lifestyle of the kingdom I will attract more people...we are the certified dealers of the kingdom

²²⁵ The first two vignettes make it easy for most Zimbabweans to identify OMG, and even OMG members can easily identify with these two. The song was composed and performed by an OMG pastor while the second vignette is from OMG website. I request assistance on ways I can deal with such data that leads to identification of the religious movement, especially for the version that will be posted online.



[OMG member during a conversation while at Prayer resort]

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss ways in which OMG engages with various aspects of the Zimbabwean society through its social ministry. OMG engages in social ministry to assist less-fortunate members of society whom the government has failed to provide adequate care or improve their lives. I will demonstrate several ways in which OMG is appropriating aspects of chieftaincy whilst simultaneously filling the gap left by the post-independence government. OMG mimics the Zimbabwean government while simultaneously mocking the government. As I argued in chapter four, ambivalence of mimicking produce new forms of in betweenness and hybridity (Bhabha, 1994). The mimicry is driven by the desire to expose government's failures and showing Zimbabweans alternatives OMG offers.

As I have shown in the previous chapters, OMG has appropriated aspects of both the state and chieftainship and added trust and charisma that are lacking among the current crop of chiefs and politicians running the government. Trust in chiefs and politicians has waned. Despair and hopelessness are ubiquitous. Against this background, OMG's appeal can be identified in its structure and operations that are read by members as defensive alternative to the state-system governed in a capricious way by ZANU PF politicians. The trust that OMG members have in the religious movement and its leadership assist in creating an image of a responsible, accountable and caring leadership, different from the political leadership. Furthermore, OMG has a vibrant social engagement system in which it provides social services that the state is struggling to provide for various categories of citizens. There is exchange of gifts between the OMG and wider Zimbabwean society. The gifts are directed at those areas and people that the Zimbabwean government has neglected and ignored. As I shall show below, for OMG members giving is both ethical and political. This exchange produces same results: creating OMG as a caring entity and offering Zimbabweans alternative system for the provisions of services that the state no longer provides. As the opening vignette clearly shows, OMG members perceive themselves as exemplars that "shed light of God upon the earth/y" Zimbabwean state and governments.



There is a compelling line of thought present in most studies of Pentecostal movements that portray tithe as a way of fleecing ordinary church members (Ukah, 2007a,b, 2013; Mangena & Mhizha, 2013). As I have already alluded to, tithe is a way of reaching out to wider society through broader redistributive arrangements to ordinary citizens that the state may not be in position to assist through its institutions and government departments. Furthermore, I will show that tithe facilitates the creation of “an autonomous community of citizens with its own property portfolio and welfare system” (James, 2015: 203). OMG members are pooling together resources to construct an OMG City close to the proposed new administrative capital city. This project is meant to bear witness to wider society about the nature of God worshipped by OMG members and also to teach the government running the state machinery on how to improve the lives of people from whom funds are collected.

6.2 Politics, Religion and Society

In this section I discuss ways in which Pentecostal movements have related with wider society, governments and states across the world.

6.2.1 Religion, politics and the public sphere

For long Marxist scholarship has portrayed religion as a “dangerous alternative to politics” (Ranger, 1986: 4). Conversion is portrayed as a last resort for people in stressing situations. Religion reduces political dynamics by either spiritualizing politics or instilling false consciousness in believers (see Gifford, 2004). Robbins (2004: 135) notes that “although Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians vote, they tend to shy away from “hard” political acts that they consider immoral, such as working for parties, criticizing public officials, or running for office.” Data gathered among OMG members contradict this line of thought. The interplay of religious movements and political establishments within same geographical areas creates dynamic relations between the two. Both operate in the same geographical area, attempt to create social order and control members. The state is concerned with temporal power while religious institutions rely on spiritual power (Marshall, 1993). The interactions of the two at any level are complex. Beinart and Bundy (1986) encourage scholars to examine the *form* religious and political activities took. The



visions, dreams, sermons and teachings in some religious movements directly confront government's policies and position. The ensuing actions of Pentecostals towards the government and its policies are both religious and political. Religion provides the avenue through which followers create and exercise power over other domains of their lives (Jules-Rosette, 1975).

Pentecostalism produces 'autonomous space' in which government and the state can be successfully challenged, critiqued and attacked. Pentecostal churches provide members with an alternative public sphere that often undercuts the established public sphere controlled by the state (Habermas, 1991; Meyer, 2005: 277). In Zimbabwe, the government has maintained a monopoly over the established public sphere through a state-owned broadcaster and newspaper. The increase in Pentecostal movements in Zimbabwe has opened ways for alternative public spheres through establishing of Pentecostal media houses, television and radio channels²²⁶. OMG operates OMGTV from South Africa, freeing itself from excessive control from Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe and the Censorship Board. OMGTV is accessed by Zimbabweans on Free-to-Air decoders²²⁷. OGM has avoided registering its television station in Zimbabwe due to the cumbersome registration procedures and requirements. OMG also has a radio channel accessed through two of OMG mobile applications, again these do not require registration with the state. These media are sites where religio-political communication occurs. Prophet Ben's critique of government policies and officials are aired through these channels, weakening the state monopoly on information dissemination that characterized in the first two decades of independence.

²²⁶ A number of PCC in Zimbabwe have opened Television and radio channels in which they determine the content carried.

²²⁷ Registering for broadcasting services in Zimbabwe is not easy. The Broadcasting Services Act passed in 2001 stipulated stringent conditions for broadcasting media houses to get operating licence.



On 09 April 2017 during a service prophet Ben gave a prophecy on the “poisoning of a loyal subordinate to the leader.” Five months later²²⁸, the then vice-president Emmerson Mnangagwa alleged that he was poisoned. While the state media, Robert Mugabe, Grace Mugabe and Jonathan Moyo²²⁹ dismissed the poisoning claims. Several OMG members whom I interacted with believed that Emmerson Mnangagwa was poisoned because prophet Ben had already prophesied about it. On WhatsApp groups, OMG members shared the video clip of the prophesy and dismissed stories carried by state media. The prophet had hinted that only prayers would save the life of the poisoned person. On OMG WhatsApp groups members encouraged each other to pray for the ‘poisoned’ Mnangagwa. When a prayer session was organized at Freedom Square²³⁰ on 17 August 2017, Nyasha and some of his OMG colleagues attended the prayer session. Furthermore, few days after the alleged poisoning incident, prophet Ben shifted his services to OMG Basilica. The alleged reason for shifting was that there was a plot by G40 members to (ab)use the police (a state institution) to arrest prophet Ben. This is illustrative of how OMG is part of the political processes in Zimbabwe. A few weeks after the military assisted transition, On 05 December 2017 prophet Ben remarked that he had scattered those who plotted his arrest²³¹. When Zimbabweans marched on 18 November 2017 against Mugabe, OMG members encouraged each other to participate because prophet Ben and prophet Mark had already hinted that “the foundation of this nation

²²⁸ On 12 September 2017 while at ZANU PF Youth Interface Rally, it has been reported that the then vice-president Emmerson Mnangagwa vomited, sweated profusely before losing consciousness.

²²⁹ These three were believed to lead a faction within ZANU PF called G40 which was fighting against another faction dubbed Lacoste led by Emmerson Mnangagwa. The alleged poisoning occurred during a time both factions were jostling for power and dominance. The 09 April prophecy had direct links to the on-going factional fights.

²³⁰ A dusty expanse of land on the outskirts of Harare’s CBD. The place was dubbed Freedom Square by MDC supporters after the MDC held its mass rally in 2013. In December 2014 ZANU PF held its annual congress at the same venue and ‘renamed’ the open space Robert Mugabe Square.

²³¹ This somehow place prophet Ben in ZANU PF faction wars. When these remarks were made, some of the G40 members were either dead, incarcerated, missing, exiled, expelled or dismissed.



had been shook²³² and that a new Zimbabwe was imminent before year-end²³³. On 18 November OMG members shared images of themselves and some pastors embracing soldiers that had removed Robert Mugabe from power.

In such ways, prophet Ben and OMG members take an active role when it comes to national politics. During my stay at the Prayer Resort, I had conversation with an OMG member who credited prophet Ben for reviving his interest in politics. The prophet had taught his followers that being a political leader was in line with OMG doctrine. Prophet Ben had encouraged members to join politics so that they can assist in establishing OMG version of society. The congregant told me that the prophet had expressed his willingness to anoint members who had intentions of taking part actively in national politics²³⁴. OMG Pentecostals do not simply pray to achieve desired goals, pragmatism is at the core of OMG approach. In Nigeria, Marshall (1993) notes that Pentecostal movements are arenas for weathering state power through empowering of Pentecostals and establishing autonomous space. Furthermore, Pentecostal movements have a way of exercising symbolic and practical power in response to the state and everyday challenges faced by people. In the following two chapters I will further this argument by illustrating how OMG members engage in politics of identity construction as a way of disassociating themselves from identity makers associated with post-colonial state.

6.2.2 OMG City: A Didactic Vehicle

OMG's interaction with the Zimbabwean state is complex. OMG presents itself as morally better than the state which is characterized by cronyism and corruption. The construction of OMG City carries with it some didactic elements. The city is a way of holding up a mirror to both Mugabe and Mnangagwa's government with the aim

²³² During the Easter Conference

²³³ Prophet Mark shared with the gathering that whilst he was still in Ghana he saw of vision of Zimbabwe hit by an earthquake. In his discernment of the vision, he noted that the old system had been shaken and will go before the general election that were scheduled for 2018. A few weeks before prophet Mark's arrival, Zimbabwe and its neighbours had experienced a mild earth tremor.

²³⁴ During a teaching called the Art and Gift of Receiving



of teaching the government better ways of running public institutions, government departments and the state-system. For these purposes, OMG do not aim to cut itself from wider society and non-members. As I showed in the previous chapter, OMG is two constructing schools in existing suburbs where non-members reside. Furthermore, as I will show later, some of OMG charity work extends to non-OMG members clearly illustrating that OMG does not wish to completely disassociate itself from the wider society but positions itself strategically as a way of exposing the ills in the current government and heralding its alternative vision for society (Taru, 2018). OMG City is a vehicle that will reach out the world and will impart new ways of behaving and organizing live different from relations fostered by current political leadership.

During fieldwork, OMG was in a process of acquiring land to establish OMG City which will herald the differences in character between the government and OMG. OMG City is a way of bearing witness to Zimbabweans what OMG can achieve, and the future prophet Ben envision for his members. OMG members through prophet Ben have organized themselves into a housing cooperative (Ncube, 2016)²³⁵.

²³⁵ The government projects deliver housing services at a slow pace as indicated in chapter two. In its 2013 manifesto ZANU PF promised to construct 300 000 houses by 2018. In 2017 the government had constructed less than 23 000 houses. Interestingly, Heavenly Glory Ministry another popular PCC in Zimbabwe 'partnered' the government in its effort to deliver on this promise. Heavenly Glory Ministry was awarded 90 000 residential stands in Bulawayo to deliver houses under the ZIMASSET. A construction company linked to Heavenly Glory Ministry founder and leader would service he residential stands and build them. Heavenly Glory Ministry initiative fed into and became part of government initiative. On 17 August 2016 the nation broadcaster aired the story on News@8, with Tabetha Kanengoni-Malinga Minister of State in Vice-President's office commending Heavenly Glory Ministry for working with government. *The Herald* of 18 August 2016 state-controlled newspaper also carried the story. When the story was broadcast, Nyasha was quick to note that Heaven Glory Ministry leader was copying OMG housing initiative and using the government to gain mileage. He latter remarked that ZANU PF would ditch the prophet and the project would not take-off. Heavenly Glory initiative faced a setback early September 2016 when Robert Mugabe rebuked the then Minister of Local Government Saviour Kasukuwere for corruptly giving residential land earmarked for ZANU PF youths to Heavenly Glory Ministry. OMG distance its housing initiative and any other initiatives from ZANU PF and state's initiatives, preferring to procure its land



Prophet Ben is the trustee. The cooperative was a result of a series of sermons and prophetic vision of prophet Ben. The housing cooperative is inspired by the tribulations encountered by Nehemiah during the rebuilding of Jerusalem²³⁶. The proposed site of OMG City is close to OMG headquarters. The area is located within the vicinity of Zimbabwe's new administrative capital²³⁷. Though the city is yet to be built, from the meetings I attended and discussions with OMG members I managed to gather that ownership of land and property was individualistic. OMG City is different from most religious communes discussed below where property is owned collectively. Each member pays for his or her residential stand/s. In OMG City, there will be marked hierarchy in terms of the organization and location of residential stands. There are two categories of residential stands. There will be spacious and less spacious residential stands. This reflects the hierarchization found in OMG and its diverse composition. There are house plans for those with smaller stands and for those who will be "*kumaDales*"²³⁸. Those who signed for stands in '*dales*' pay USD 100 per month while others pay USD 50. During the cooperative's Annual General Meeting (AGM), financial report showed that congregants had contributed \$892 000

from individual owners. Heavenly Glory Ministry's leader has sponsored (fe)male national soccer teams. It is my observation that OMG distance itself from the state so that it can deliver its vision outside of the state. Heavenly Glory Ministry 'partner' the state to deliver on its vision. This is not new for Pentecostal movements to partner certain political parties or governments (cf Freston, 2001; Gathogo, 2011).

²³⁶ The full story is found in Book of Nehemiah in the Bible

²³⁷ One congregant told me that the choice of the site was prophetic, the prophet knew that the new administrative capital would be located there. It is noteworthy that currently government offices and state institutions are located near mission and mainline churches. For example, Mkwati building (houses a number of government departments and ministries) is close to Roman Catholic cathedral; The High Court is close to Methodist Building while the Parliament of Zimbabwe rents the building from Anglican church. OMG has already secured its place in Mt Hampden and will be closer to government offices and state institutions. In a sermon given on 14 October 2018 Prophet Ben called the government to move from Harare to Mt Hampden.

²³⁸ In Zimbabwe several affluent residential areas have names that end with '-dale', for example Borrowdale, Avondale, Glendale and Umwinsdale. The term is used to point to residential locations for the wealthy and affluent. Congregants often used the term when I asked for information regarding the scheme they signed for.



as of 01 January 2017. When I inquired eight months later, Nyasha informed me that the cooperative had over \$1, 400 000 in the bank accounts.

As I highlighted in the introduction, I am a member of SDA which views the earth as a 'transitory platform' that we must not invest much in. OMG members are making efforts to build a heaven here on earth. OMG members consider the earth as the place in which Jesus will establish his kingdom, thus invest on it heavily through ownership of land, mines and houses. This is quite different from SDA eschatology and beliefs that 'houses and land will be of no use to saints.'

The emergence of 'competing sovereign(ties)' and 'states of exceptions' in African is a pointer to the shaky foundations in most the post-colonial state (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2008; Lanz & Oosterbaan, 2016) These sovereignties are found on the basis of religion, ethnicity, crime and gangsterism. Some religious movements have and are creating secluded cities for their members. This withdrawal and seclusion from the rest of the world limit religious movements' engagement with society and state. Alsayyad (2011) has called such religious communes 'fundamentalist cities' with clear demarcations between insiders and outsiders. The purposes of retreating into the fundamental cities vary. Some religious movement retreated for the purpose of allowing members to experience what heaven is like by creating 'New Jerusalems' (Fernandez 1979), cities of God and religious gated enclaves (Lanz and Oosterbaan, 2016: 501). Other religious movements withdrew from the rest of the world as a way of self-preservation and insulating members from the contaminating world (Hastings, 1979: 279). The emergent communities are self-governing with the religious leader as the head (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2008: 33; Ukah, 2014).

Religious communes and sovereignties have a long history in the world. In North America, the Hutterites established their communes to escape from the wider American society (Janzen & Stanton, 2010: 35; Evans & Peller, 2016). The Hutterites communes are constituted by Anabaptist members who have insulated themselves through the use of Carinthian-Austrian dialect called Hutterisch. The commune is self-sufficient with its school and service providers. Members engage



in collective activities informed by religious doctrine. The Hutterites have refrained from any civic and political engagements. The Hutterites have remained exclusively an ethnic group of people with European origin. They have resisted assimilation (Evans and Peller, 2016: 52). As migrants and due to long history of mistreatment by government departments in the United States and passage of laws against them, the Hutterites have withdrawn from wider American society. They have formed a 'quasi feudal enclave' organized on the basis of their religion.

In Israel, the Kibbutzim that emerged after 1930 were based on religious affiliation. Kibbutzim are collective settlements organized around the ideology of socialism and halachic Judaism (Sosis & Ruffle, 2003: 4). Collective ownership of property and wealth prevailed in Kibbutzim. Members of the commune received food, shelter, clothes, education and health care service free of charge. These communes are mainly agricultural. In establishing these communes, the aim is to set members apart and to give them a glimpse of a vision of heaven on earth. The leaders often provided the vision and direction the communes take. Residents of the commune have less contact with outside communities, thus reducing engagement and impact on society.

In Africa, religious communes have emerged in a number of countries. In South Africa, Isaac Shembe established the Ekupakameni for his Nazarites Baptist Church (Fernandez, 1978); Charles Wovenu formed the New Tadzewu in Ghana (Fernandez, 1970). In Nigeria Adoboye has established gated 'Redemption City' in Lagos (Maclean, 2017; Ukah, 2014; Lanz and Oosterbaan, 2016: 493). Barret (2006) has also documented religious communities in Nigeria, namely the Aiyetoro which he calls Olawo and the 'Talika' both located in Ilaje (Owusu, 1980: 514). The Olawo was established in 1947 by members of a Cherubim and Seraphim religious movement, an offshoot of the Aladura. It was a closed community controlled by the *oba* who wielded religious and political authority. Communalism was the major organizing principle. Members worked together on tasks selected by the *oba*. Proceeds from economic activities were sent to the central treasury. Food, clothes, and housing were provided for free. Children, women and men lived separately, thereby weakening familial bonds. The Olawo succeeded economically. As a fishing



community, they provided fish for the mainland communities, charging exorbitant prices to outsiders.

From the discussions I had with members and from the annual general meetings, OMG City will be radically differ from the religious communes discussed above. The Hutterites commune in America is composed of migrants who find it difficult to encounter and engage with the state and surrounding communities that are predominantly racial²³⁹. OMG members are Zimbabweans, some of them are government officials and politicians. This provides a leverage when it comes to engaging with surrounding communities and wider society. OMG model does not aim at withdrawing and severing links with wider Zimbabwean society. To some extent, this shows OMG's desire to remain part of post-colonial Zimbabwean state. It aims at continued engagement, as a way of showing non-members and government pieces of heaven on earth²⁴⁰. While there will be schools, hospitals, hotel and a shopping complex at OMG City, there were no plans to force members to withdraw from outside activities.

Furthermore, in most religious communes the shelter provided was similar in structure and quality. In Aiyetoro, residence was organized around sex and age, women shared their section while men had their section. As I noted above, OMG City will not adopt communism as its organizing ideology. Members will pay for their land and even live in houses that reflect their different incomes and social positions. In a sermon prophet Ben encouraged members even to build houses elsewhere other than in OMG City. He declared that it was a way of luring non-members to OMG through provision of houses for lodging. However, prophet Ben categorically dismissed night clubs and beer halls from the OMG city. Beer halls and night clubs are forms of 'dirt' that OMG members must not entertain in their city.

In its formative years, American Pentecostalism was filled with marginalized categories of migrants, slaves, outcasts and farm labour. The marginalized groups

²³⁹ The racial and anti-migration policies of the Trump administration exacerbate the situation

²⁴⁰ The vignette is a confirmation of the role OMG gives itself within the world/ society.



developed less concern for the society they were part of (Wacker, 2001: 199). Pentecostals perceived the American society as organized on human principles which conflicted with divine principles. Stronger association with such a society, state and governments would lead to damnation, some of the marginalized Pentecostals reasoned. Premillennialism diverted the focus of early Pentecostals into 'otherworldly' neglecting concerns for their society. As a way of retreating from the world, some religious movements established religious communities. In the Americas, Peoples Temple Jonestown, the Hutterites, and Oneida communes emerged for the purpose of severing members from the world. In Africa Zionism erected an alternative social and cultural ideology different from that of the colonial state (Comaroff, 2013; Ranger, 1986). The establishment of communes reconfigured citizens' relationship to the state and nation they are part of. In retreating into communes, believers downplay efforts of engaging with the state and wider society. OMG aims for partial disassociation from the state polluted by corruption, cronyism and violence. I now turn to ways in which OMG members negotiate their citizenship and belonging in relation to the state.

6.2.3 Citizenship and Denizen-ship

As I have shown above OMG Pentecostals do not seek to withdraw completely from wider society. Their aim is to engage and transform Zimbabwe in line with the prophetic vision of prophet Ben. The vision of prophet Ben at times contradicts that of the ZANU PF led government, bringing clashes between the two. As I have argued, the success of OMG depends of the fragile nature of the Zimbabwean state and OMG ability to appropriate elements of chieftaincy. OMG rides on a structure similar to that of the state, government and chiefs. This situation often brings forth instances of conflict and cooperation between OMG believers and the government. OMG were necessary seeks government approvals, simultaneously often embarking on projects that expose and undermine the credibility and efficiency of the very government in the eyes of OMG members and other citizens.

To some extent, OMG members' political opinions and perceptions are influenced by prophet Ben through sermons, teachings and passing remarks made from the podium. The alleged poisoning of Emmerson Mnangagwa discussed above is one



case in point, were OMG Pentecostals followed prophet Ben's word while discrediting that of the former president Robert Mugabe. Most OMG members believed that the Mugabe led government was a hurdle for prophet Ben in his bid to create his envisioned society in Zimbabwe. A number of congregants played or referred me to a DVD titled *Zacchaeus Spirit*. During an emotive sermon Prophet Ben cried and it induced resentment for the government in his followers. Prophet Ben lamented that the government of Zimbabwe through its departments and ministries is irresponsible, uncaring and driven by greedy and selfishness. He gave a number of examples to build his argument against the Mugabe led government. Prophetess Jane sourced bales of second-hand clothes for the poor and children living on the street. Custom and Excise officers saw that the consignment was in prophetess Jane's name and demanded duty despite the consignment being meant for charity. Prophet Ben narrated also how certain politicians from the ruling party turned him away after he had brought food to people in their constituencies. Prophet Ben noted that the elderly and poor had to go back empty handed due to the politicians' sense of insecurity. Prophet Ben blamed Mugabe's government for being anti-religious movements. Rhetorically, he questioned if the government honestly cared for its people? Who benefits when religious movements help citizens?

In November 2017 when Emmerson Mnangagwa took the political reigns from Robert Mugabe, implicitly, the congratulatory message from prophet Ben hinted on his desire for the new president to steer the country towards God's vision. Part of the message read

MAY THE LORD LEAD YOUR EVERY MOVE AS YOU STEER THIS GREAT NATION TO
ITS INTENDED GLORY.

Most respondents told me that prophet Ben knew where Zimbabwe must be and what it would become.

The comments and remarks made by Prophet Ben are important in building political consciousness and engagement among his followers. For some OMG members, their perceptions of the post-colonial state and the political leadership heavily rely on Prophet Ben's statement. A few days into my fieldwork, the passage of Statutory Instrument 2016-064 - Control of Goods (Open General Import Licence) (No 2)



(Amendment) Notice 2016 (No 8)²⁴¹ incensed Prophet Ben. His commentary of the situation in June 2016 was confrontational, exposing the inhuman nature of the Zimbabwean government. Prophet Ben noted that:

Zimbabweans are not asking for teargas. They are asking for bread. Even Jesus said there is no father who can give his children stones when they ask for bread... The children are bitter and there are certain things we cannot afford to ignore. When I heard of the import ban, I said it must be a joke. I could not imagine learned people sitting down and resolving to ban imports... When you meet and conclude your meetings, know that this is a joke. Remove this joke!

SI 64 of 2016 was passed when local industries were dysfunctional, and most retailers and ordinary Zimbabweans depended on importations from South Africa, Zambia and Botswana. Prophet Ben declared that imports were the life-line for most Zimbabweans and SI 64 would stifle Zimbabweans. After the sermon, as we walked to the bus termini in the CBD, we discussed the issue and most of congregants concurred with Prophet Ben. Some even noted that the government was inhumane and in need of transformation and proper guidance. When SI64-related-riots and upheavals occurred in early July at the border town of Beitbridge, most OMG Pentecostals sympathised with the rioters. After prophet Ben warned the government of possible riots due to unpopular SI 64, the then minister of Home Affairs scorned the prophet (Ncube and Mhlanga, 2016)²⁴². Such responses from government officials angered some of the OMG members. I later learnt that one of my interlocutors Nicky was also fighting this 'satanic law' by smuggling most of the hardware products sold at his shop. What baffled me is that his business paid other

²⁴¹ Popularly known as SI 64 in Zimbabwe. SI64 of June 2016 banned importation of most if not all essential food commodities and building equipment.

²⁴² In a statement former Minister of Home Affairs Ignatius Chombo said "We do not run a country on prophecies, we run a country on policies that we have, so any person, who really breaks the law, whether a prophet or whatever the individual is, they will be dealt with smoothly, properly and procedurally by the law. We have the police, who have the proper training and capacity to deal with that person...So, if a prophet comes up with a prophecy, that is for the church members to interpret its meaning there. We have the police put there to deal with trouble causers..." Interestingly on 25 November 2017 when Chombo was charged with abuse of office, corruption and fraud, OMG members perceived the charge as God's revenge on the minister who had attacked the prophet. They questioned why he was the only minister charged when government is full of corrupt and incompetent minister (WhatsApp group).



taxes, but he avoided customs duty. His explanation was that payment of tax was encouraged by Jesus and even prophet Ben. Tax is an acknowledgement of the state, but the excise duty stipulated in SI 64 was a 'joke' and hence he had no obligation to pay it. In this instance, Nicky evaded payment of custom duty as way of targeting a representative of the state in his everyday life.

As I have shown above, political commentary and the resentment towards the government among OMG Pentecostals are not just atmospheric. Journalists and independent press have always constructed politically charged narratives and press headlines that undermine the post-colonial state from the teachings of Prophet Ben. Headlines such as "*Miracle money not for government thieves*"²⁴³ and *Prophet Ben "warns politicians"*²⁴⁴ point to the underlying political narratives in his sermons. As I have shown in the previous chapter, the prophet and his followers construct an image of themselves as better than the irresponsible and ill-disciplined government. OMG provides itself as a model of a better institution.

In April of 2017, during an Easter Conference, Prophet Mark who was the guest of honour gave a prophecy and a teaching that touched on structural issues that the Zimbabwean government must address. He told us that he had been warned at Harare International Airport that he must not give prophecies concerning the nation of Zimbabwe, and thus he told us that he would use euphemism. He then narrated a vision in which he saw Zimbabwe experiencing an earthquake. He confided in us that the foundations of the Mugabe regime will be shaken, and a new dispensation will come. He prayed for politicians in OMG to be part of the dispensation²⁴⁵. Prophet Mark noted that after more than three decades, most leaders in African states still blame colonialism for the underdevelopment in their countries. Mugabe is one of the

²⁴³ www.relzim.org.new (accessed 09 February 2018)

²⁴⁴ Daily News of 02 January 2015

²⁴⁵ Later in November when the army 'captured' Mugabe, most OMG members linked the event to the prophecy. There were a number of prophecies given by Prophet Ben on Zimbabwe and the upcoming election. During the month of November OMG Pentecostal shared and discussed about them and the way forward. During the protest march against Mugabe, most OMG members participated and share their images on WhatsApp groups.



most vocal African statesmen who blames the 'west', sanctions and colonialism for lack of development in Zimbabwe. Prophet Mark noted that most of African states had diverse and thriving economies that were destroyed by post-colonial governments. He dug into post-colonial leaders who had elaborate motorcades with ambulances and armoured vehicles but who go and beg from Obama who moves in a modest motorcade²⁴⁶. He advised that Africa must reorient its economies towards value addition and beneficiation. He asked why is that the west side of Africa is shaped like a question mark (?) with Madagascar as the dot. His solution was in grooming God-fearing politicians who would get into government and align national vision to the prophetic visions. He prayed for OMG Pentecostals who were career politicians or had passion to join politics and government. In this instance, there is a matching of pragmatic actions and spiritual issues. The prayers were intended to protect OMG members in politics and to guarantee their success. Issues were not spiritualized as some Ghanaian Pentecostals do (Gifford, 1998; 2004). This ethnographic detail points to the complex and contradictory relationship between OMG and the state. Prophet Mark was self-censoring but at the same time critiquing the very government using euphemism and symbolism. State agents had warned Prophet Mark against delving into local politics. Prophet Mark disregarded the warning, told congregants about the warning and threat before launching a veiled attack on the government.

OMG members recognize the existence of government of the day and engage it through payment of taxes, being law abiding citizens and voting. Despite this, most OMG members believed the Mugabe led government was 'cursed' as it ignores and disregards the voice of the prophets. They consider themselves denizens of OMG spiritual community. OMG Prayer Resort and the Basilica are havens and symbols of their identities and territories. Unlike the early American Pentecostals who withdraw and disengaged with the government, OMG members wish to transform the government and align it to the vision of the prophet. One way of achieving this involves having government officials and politicians among its membership.

²⁴⁶ He remarked that he and Prophet Ben saw President Barrack Obama's motorcade when they were in the USA shopping.



Imparted with the vision of the prophet, these officials may change the way the government operates by drifting it towards the prophetic vision²⁴⁷.

OMG members identify themselves primarily on the basis of their religious affiliation. The forms of adornment among OMG members brings their Pentecostal identity first and foremost before their national identity. OMG members wear wrist-bands, t-shirts, shirts, doek, berets and hats bearing the OMG logo, colours and images of the prophet and prophetess. OMG produces paraphernalia for its members, and these aid in identity construction. The paraphernalia ranges from blankets, car seat covers, note books, pens, key holders, stickers, calendars and,—blankets to handkerchiefs and oils. Furthermore, OMG members identify themselves as *vana vababa*²⁴⁸ and *vana vemuporofita*. OMG Pentecostals identify and construct their identity around OMG and not around the state. They perceive Zimbabwe as ‘cursed’, polluted and requiring transformation before they can proudly identify with it. I have heard OMG congregants shunning national ceremonies and events. In August of 2017, when I asked some families what they had planned for the Heroes Day celebrations, I got responds that such as:

ngavarove makuva avo muna August isu hatiko ikoko ²⁴⁹.

Some OMG members are distancing themselves from national events and ceremonies.

From the discussion above, it is clear that OMG members partially disassociate themselves from the current Zimbabwean state and find identity markers within their religious movement. It is important to note that the strategies and identity markers

²⁴⁷ Congregants told me that when Walter Muzembi was named as the best Tourism Minister in Africa (2016) by Africa Travel Awards; and named by Mugabe as one of the best performing ministers in 2014, he was a member of OMG then. During my fieldwork they believed that he would with the Secretary-General post for UNWTO.

²⁴⁸ Prophet’s Sons and daughters

²⁴⁹ Let them engage in heathen mortuary ritual, we (OMG Pentecostals) do not participate in such rituals. The cynicism in this statement is that most Zimbabweans organize rituals for ‘bringing back the spirit of a dead person’ in August. Heroes Day commemoration is portrayed as one such ritual.



used by OMG Pentecostals are similar to those of ZANU PF: party regalia and paraphernalia as well as language of comradeship common among ZANU PF members (*mwana wevhu*)²⁵⁰ (Basure, 2014). Furthermore, a bulk of OMG members I interviewed were not aware of the words in the national pledge. The national pledge was forced on schools by the Ministry of Education after 2013. Despite owning and running a private college, Nyasha could not recite the pledge, the college administration did not enforce the national pledge reciting. Nyasha criticised the national pledge as a distortion of history and elevation of men before God²⁵¹. He believed that the OMG declaration and pledge was more important than the national pledge. Nyasha pulled out the national pledge from the drawer of his desk²⁵² and wrote the OMG pledge in my diary and asked me to read the two and judge which one was more practical and meaningful. This is clear that he resented the Zimbabwe state-system and its leadership. The partial disassociation of OMG is evident on some aspects but remain hinged on some aspects of the state and chieftaincy as it builds its alternative. The picture frames hanging against the wall of Mai Chipu's office convey this. There is an assortment of pictures showing Prophet Ben,

²⁵⁰ Sons and daughters of the soil. The language of comradeship is similar, as noted above, OMG members refer to themselves as *vana vababa* or *muporofita*. Prophet's sons and daughters.

²⁵¹ Zimbabweans and even religious denominations criticized the national pledge when it was introduced. Most Zimbabweans past the school going age are not familiar with the pledge and do not even bother to learn it. It is not only OMG members who resent the pledge but the general population. Nyasha had issues with the emphasis placed on *Chimurenga/Umvukela* and those who participate.

The National Pledge: *Almighty God, in whose hands our future lie, I salute the national flag. United in our diversity by our common desire for freedom, justice and equality. Respecting the brave fathers and mothers who lost lives in the in the Chimurenga/Umvukela and national liberation struggles We are proud inheritors of our national resources We are proud creators of and participants in our vibrant traditions and cultures We commit honesty and dignity of hard work.*

The OMG pledge: *The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the communion of the Holy Ghost and the love of God is with us all. Surely surely surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life...and Jesus said behold I give you power!*

²⁵² The pledge was not displayed, he pulled it from his desk



Prophetess Jane, tithe receipts, business registration certificates, and tax invoices. The picture shows that OMG members strategically (dis)engage with the state as and when necessary. The pictures depict the contours of the complex relations between OMG and the state.

6.3 Defensive Alternative: Intersections and interactions with the state

Religion is about world-making (Meyer, 2003; Robbins, 2004a) and worlding (Ong, 2011:11). Religious movements develop idealized versions of society they wish to create on earth. Lambek (2015) following Geertz (1993) discusses individual's awareness of the world, arguing that religion presents two types of worlds to believers. A *model for living* that portrays an idealized idea of the world - the world as it should be. OMG Pentecostal charismatics have a *model for living* which forms the idealized version of society which members attempt to create or at least connect to. The model is based on preaching and teachings given by Prophet Ben. On the other hand, a *model of the world* represents the lived realities (how the world actually is). Rituals involving money and consumption become important in aiding our understanding of ways in which *models for living* and *models of the world* relate to each other for OMG congregants. Rituals make the *models for living* and the *models of the world* "seem realistic and reasonable" (Lambek, 2015: 10).

Alsayyad and Roy (2006: 491) argue that religion is one of the vehicles used in worlding in response to government inadequacies. To achieve this, OMG engages in a number of initiatives to sway the wider Zimbabwean society towards its version and vision of society. The concept of 'worlding' helps us to understand ways in which Pentecostals insert themselves into the world and how they in turn shape the same world. For Ong (2011: 11) worlding involves "projects and practices that instantiate some vision of the world in formation." The worlding projects at times leads to the emergence of alternative social visions and version of society, markedly different from the one envisioned by the government. In such cases, relations of power and politics of belonging are reconfigured. In Nigeria, the Pentecostal movement that Ruth Marshall focuses on provides alternative institutionalized social services that the state failed to provide for citizens (Marshall, 1993) or creates cities with little control from the state (Ukah, 2014). By establishing nurseries, schools, clinics, some



Pentecostal movements reduce the presence of the state in the lives of members. Pentecostal movements capitalize on the weaknesses of the state to develop and sell their vision of society to members. As the vignette shows, the onus is upon the OMG as the 'light', 'salt', and beacon 'city' to offer an alternative to the greedy, corrupt, unscrupulous and partially dysfunctional government that runs state institutions.

6.3.1 The politics of state welfarism and OMG charity work

OMG runs charity activities assisting vulnerable people across Zimbabwe. OMG charity work has increased during periods the state and chief's welfare systems are on the decline. OMG charity activities are reminiscent of the social welfare system of the 1980s developmental state. The developmental state of 1980s put in place mechanism for assisting most Zimbabweans, especially those who had been neglected by the racist colonial administrations. 'Education for All' and 'Health for All' were instrumental in extending services to indigenous blacks—regardless of socio-economic standing. The government had an elaborate social welfare system coordinated by the Department of Social Welfare under the Ministry of Public Services, Labour and Social Welfare (Kaseke et al., 1998: 21–22). The developmental state of the 1980 improved the lives of most Zimbabweans. The political and economic crises that bedevilled the state in the 1990 negatively affected the gains that had been made in the previous decade. In the late 1990s, Mugabe's government abandoned the pretence of running a developmental state. The ZANU PF government turned to corruption and crony capitalism that destroyed the effective social welfare system of previous decades. Some older OMG Pentecostals narrated that OMG charity activities in nostalgic terms, making reference to earlier day of post-independence government that took good care of vulnerable people. OMG was re-igniting such memories in its elder members.

On the other hand, OMG is rearticulating some aspects of chieftainship. Chiefs practiced *zunde ramambo*, in which subjects produced food in the chief's field²⁵³.

²⁵³ *Zunde ramambo* refers to a pre-colonial 'customary' institution in which people worked communally in particular fields on behalf of chiefs and headmen. The produce from these fields



The food would be distributed to the needy in times of drought (Fontein, 2009; Vambe, 2011: 92). *Zunde ramambo* was a redistributive and welfare mechanism that was coordinated by the chiefs and headmen in some parts of Zimbabwe. The declining role of chiefs amid claims that chiefs have become partisan, rural to urban migration and incessant droughts have negatively affected the operations of *zunde ramambo*. Despite its decline, Prophet Ben is creating a redistributive system similar to that of *zunde ramambo*. In donating to vulnerable members of OMG, and others in society, I see a recreation of *zunde ramambo*, informed by Pentecostal principles. Prophet Ben receives donations that he later channels to the needy, replicating the chiefly role under *zunde ramambo*.

I situate the charity activities of OMG to various less-privileged categories in society within the theoretical framework of Mauss' gift exchange, which I introduced in the previous chapter. Charity activities structure the relationship between OMG and wider society. The church donates heavily to the less-privileged amongst its members and also in society. OMG has donated to orphanages, children's home, prisons, children living in the street, the elderly and widows. OMG has embarked on a number of projects such as construction of schools, drilling of boreholes, eye cataract operations. In a sense, there is an exchange of gifts between the church and the wider society that OMG seeks to shape along its model.

In the previous chapter I discussed gift exchange between individuals with intimate social relations. Furthermore, the parties involved were motivated to give with the intention of receiving a counter-gift. Reciprocity marked the exchange discussed in the previous chapter. It replicates the Maussian model. The types of exchange I discuss in this chapter however do not fit quite so easily into the Maussian model as presented previously in this thesis.

would be set aside to help widows, the aged, orphans and others unable to grow their own food (Fontein, 2009: 27).



OMG charity activities are directed towards the vulnerable, the less privileged and those in distressing situations. They are not in a position to return the gift. Such exchange is one directional, from OMG to the beneficiaries. Gifting without reciprocity is not peculiar to this study only. Ethnographies from India have documented instances of exchange in which the expectation of a counter-giver does not motivate the act of gifting. Indian priests received gifts polluted with the givers' sins, often pilgrims and mourners. Such 'cleansing gifts' are never returned (Parry, 1986). Bornstein's (2012: 12) discussion of *dan* as a form of exchange that "release the giver of social obligation and eventually frees the giver of the constraints of the material world." in such situations, the Maussan model is less applicable.

OMG charity activities are directed towards orphans, prisoners, widows and the elderly. Some of these beneficiaries especially those who are not members of OMG are anonymous making reciprocity almost impossible. The economic and social standing of the beneficiaries stifles reciprocity in material sense. Graeber, (2001) notes that in giving to a beggar we do not expect to receive anything back. The more we encounter the beggar, the more we give and consolidate our higher standing and status to the recipient. Charity activities are meant to reinforce the status and higher standing of OMG as the giver. Giving is a way in which the beneficiaries are drawn into the gift-givers' display of status (Friedman, 1994b: 8). For OMG members, the counter-gift is expected from God and not from the immediate recipient of their charity. By bringing in God into the matrix, a direct exchange that Mauss discusses is upset. God is the third actor who returns 'on behalf' of the recipients. OMG Pentecostals expect salvation and other counter-gifts for their efforts in helping build the 'idealize version of Godly society. OMG charity activities both exposes and critiques the government's failure to look after the vulnerable in society.

Charity activities are meaningful as they constitute a strategy for engaging with wider society, attempt to fashion the society in line with OMG vision and offers alternative ways of achieving well-being outside of the state. I frame the charity activities within the broader discourse of systems of exchange. I will also show how giving is a way of extending trust in Prophet Ben, at a time the state is distrusted,



hated and polluted spiritually. Unlike the mimicry of neoliberal market that the Comaroffs (2009: 24) discuss, OMG mimics the state and “promise to unlock unprecedented sources of value and productivity by tapping the direct operation of God in the world.” What I discuss below are charity activities that were mentioned by OMG members. These charity activities are deeply etched in the memories of OMG members. Most of the members had a rough idea of years and months these donations were made. They derive pride from being donors and helps in times the state, chiefs and headmen are unwilling or incapacitated.

6.3.2 Evangelizing through Education

The Zimbabwean education system has been adversely affected by the economic and political turmoil. The gains made in the early 1980s in education sector were reversed significantly (Kawewe & Dibie, 2000; Zvobgo, 2003). Government-funded education institutions were well-resourced and the education system produced competent students. From the end of 1990s, the education system that had delivered over 90% literacy rate, was compromised. The post-independence government reduced funding to government teaching and learning institutions, teachers and instructors were not well paid resulting in a number of qualified and experienced teachers leaving for other countries. Furthermore, in 2000 the government revoked Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council’s (ZIMSEC) affiliation to Cambridge International Examination syndicate²⁵⁴. ZIMSEC has lost credibility since year 2000 (Kanyenze et al., 2011: 308). ZIMSEC has been dogged by examination leaking scandals and inefficiencies in marking, grading and publication of results.

Other stakeholders have chipped in to assist and maintain the previous gains. UNICEF provided reading material during the Government of National Unity era²⁵⁵. OMG has also heavily invested in education through construction and rehabilitation of schools. In February 2017, OMG raised money through donations from its

²⁵⁴ Section 63 of the Education Act gave the government to determine the curricular and examination systems for all school in Zimbabwe

²⁵⁵ 2009-2013



members to construct two schools in residential areas. The schools are located in residential areas and are meant to serve the communities in which they are located. During the ground-breaking ceremony of one of the schools the ministry of education, local leadership²⁵⁶ and the OMG were represented²⁵⁷. The school's name is a combination of Prophet Jane name and the *-Dale*, Janedale Secondary School. The school sit on 8.5 hectares of land acquired from the council. The land was earmarked for a school but both national and local authorities failed to construct the school. OMG education programme recognizes the laws and policies in the education sector and abide by them. The invitation of the representatives from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education attest to this.

The school is located in an area without a secondary school. Students walked long distances, crossed a major high way to get to the nearby secondary school. OMG has made it clear that the school belongs to OMG by naming it after Prophetess Jane. During the ground-breaking ceremony it was expressed that the aim for constructing the school is "part of our mission to Build A God Society For All People And All Nations." OMG members bragged about the 'state of the art school' that will act as a model for 'what modern schools look like.' During the donation week, congregants saw it as a noble cause of reaching out to the communities and non-believers. I was told by one OMG adherent that the community will see that OMG is more organized than the post-independence government which failed to construct a school for the community in the past four decades.

OMG has widened its reach to communities through the rehabilitation of existing government schools, financial support, "supplying books, helping with electrification, and putting up boreholes"²⁵⁸. Such projects are well publicized through the newspapers and OMG literature. During OMG gatherings progress and feedback on these charity activities are announced to the attendees. Wild cheers and screams follow. The announcements are a way of informing OMG members how the money

²⁵⁶ Councillor ward 10

²⁵⁷ 14 June 2017

²⁵⁸ Pastor Danny, 14 June 2017



they donate is used. It is a form of accountability that convinces the members to donate more towards the projects. OMG also offers scholarships and grants to orphaned and disadvantaged students. Through a project called 'send a child to school' OMG members partner the prophetess in raising funds that given out as scholarship to beneficiaries. OMG support students in different levels of education. Watching OMGTV, it is common to come across advertisements showcasing the beneficiaries of OMG scholarship. I once saw an advertisement that showcased students who had studied life sciences, engineering²⁵⁹ and financial field narrating and appreciating the assistance they got from OMG. These testimonies encouraged OMG to give more to the ministry as they often associate the money with improving the lives of the less fortunate. As I showed in the last chapter, OMG members derive fulfilment and satisfaction from giving and 'transforming society'. In funding projects such as this, congregants view themselves as having the power to change and influence the community they are part of.

Most importantly, I view this project as one of the ways the movement engages and attempts to create a world in line with Prophet Ben's vision. In return, compliments, social approval from communities and social visibility of OMG increases. OMG is proselytising and recruiting congregants through the education programme. The national education system has been compromised by lack of funding, greedy and corruption that have led to less credible public examinations. The government is at the centre of the collapse of the education system through its policies and directives. The transition from Robert Mugabe to Emmerson Mnangagwa's rule is yet to produce any meaningful efforts to improve the education sector. OMG has identified the space created by government's failure and moved in to fill the gap left within the education sector. The whole system mirrors that of *zunde ramambo* where donated funds first centralized and then distributed to others. This places prophet Ben at the centre of system.

²⁵⁹ From 2013 the Zimbabwean government has been promoting Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The bulk of OMG grants and scholarships that were aired on OMGTV fall under STEM.



6.3.3 Proselytising through health

In pursuit of a health OMG embark on a number of initiatives. OMG provides health-care services for members and the general populace. Apart from restoring health through spiritual healing and deliverances, OMG engage in a number of health related initiatives. During a Men's Clinic, prophet Ben encouraged males to visit health care facilities for regular medical check-ups. Prophet Ben remarked that he had a blood pressure checking machine at home which he relied on to check on his blood pressure. During Men's Clinic the director of the Health Department attended to health concerns raised by followers. As I indicated in chapter four, the director of OMG Health Department is a medical doctor. The information shared was useful. Most male congregants had their health issues dealt with for free. This cushioned male congregants as health services are quite exorbitant in Zimbabwe²⁶⁰.

I came to know of an OMG related pharmacy through Nyasha. When I developed a sinus, Nyasha took me to a pharmacy in the CBD. Nyasha was sure that the pharmacy was linked to OMG because it had an entry in OMG Business Directory. Its name and colours of the logo reflected the links. The pharmacy was either owned by OMG or by an OMG member. Nyasha told me that since knowing about it, he buys all his medical supplies from the pharmacy. OMG encouraged its members to seek medical assistance when necessary. Despite this encouragement, some members noted that even if the government fails to purchase medication for its hospitals the spiritual coverage of the prophet protects them. The role played by government hospitals is partly replaced by the spiritual coverage of the prophet.

Apart from these activities, OMG has directly assisted government health facilities. One congregant noted that OMG responded when a government hospital appealed to well-wishers for assistance. OMG chipped in at a time when the government could not assist. From the congregant's narrative I picked that the prophet was an alternative to the government, a better one. In her words she said:

the hospital was in a crisis, there were no beds, blankets, pillows, food and other basic things, I went there sometime and I could see that the hospital was struggling... the

²⁶⁰ Consultation fee ranges from USD20 to USD 35 during the period



patients were in threadbare blankets, the food horrible. As a hospital located in the same area as our Basilica, the hospital approached the church and prophet assisted by providing most of the what they were lacking. The government and even the Member of Parliament were ignoring the appeals from the hospitals. I went to the hand-over event, I saw new blankets, beds, pillows and other things... where would they run to when the government cannot even pay nurse and doctors? The church is the place of refuge for the burdened people...

OMG health and education activities ride on the infrastructure provided by the government but which the latter cannot maintain, manage and run efficiently. By assisting, OMG juxtaposes itself as an alternative, a better one from the state. The portrayal of OMG as a better alternative, well-financed and concerned with the plight of the sick and the poor is in direct contrast to the government polluted by years of corruption, greed, violence and human rights abuse. By engaging in these activities, OMG places itself on a higher moral position than the government.

In January 2016 a Member of Parliament for Buhera South constituency approached OMG begging for money to complete the construction of a clinic in his rural constituency. OMG assisted the Member of Parliament. When a Member of Parliament approach OMG and not government, in the eyes of OMG members and the beneficiaries of the gift, OMG is a better institution than the government. I have followed threads of comments on press articles covering these stories and some non-OMG members applaud the prophet for his compassion (Mabehla, 2016)²⁶¹. OMG also organizes mobile clinics and surgical programmes for people in rural areas. These operations are meant to assist patients in rural areas who lack access to health facilities resources and specialists such as opticians and dentists. OMG organized a team of opticians who operated over 400 elderly people with eye cataract problems.

OMG has targeted clean water provision as one way of addressing health issues in Zimbabwe. In the last decade, water –borne diseases such as cholera, typhoid and dysentery have been recurring in Zimbabwe. The water provided by local authority

²⁶¹ The comments on this website resonates well with the opinions expressed by OMG members who believe even the government borrows and begs from OMG and its members.



in Harare is contaminated. Some areas in Chitungwiza and Mabvuku have no access to clean water. OMG has drilled boreholes to alleviate the plight of residents. Communities located close to OMG Basilica, have access to borehole water at OMG Basilica. The areas close to OMG Basilica have erratic water provision. Residents depend on shallow well and streams. OMG has opened a way through its perimeter durawall for residents to access borehole water. The gift of water to the nearby community is a way of evangelizing and showing the urbanites what God of the prophet can offer. Prophet Ben constructed a six-roomed house for chief in his home area. It was after a realization that the government had neglected the chief. Prophet Ben took it upon himself to finance the construction of a house for the chief. The decent housing was a way of improving the living conditions of the chief.

These initiatives target the general populace, ravaged by poverty, savings eroded by inflation and lost during the adoption of multi-currency system and paltry pension. OMG members often talked about medical programmes as a way of showing the nature and character of God they worship. Theirs is a God who wants healthy people, show compassion for the elderly, weak and poor. In one of the televised eye cataract removal programme, the beneficiaries were happy, relieved and unreservedly thanked the prophet, his God and OMG. I saw an elderly man joyful after regaining his sight. Charity activities by OMG constitute actions through which the OMG constructs itself in a way that exposes the failure of the current government in charge of state institutions. Assistance and social welfare is accessed through religious movements in times the state neglects or is unwilling to provide (Marshall, 1993). Such actions of giving via these projects and initiatives are ways of portraying OMG and prophet(ess) as caring. The giving must also be read as meaningful action aimed at creating or bringing about the OMG idealized version of society in which illness is reduced through various ways at the movement's disposal.

6.3.4 The politics associated with Orphans and Vulnerable Children

Compassionate Hand is the charity organ of OMG. The activities of Compassionate Hand were aimed at creating a *model of living* that OMG envisioned. One way of achieving OMG *model of living* is through assisting Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC). OMG donates generously to children's home. Prophet Ben and



prophetess Jane celebrate their birthdays with children living on the street and in orphanages. In 2016 Prophet Ben celebrated his birthday at a 4 star hotel. He fed, dressed and prayed for the children. Women from the OMG Ushering Department served and assisted in distributing hampers and clothes to the children. A few days²⁶² after the birthday party celebration I saw several children living on the street in red, orange and purple t-shirts with the OMG logo. At one time I asked one of my interlocutors if these children in OMG t-shirts did not spoil the prophet(ess') brand²⁶³. She responded that the opposite was correct. In her words:

it shows the world that the weak and the neglected find refuge in the prophets, it is a way of extending God's love to them... its unlike others who call students to a party full of security guys and the police

In assisting OVC OMG presented itself to the general public as one of the few entities concerned with the plight of OVC. As the children living in the street roamed across the city, most people could notice the bright orange and red t-shirts written in purple 'Love' or 'Life'. Assisting OVC was one way of parading to the 'world' the ability of OMG to care even for the weak and neglected. While Bornstein (2003) argues that faith-based NGO humanitarian discourse shares a lot with the free market ideologies when it comes to the construction of the individual in relation to the divine and market economy. Free choice and the notion of a 'suffering stranger' undergird both discourses (Butt, 2002: 3). Images from and narratives of parties organized by Prophet Ben and Prophetess Jane for OVC convey intimacy, love and caring relations with a 'suffering brother.' I have come across images of prophet(ess) serving food, conversing with OVC and praying and counselling them. The OVC are brought closer and the notion of 'suffering stranger' is replaced by 'suffering brother.' The 'love' portrayed differentiate OMG donations from those by NGOs and the state. Love and caring, as portrayed on the pictures and images in press, undergird giving that is informed by what Bornstein (2012: 22 and chapter 5) calls 'relational empathy.' Effort is made to learn and cater for OVC's needs, 'turning strangers into kin.' NGO and the state fail to develop such relational empathy with vulnerable groups benefiting from welfare system and humanitarian work.

²⁶² The celebrations were done a few days before the actual date. Prophet Ben wanted to leave for December holiday.

²⁶³ See footnote 91



The concepts of benevolent humanitarian and state welfare popularised by neo-liberal discourse portray assistance as an entitlement or a right. From narratives I got from OMG members, the donations and assistance they gave to the OVC was a gift to ‘suffering brothers’ (Bornstein, 2012). Donations given to OVC, especially those living in the street donning OMG t-shirts must not be read as a neutral acts. Why would OMG target OVC living in the street? Why feed them and clothe them in OMG colours but leave them on the streets? Since the early 2000s, OVC have been turned into “objects of intervention” (Cheney, 2017: 26–35). UNICEF (2006) warned of a looming ‘orphan crisis’ due to HIV and AIDS that decimated people in Sub-Saharan Africa. Orphan-hood assumed new meaning associated with vulnerability. Orphans were targeted as “sites of benevolent intervention” by the civil society and the state (Ferguson & Freidus, 2007). Assisting OVC is considered politically correct. This may partly explain reasons behind OMG’s support for OVC, especially those living in the street. OMG benefits from being seen as assisting the OVC.

Furthermore, it pleases the members that the money they donate to the movement is channelled towards the weak and the vulnerable. To the general public in Harare, sight of children living in the streets in OMG colours communicates a lot about the religious movement. The government has failed to take care of the OVC through the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare. My interlocutor’s allusion to ‘others’ who invite students to birthday parties manned by heavy security was a direct attack on former president Robert Mugabe. During his tenure, every February Robert Mugabe organized a children’s party in which he hosted students. When I was in primary school I attended the birthday parties in 1997 and 1998. I understood what he meant. The security procedures were hectic, going through a body scanner, restricted movement and police presence in the venue. I vividly remember the 1998 party, Mugabe sat on the stage away from us. He waved as he entered the venue. Mugabe physically separated himself from the children he invited for the celebrations. The images of Prophet Ben and Prophetess Jane that emerged in newspapers showed them sitting, serving, interacting, feeding and playing with the OVC painted a different image from that of the former president. I failed to attend the birthday party for Prophet Ben due to tight security that screened those whom



they suspected were not OVC. Security concerns and heavy screening is a common feature at these birthday parties. I managed to get information about the celebration from female congregants who were members of Ushering Department.

6.3.5 The elderly, the widowed and the incarcerated

OMG has also made itself visible and appealing to many people through its support of the elderly and widowed. Through Compassionate Hand, OMG supports more than five hundred widows and elderly people across Zimbabwe. These beneficiaries receive money and groceries from OMG. I interviewed four beneficiaries who were also members of OMG. The widows did not disclose the amount of money they received but noted it was sufficient to cover their rental, food and other requirements. One widow told me that she joined OMG after she had benefitted from the programme. The widows often sat in their corner during services. Considering that the prevailing economic collapse has reduced opportunities for employment, eroded earnings and pensions, most of the beneficiaries spoke positively about OMG. They received the money in cash and timeously. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, cash is in shortage and the government pays public servants late. Pensioners are the last to be paid, often receiving their money way into the month. OMG actions are a critique to the government. OMG ability to timeously disburse funds to widows can be contrasted to the way the current Zimbabwean government treats pensioners and social welfare beneficiaries. OMG seems to be better and more efficient.

Apart from supporting widows, OMG has ventured into supporting Prisons and Correctional Services department. OMG has donated food and other necessities to prisoners. OMG drilled boreholes at Chikurubi Maximum Prison to avert water shortages at the facilities. OMG attention on prisons was well-timed at a time the government was incapacitated to provide for the prisoners. As highlighted in chapter three, Zimbabwe prisons are in a horrible state (Alexander, 2009). Through provision of basic necessities, clean water and food, OMG appeal to the section of society that is neglected by families and the state. During the donations, the OMG delegation used the time to share with the prisoners the gospel. A number of prisoners were converted. In donating to prison the aim is to share with convicts *Life*



as it should be live in *OMG model of living*. In Zimbabwe, prisoners are perceived as outcasts and strangers but taking time to pray for their personal and spiritual needs constructs an image of brotherhood under the fatherhood of God.

In September 2017 Prophetess Jane celebrated her birthday with female prisoners. She donated food, clothes and sanitary pads for female prisoners and their babies. I learnt about it through pictures posted on Prophet Danny's Twitter handle and through OMG WhatsApp groups. In giving to the prisoners, elderly and widows, OMG does not expect a counter-gift from the recipients. It is a way of showing and extending *Life* and *Love* to wider society. The gift is a way of pulling non-OMG members to OMG's idealized version of society. Some of the beneficiaries have converted after receiving the gifts. Beneficiaries offer themselves as counter-gifts. The case of a widow who converted after receiving stipend from OMG illustrates the complex nature of exchange between OMG and wider society. In such instances, the receivers of OMG donation become gifts as they submit themselves to OMG. While, Graeber (2001) notes that gift may re-emphasize the power dynamics between the giver and the receiver. In the case of OMG beneficiaries submit themselves as gifts. Furthermore, in furthering God's work through charity activities OMG and its members expected counter-gifts from God. This matrix is a three-tier exchange system different from the dyad exchange discussed by Mauss.

6.3.6 Public visibility

Pentecostal movements have increased their visibility in African urban landscapes (Meyer, 2003: 6; Jinnah & Rugunanan, 2016; Wafer, 2016: 117; Wilhelm-Solomon, Zulu & Worby, 2016: 23; van de Kamp, 2017: 2). The public articulation of Pentecostalism into urban space through charity activities, posters, banners and billboards and t-shirts inscribed with religious message. OMG, like most Pentecostal charismatic movements, has increased its visibility in Harare and rural centres in Zimbabwe. The visibility is one way in which OMG shows its intentions to engaging with Zimbabweans society. The larger-than-life billboards in Harare signal OMG and Prophet Ben's intentions to transform – or at least present a morally and spiritually superior alternative to – contemporary Zimbabwean society. In making themselves visible, OMG dispels ideas of retreating and withdrawing that characterized early



American Pentecostalism. Driving through Harare one cannot fail to observe OMG congregants in their t-shirts, wristbands, billboards, and a vehicle with stickers bearing OMG-related information²⁶⁴. Children living on the streets I discussed above adds to OMG visibility. As they don OMG t-shirts, the children 'advertise' OMG and its charity activities.

Lastly, OMG has increased its visibility by engaging in clean-up campaigns and marches. OMG members organize clean-up campaigns in Harare. The congregants swept the streets of Harare which have been neglected by the authorities. This campaign was organized at a time the CBD was an eyesore due to heaps of uncollected refuse. The city of Harare municipal failed to maintain a clean city that had earned Harare its 'sunshine city' status in the 1980s. OMG members took it upon themselves to clean the city. In cleaning the city, OMG Pentecostals noted that they were bringing 'Godliness' to the city of Harare. OMG's version of Pentecostalism aims at pragmatic action towards achieving the desired goal. Issues are not only spiritualized but pragmatic approaches to achieve the desired goals are sort. I once participated in a march around Harare. The march was an awareness campaign to publicize the 2016 ANNP. The police had cleared the march²⁶⁵. We wore OMG t-shirts, caps and wrist-bands, we raised OMG banners, there were branded vehicles, music by OMG choir was playing loudly.

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the complex relationship between OMG on one side and the state and chieftaincy on the other. OMG activities are aimed at 'patching' the crevices that are left by the state that is being run by corrupt ZANU PF politicians. At another level, charity activities spearheaded by OMG reproduce the safe nets and welfare system associated with chiefs and headman. The distributive

²⁶⁴ OMG is equally visible in rural areas. Its members wear clothes that advertise the religious movement. I also came across poster advertising crusades and all night praying sessions in Chivi and Zvishavane.

²⁶⁵ Public Order and Security Act stipulates that all public gatherings must be cleared/ authorized by the police.



mechanism operating in OMG charity activities shares a lot with welfare system such as *zunde ramambo*. Despite several similarities, OMG has managed to present itself as an entity different from both the state and the institution of chieftaincy. OMG is a relatively new entity that has managed to forge a good image through its charity work. When contrasted with the government tainted by years of genocides, violence, human rights abuse, corruption and mismanagement of public funds, OMG occupies a higher moral ground.

As I have shown, OMG charity activities and the OMG City are didactic alternatives, aiming at teaching the state how to do things better. The professionals who are member of OMG have a good understanding of the way Zimbabwe worked over time under Mugabe. OMG is the vehicle through which they critique and proffer alternatives on how the state operates. Trust, charisma and morality are at the centre of OMG relations. For vulnerable categories in society, OMG is a defensive alternative against the considerable hardships they experience. The state and its officials are corrupt, partisan, harsh, unpredictable and grasping. The vulnerable and general members of OMG find responsible and predictable leadership in OMG clergy. Leadership that does not demand bribes before doing anything for ordinary people. OMG charity activities, viewed from this perspective, form an alternative that is in some ways defensive. OMG extracts vulnerable categories of people and some of its members from the state that is ruled in a capricious way by ZANU PF government. OMG offers them an alternative, ruled by the word of God and treat the beneficiaries and OMG members with respect and dignity. OMG is constructing itself as an island of security operating differently from the uncaring state. In these situations, “Pentecostal movements have come to play a central role in urban spaces, where they have displayed a resilient form of associational life in the face of the immense failure of the state” (Onuoha, 2013: 223). The appropriation of some aspects of the state and functions of chiefs may partly explain the popularity that OMG enjoys among Zimbabweans. OMG has reproduced welfare, operations and leadership systems that combine some aspects of the state and those of chiefs. The decline of the state and chiefs opens up space that OMG capitalizes on.



7. EVANGE-LIVING

It is a heathen mentality to approach God or man of God empty-handed, if you know this you must approach God with something, definitely God will reward you with everything that you desire, cars, houses, clothes and food everything. It is God's way of showing that those who believe in Him shall not lack... Jesus himself was very wealthy, Roman soldiers fought for his robes, why why? Because it was elegant and expensive. Christians must have all the best things in this world, why would God pave Jerusalem with gold, why would that lady pour expensive oil on Jesus' feet? Do you know that Daniel was very wealthy, and the bible says he had to forego other foods as he fasted? Can you forego when your home is empty? Our God is a God of class, a good of the best, a good who markets himself through us...

[Nicky August 2016]

The pastor must wear the most expensive suits and drive the most expensive and powerful vehicle at every branch. What type of God does he represent when he is poor? [OMG member who is studying at a local University in April 2017]

Gold attracts God... when I got my gold (wrist)watch...I started to flow spiritually, prophecy after prophecy... Gold is a good conductor of the divinity [Prophet Ben during a service]

If your God or Christianity needs microscope to be seen, then it's not there...what you eat, how you dress and what you drive points to your God... [Nyasha October 2016]

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss how OMG Pentecostals retool commodities into both everyday lives as well as in religious practices. I situate commodity consumption within the obtaining Zimbabwean political economy characterized by shortages of commodities, unemployment and increasing informality. For OMG Pentecostals consumption of commodities and brands is one way of evangelizing to non-members. Commodity consumption is not only directed towards outsiders, but it is a mechanism of bearing witness and encouraging other members to keep trust in the prophet and God who generously rewards the faithful. The consumption of commodities is not a mere representation of the world that OMG Pentecostals envision, it is an end in itself as they experience the world through the commodities



they consume and ostentatiously display in everyday lives. I shall discuss consumption of religious commodities also and the role of the body as social and religious. Consumption of clothes and food is a form of bodily technique that Pentecostal congregants depend on to index the transformation and aspirations they envision. Consumption is central in the construction of the self among OMG Pentecostals. Pentecostal “aspirations for a better life, their imaginaries of political freedom, their relation to others within African municipal townships and their fantasies about consumption also shape their subjectivities” (Krige, 2011: 28).

From the data I gathered, commodity consumption by OMG Pentecostals serves as both a critique and an alternative to the government. As I have argued in previous chapters, OMG is filling the spaces left by the post-colonial state and the waning institution of chiefs. To achieve this, OMG is appropriating functions that the state and chiefs are no longer performing. Furthermore, OMG is reproducing a machinery that mimics both the state and chieftainship. In this chapter I explore ways in which commodity consumption by OGM Pentecostals is discursively configured to be a statement directed at the post-colonial state and current leadership. The government has failed to diligently manage the national economy, pushing most commodities beyond the reach of most ordinary citizens. OMG is opening new avenues through which its members can accumulate and consume commodities that most Zimbabweans are failing to afford. This chapter furthers the argument introduced in the previous chapter. Commodity consumption shows the complex relationship that exists between OMG and the post-colonial Zimbabwean government.

7.2 Commodity consumption in perspective

In this section I discuss literature on commodity consumption at global and local level, highlighting major ideas and conceptualization raised in the body of literature.

7.2.1 Themes on Commodity Consumption in Africa

Literature on commodity consumption in Africa has grown significantly in the last three decades. The thrust of the bulk of the studies capture the consequences of Africa’s insertion into global ‘circuits of consumption’ through commodities (Friedman, 1990, 1994a; Ferguson, 1999; Belk, 2000; Stambach, 2000; Nyamnjoh,



2005). In Congo, consumption of western commodities mediated one's access to status and honour. The *La Sape* derived prestige, honour and status through their association with and consumption of French commodities (Friedman, 1994). Implicitly, consumption is read as a process of modernizing Africans through 'taste transfer' (Burke, 1996: 2). Western commodities open the floodgates for Africans to be part of the global economy and consumption systems. The strength of this approach is its ability to weave a link between global commodities and local contexts in which the commodities are consumed (see Appadurai, 1986).

Another strand of studies emphasizes the ritual nature of consumption focusing on purchasing processes, types of food, and shopping malls (Dant, 2000; Chevalier, 2015). These studies have been criticised by proponents of what could be widely termed a 'culturalist perspective' in that they emphasise ways in which foreign commodities are incorporated into local cultural milieu. Focusing on the ritual of purchasing limits our analysis when it comes to commodities that are given as gifts. As I will show below and develop further in the following chapter, commodities consumed by some of OMG members are gifts that they received from fellow OMG Pentecostals. The act of purchasing and window-shopping is absent for some of the respondents that I discuss.

Consumption practices have been situated in the study of race and class (Krige, 2011). Consumption has in this context often been presented as informed by the need to access and consume commodities and activities that Africans were denied during the colonial era. Pittman (2012), Posel (2010), Wolfhard (2010), Belk (2000), Burke (1996) and Comaroff and Comaroff (1997) have shown that Africans have adopted modes of consumption that were erstwhile associated with the 'reference group' of former colonizers (Ferguson, 2006: 157). Consumption is one strategy at the disposal of the newly rich to counter erstwhile deprivations (James, 2015: 45). While accounting for current consumption patterns in terms of past deprivation is productive, it fails to explain consumption as projection of future aspirations. The need to 'catch-up', 'keep-up' with past trends becomes the motive for consumption (Chipp, Kleyn & Manzi, 2011). In this approach to consumption, Africans are deprived of the agency to discursively reconfigure commodities into everyday lives.



Explaining consumption in the current milieu and discourse is more productive than presenting it as mere mimicry.

Literature on youth and consumption has been on the increase over the past decade (Mate, 2014, Nyamnjoh, 2005; Stamboch, 2000). The youth have been targeted as they are considered highly mobile, major players in the global system of consumption and receptors of modernity. They are in a precarious category. The means to earn a decent living is stifled by poorly performing economies yet are interested in acquiring western commodities. Mate (2014) and Nyamnjoh (2005) present the 'youth' as a category dislocated economically and prone to abuse by the older generation that has amassed wealth. The youth are consuming from below. As in most studies highlighted above, attention has been cast on categories in precarious conditions struggling to be incorporated into the global circuit of consumption (see also Ferguson, 2006 chapter 6). Juxtaposing the precariousness and the consumption of global commodities often-times leads to portrayal of the latter as a corrosive practice. Krige (2011: 115) advises researchers to go beyond the idea of conspicuous consumption which he argues is accusatory and unproductive. Studies on consumption must rather aim to explore how consumption is discursively framed by participating individuals and categories as well as situating it with the local context.

7.2.2 Trends and Patterns of Consumption in Zimbabwe

Studies on consumption in Zimbabwe have been erratic. Burke (1996) offers a detailed account of how Zimbabweans were shepherded into adopting European cultural practices through a dialectic process that created 'false needs' and 'transfer of taste' for European commodities. Consumption of European commodities such as food, clothes and technology are perceived as synonymous with modernization by most Zimbabweans. The colonial era witnessed frantic efforts by missionaries and settlers to 'civilize' Africans through transformation of their consumption patterns. Burke (1996) gives a historical account of how Black Zimbabweans adopted western practices of cleanliness through consumption of various toiletries. Africans who adopted European consumption patterns gained higher status and



formed a class of their own. Educated Africans especially those employed by the colonial government were the main partakers of western commodities (West, 2002).

Belk's (2000) study on elite consumption brings to the fore that seeds of post-colonial consumption trends were sowed during the colonial epoch. Post-colonial black elites, according to this study, often consume commodities previously associated with white settlers. Zimbabwean elites have moved into former white-only residential areas; send their children to former white-only schools and joining sporting and luxury activities such as fishing and golf. Consumption of foreign commodities is not something new in Zimbabwe. What interests me is the ostentatious display of commodity consumption at a time most Zimbabweans lack means to access basic necessities. Consumption by OMG clergy rivals that of politicians and state-connected entrepreneurs. The national leadership has often expressed that they fought and liberated Zimbabwe so that they can enjoy the milk and honey it offers. Does consumption provide an arena for Pentecostals to question the symbolic power of the governing politicians? Is OMG presenting itself as an alternative to state-linked ways of building wealth and consumption. Are OMG members challenging politicians via consumption? Below I will try to answer these questions. To my knowledge, there have not been intensive studies on consumption among religious groups in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, there is little literature focusing on consumption as a strategy of accumulating symbols of power or challenging those wielding state or 'traditional' power. Friedman's (1994) and Krige (2011) study of the *La Sape* in Congo and African males in Soweto are some of the few studies that broaden consumption to the level of national politics.

7.2.3 Religion and commodity consumption

Before zeroing in on OMG Pentecostals' consumption I discuss literature that frames the relationship between religion and commodity consumption. Stamboch (2000) discusses 'youth consumption' among young church members in northern Tanzania. The church leadership perceived consumption of foreign clothes as corrupting and carnal (ibid, 177). Commodity consumption is at the centre of conflict between youthful followers and an older leadership. The youth embrace commodity consumption which is read as divisive by the elders. The anti-materialist stance of



the leadership is an attempt to stifle consumption among the youth. Some religious movements have openly condemned consumption arguing that desires for earthly commodities reduce spirituality (Sorokin, 1992; Schwartz, 1994; Stillman et al., 2012). Stillman *et al* (2012: 2) study of American Protestants observed that consumption has an “effect on spirituality in general, one that is not specific to a particular religious group.” Asceticism identified by Weber (1930) in early Calvinist is still evident among Protestant groups that discourage indulgence. A frugal life that was led by most Calvinists as a sign of being the elected continues to be practiced.

Some Protestant groups have embraced the opposite of asceticism present in early Protestant groups such as Calvinists and first wave Pentecostal movements. Consumption and ostentatious display of commodities have become a defining feature in some religious movements (Maxwell, 1998: 354; Park & Baker, 2007; Taru & Settler, 2015). Park and Baker (2007) pay attention to the consumption of religious commodities such as religious iconography, statues, clothes and literature. Religious commodities are a way of identity construction and inviting an aura of the sacred around individuals. Consumption is not restricted to religious commodities only; it has been extended to non-religious commodities such as vehicles, houses, clothing and food (Maxwell, 1998; Taru and Settler, 2015). Among Zimbabwe Assemblies of God-Africa (ZAOGA) members’ consumption is evident in flaunting of clothes during church services. Clean and knife-edged creased shirts and trousers are a common among ZAOGA Pentecostals. Taru and Settler (2015:132) note that among UFIC Pentecostals in Zimbabwe consumption

carries symbolic meanings which makes it part of a situated body practice that reinforces member’s sense of belonging. Such extravagant adornment confers symbolic capital to the member because it is regarded as an indication of God’s blessing... members of the UFIC through their holy consumerism map a religious field that imagines a postcolonial African future characterised by acquisition, flamboyance and victory over poverty.

Consumption forms part of religious rituals of identity creation. Below I shall extend analysis of commodity consumption by locating it within the Zimbabwean political economy and emerging meaning associated with consumption in an underperforming economy. In this study, I aim to broaden our understanding of consumption and ways in which consumption by OMG members poses as accumulation of symbols of power. In order to achieve this, I frame this chapter



around three questions suggested by Krige (2011: 115): What exactly is asserted by Africans (in my case OMG Pentecostals) when they purchase and display consumer items? Who is their audience? What are the desired and unintended effects? These questions help in showing that consumption is more nuanced and multi-layered than most scholars allow.

7.3 Politics of Pentecostal Charismatic Indulgence

In this section I systematically present and analyse OMG Pentecostals relations with and consumption of gold, vehicles, clothes, food and religious commodities. The data was gathered through the experimental method called *religious biographies of thing* that I discussed in the methodology section. I will conclude this section by illustrating how consumption aids OMG members launch a critique and an alternative to the post-colonial state and its leadership. Furthermore, I illustrate ways in which consumption aids in creating bond and relations among OMG members.

7.3.1 Gold

Gold plays a central role in OMG liturgy and practice. It is one of the widely consumed metals among OMG Pentecostals. In one of the opening vignettes to this chapter, Prophet Ben told his followers that his gold wristwatch ushers him into the spiritual realm. For Prophet Ben, gold enables him to give what one OMG member called “forensic prophecies and healings.” Prophet Ben taught his followers that gold draws him closer to God. Prophet Ben noted that gold is one of the few metals found in heaven and in the new Jerusalem, thus has the ability to draw individuals closer to God. The property of gold as a good conductor of electricity and heat feeds into the narratives of how OMG Pentecostals incorporate it into their consumption practice. Gold is equally a good conductor of the divine.

As the vignette shows, gold is considered an effective conductor of the Holy Spirit and divinity. Prophet Ben wears gold wristwatches, pens, bracelets and rings. Gold as mentioned by Prophet Ben is a good conductor of electricity as well as divine power and blessings. Prophet Ben taught his congregants that they should develop ‘hunger’ for possessing gold, owning jewellery made from gold and diamond. He narrated how he failed to give prophecies because he had forgotten to put on any



jewellery made from gold. It was after, he had sent for it that he managed to give prophecies. God later instructed him that gold had both terrestrial and extra-terrestrial values. This points to the importance of gold as a commodity. During my stay with the Moyo's, one of Nyasha's dream was to own a gold wristwatch or a ring and to buy for his wife earrings and jewellery made from gold. He believed it would attract God and other spiritual agents to the family. Nyasha was fascinated by my wife's gold ring. He developed interest in it, scrutinizing it thoroughly when she visited us.

Prophet Ben, other members among the laity own gold mines across Zimbabwe. Prophet Ben owns several gold mines. From interviews and also from some of his sermons, I have gathered that Prophet Ben acquired distressed and dysfunctional gold mines which he revived and are now operational. Narratives given by Nyasha's young brother²⁶⁶ confirms this. He had hinted that for some time he had been stationed at one of Prophet Ben's recently acquired mine in Mashonaland West province. Nyasha's young brother confided that they were draining water from logged mining-shafts. While I have failed to establish the previous owners of the mines Prophet Ben now owns, he might have bought distressed mines from private small to medium scale artisan miners (Mashava, 2018)²⁶⁷ as well as from established corporates. Consumption and display of commodities by Prophet Ben are a way of showing that wealth and prosperity can be achieved independent of the state or political patronage. Prophet Ben claims that

²⁶⁶ See chapter 4.3.6 on Militarization of Charisma

²⁶⁷ Zimbabwe has a lot of registered small to medium scale artisanal gold miners, as well as individuals who own gold mines. In the past two decades, a number of corporates in gold mining have been closing due to unfavourable economic environment. Prophet Ben might be taking advantage of the economic situation to acquire gold mines at a low price, the story carried by a local newspaper confirms this. There have been speculations in media that Prophet Ben has acquired one of the major gold producing mines used to be owned by Metallon Gold, after buying its gold processing mill at an auction.

Sources of prophet Ben's money is unknown. However, it is important to note that the government has an US\$ 80 million-Gold Development Fund facility per year to assist entrepreneurs with interest in gold mining.



he acquired his mines, land and business without benefiting from government programmes such as FTLRP, IEEP, AAG and ZIMASSET. Some OMG pastors and members have formed a consortium that has interest in gold mining. The consortium has been active in acquiring mines in Zimbabwe.

In one of his sermons, Prophet Ben said that the bulk of gold from his mines is being stored for future use. I found this interesting. The government of Zimbabwe has put in place incentives to encourage gold miners to deliver their gold. Despite this, Prophet Ben claimed that he was storing his gold for future use. If this claim is true, Prophet Ben is building his own reserve of gold. Gold is stable store of value, especially in Zimbabwe where currency fluctuates often, and the local surrogate currency is worthless. There are issues that still need to be explored further: Is Prophet Ben storing reserves of gold to secure OMG and its future city? Will he use the gold as leverage later in future, especially when dealing with the government? Is he establishing his own reserves of gold because he fears that the government will misuse or mismanage it if he delivers to government? Is it religiously motivated?

7.3.2 Vehicles

From the discussion of gold above, it is clear that Prophet Ben shows visible manifestation of success and prosperity. He is a model for his followers because he embodies success and the future that most of them desire. This materialization of success appeals to most Zimbabweans whose chances of upward mobility is stifled by bad policies, mismanaged economy and less life-chances. Consumption of vehicles is another way in which OMG members differentiate themselves from most Zimbabweans.

Prophet Ben and Prophetess Jane use vehicles as aesthetics of success. The prophet and the prophetess own expensive and powerful vehicles, mainly foreign brands such as Roll Royce, Lexus, Range Rovers, Toyota Land Cruisers and V12 Mercedes Benz S65 and S600 among others. These vehicles are expensive and beyond the reach of most Zimbabweans. These types of vehicles are usually associated with government departments, ministries, foreign embassies and Non-Governmental Organizations. In the same fashion with government officials and



foreign dignitaries, Prophet Ben and Prophetess Jane own executive and off-road vehicles. In Harare the couple is chauffeured in executive vehicles and reserve off-road vehicles for touring places outside Harare. This is similar to Zimbabwean ministers who are given executive and off-road vehicles. These symbolic similarities in the consumption of vehicles points to ways in which Prophet Ben is appropriating some aspects of operation done by government officials. The vehicles convey an aura of power, wealthy and authority, especially when one observes them speeding in a convoy. The consumption of such commodities is at the heart of subtle rivalry to national presidency. Prophet Ben's consumption and display of vehicles rivals that of both the former and sitting Zimbabwean president.

Ownership of vehicles feeds into OMG members' critique of the post-colonial government while strengthening bonds among OMG members (see Miller, 1998: 83). The parking bays at OMG services are filled with Mercedes Benz, BMW, Toyota Prado and Land-Cruisers. The acquisition of vehicles by OMG members point to weaknesses in the post-colonial government administration. I encountered an OMG member who was a civil servant. He drove an ex-UK Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV). During an interview I inquired how he had managed to buy and maintain such an expensive vehicle considering his low income, the fuel consumption capacity of the SUV and high prices of petrol in Zimbabwe. His response was illustrative of political dimension of consumption. The congregant told me that the meagre income from the government was insufficient to allow him to buy such a SUV. He had received the SUV as a gift from another member of OMG based in United Kingdom. In his version of events, he attacked the government for paying lower wages and for exploiting its workers and citizens. Further he launched an attack on government institutions such as the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), Zimbabwe National Road Administration (ZINARA) and Zimbabwe Revenues Authorities (ZIMRA):

You know my brother, when I was wallowing in poverty, commuting to and from work, no one was interested in me, no one even sought the source of my poverty and difficulties. When I got this car as a gift from a family in London²⁶⁸ that I introduced to OMG, ZIMRA was eager to know the price I bought it for. They then made me pay duty. From border to

²⁶⁸ In everyday speech London and United Kingdom are used interchangeably, the intended meaning might be United Kingdom and not London per se



here (Harare) the police were asking for lots of documents: import permit, temporary registration, receipts and etc. I had to pay for tollgates, what for? The roads are not maintained, they are death traps.... And at work my boss and workmates are jealous. They thought I was stealing money or involved in some underhand deals, but they couldn't find anything. You know when I was commuting no one asked for the source of my poverty, now I have a car they all want to know how I got it. The government is funny, why not focus on the source of my poverty? This car is from the prophet, I got it through his grace, just a gift from *mwana wemuporofita*²⁶⁹. Government can't pay a salary that can support this, even my clothes are quality clothes! its prophet's grace. At work I have told them if they continue to rely on government salary, they will die poor... the prophet is the solution to our situation...

For this respondent, the display of the SUV and clothes when juxtaposed against other workmates and the old-modelled twin-cab driven by his immediate superior at work is perceived as a direct attack on the government. OMG opens up new networks of exchange, love and reciprocity among its members, the government comes in as a hindrance through imposition of excise duty, numerous roadblocks and a cumbersome procedure for vehicle clearance and registration. Consumption and display of commodities acquired through OMG fostered relations directly points at the inadequacies of the government to decently pay its employees. Furthermore, driving a better vehicle than his boss gave the congregant more trust and confidence in OMG than in government. The government is constructed as irresponsible, illegitimate and vampiric to its citizen through cumbersome procedures.

7.3.3 Proselytising through vehicles

Commodities such as vehicles that are owned and displayed by OMG Pentecostals assume new meaning and role. To fully capture the ways in which commodities and their consumption assume new meanings among Pentecostals, I discuss the social life of Nyasha's vehicle.

Nyasha owns a Toyota sedan which he bought from a local Indian businessperson. A sticker on the rear reads "This is a result." From Nyasha's narratives, the process of purchasing the vehicle was mediated by saving, prayers and fasting. Nyasha locates the purchase of the vehicle within the logic of his prayer life and hard

²⁶⁹ Son of the prophet



working. The vehicle was sold cheap to him by an Indian businessman²⁷⁰. The sticker is a confirmation that God responds to prayers and requests by OMG members. The vehicle is also a reminder of a season when OMG congregants focused on prayers for commodities such as vehicles and houses. For most OMG members, God rewards their faithfulness and obedience through opening avenues for them to purchase vehicles. I have come across vehicle with bumper-stickers that read: *This is a result!*²⁷¹

Nyasha always made it clear to anyone who care to listen that his vehicle was not an ex Japanese car. His car was a manual transmission version from South Africa²⁷². This was meant to diffuse the idea that his entry into circuits of consumption was through “back door.”²⁷³ To Nyasha the narrative about South African origin of his car diffused and dispelled the idea that it was cheap. Nyasha had sold his first car, an ex-Japanese sedan to buy a South African one. According to Nyasha, he was progressing and getting “there where papa wants us to be.”²⁷⁴ Through this biography of the vehicle we understand what motivates OMG consumption patterns, the meanings and practice that inform it.

Every Sunday on our way to church we picked a couple that stay close to Nyasha’s residence. Nyasha ferried them to church as a way of “showing love through the things that God has given to us.” During weekdays we picked two individuals on our way to the CBD. During the drive, Nyasha would play OMG music or sermons from his stereo. He often discussed the benefits of joining a prophetic ministry like OMG. Nyasha was using the morning trip to proselytize and convert the individuals into becoming OMG members. The vehicle was both a result of prayer and a vehicle of

²⁷⁰ There is a general narrative in Zimbabwe that Indians are good at due diligence that they sell anything at the highest possible price. Furthermore, Indians tend to buy and sell amongst themselves. Nyasha told me that it was a miracle that he managed to buy the car cheaply.

²⁷¹ OMG produced and sold stickers inscribed *This is a result* as a way of indexing and giving testimony new acquisition made in 2012

²⁷² Most ex Japanese cars have automatic transmission and are cheaper.

²⁷³ Vehicle from Japan seen as cheap and imitations in Zimbabwe.

²⁷⁴ Interview with Nyasha December 2016



inviting more people to OMG. He boldly claimed that he bought his first vehicle a year after joining OMG. In his own words Nyasha stated that

Takavako kunyika hakuna chiriko, mapromise chete chabuda hapana...., baba helps us to get these things

(There is nothing you can get out there, only unfulfilled promises)

Nyasha is expressing his dissatisfaction with the government which does not deliver on its promises to citizens. The juxtaposition of government and OMG makes OMG a better alternative. For Nyasha the vehicle is a way of spreading God's word, selling OMG version of the future and showing off the benefits of being OMG member. The vehicle assumes new social meaning: it is a way of evangelizing and proselytizing.

Consumption of commodities among OMG Pentecostals presents one way in which Pentecostals reach out to non-Pentecostals within their vicinity. Consumption of commodities such as vehicles acts a mechanism for fostering sociality and expressing intimacy among OMG Pentecostals and between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals (see Miller, 2005). In their studies of Pentecostals, in Zambia (Haynes, 2012 a and b) and Zimbabwean Pentecostal migrants in Cape Town, South Africa (Dube, 2017), have shown that Pentecostals are not any insulated group whose members are severed from the wider society. Pentecostal consumption initiates new forms of "self-expression, the fostering of community, sociality and the performance of social differentiation (or status boundary- making)" (Krige, 2011: 37; Haynes, 2012b). Consumption paves way for the proselytizing mission.

The above excerpts raise issue of ethnographic importance. Consumption of vehicles and their ostentatious display is divorced from a cash-nexus, the act of purchasing or strolling in malls that is emphasized in a number of studies is absent (Dant, 2000). Failure to account for the *religious biography of commodities* narrows the scope in some studies, not all commodities displayed are purchased. Some of OMG Pentecostals received commodities they displayed from fellow OMG members. The SUV received from a fellow OMG member and Nyasha's Toyota sedan do not mediate entrance into global consumerism, these vehicles' social biographies and exchange are steeped in religious doctrines and relations rather than money. When one focuses on the commodity and its economic value, wrong



conclusions may be deduced that the marginalized categories of society consume high end commodities as a form of 'compensatory practice', and as a way of inserting themselves into the global circuit of consumption. The approach of accounting for religious biographies of things helps us understand that commodity consumption is complex and nuanced. In our cases vehicles' social biographies bring forth their owners' interaction with, negligence of and harassments by state authorities and institutions (ZIMRA, ZINARA and Zimbabwe Republic Police). For Nyasha his vehicle is a way of engaging with wider society and drawing non-OMG member to the alternative prophet Ben promises.

7.3.4 Clothes and Apparels

The form of dressing by Prophet Ben is a statement and a commentary about the economic situation in Zimbabwe. Prophet Ben, Prophetess Jane and the acolyte dress in clothing brands that materialize their success and the God they worship. Prophet Ben dresses in bespoke designer suits and shoes - long jackets, double-breasted and with fine finish. Prophet Ben wears made-to-measure Angelo Galasso, Christian Dior, Prada, Stefano Ricci and Saint Laurent shirts, shoes, jewellery, tuxedos. From the bulk of services, I attended, Prophet Ben dressed in designer-suits, a different one every time²⁷⁵. Prophet Ben's dressing rivals that of ZANU PF politicians and government officials. While dressing may be similar, most government officials are tainted by allegations of corruption. This gives Prophet Ben a moral ground higher than that of political leaders. There are yet to be told stories of corruption and financial mismanagement raised against Prophet Ben. As I indicated above, Prophet Ben's deportment is similar to that of government officials. Prophet Ben's dressing projects the future that OMG offers and promises its members, promises which the current government is failing to avail and give to Zimbabweans. Dressing by OMG acolyte is an embodiment of the future and success that OMG promises (cf de Witte, 2018: 79).

As I have been arguing in this chapter, the desire to consume and display commodities for OMG Pentecostals is driven neither by the need to be part of the

²⁷⁵ Prophet Ben told them during one of his teachings.



global consumerism culture, global neo-liberalism nor modernity. Congregants' desire to acquire and display commodities must be located within the religious discourse as well as local situations that spur such consumption in the first place. Furthermore, consumption and display of gold, vehicles and clothes act as an identity marker for OMG members; a sign of being blessed and favoured in the here and now; a form of evangelising to both believers and non-believers and objectification of relations of love and caring. Friedman (1990: 313) has long advised anthropologists to read "consumption as aspect of a more general strategy or set of strategies for the establishment and/or maintenance of selfhood." Clothes and vehicles displayed reveal a lot about how the person perceives himself/herself. These commodities embody aspects of the self (Ger & Belk, 1996: 273; Ger, 1999: 66) which the person wishes to communicate to others (Wilk, 1998: 320).

I once passed a comment on one of the section leaders in the security department; I remarked that his blue suit was stylish. He took it as an excuse to narrate and made it clear that for November 2016 he had been coming for church services in new clothes. He then told me to check him the following Sunday; he would put on either a black suit or an African attire from Ghana. Ostentatious display of clothes is a form of religious bragging that places certain individuals and families at a higher wrung than others. Foreign commodities participate in the construction of a blessed and prestigious selves. This explains why OMG members are quick to point to the foreign origin of commodities they consume (see Friedman, 1994). There was an 'undeclared war' among OMG Pentecostals when it came to dress. OMG Pentecostals always come for service in their best clothes. I observed how Nyasha and his wife meticulously selected clothes for Sunday service. It was an unwritten rule that they would not wear the same clothes on successive Sundays. Clothes are a way of establishing social hierarchies among congregants. Congregants shared details of the origins and prices of their clothes. A form of subtle competition and communication is inherent in the display and consumption of commodities (James, 2015: 46; Krige, 2011: 296). While I present here the nature of consumption, in the following chapter I will present how consumption in its performative form is sustained in an underperforming economy.



7.3.5 Religious Commodities

In the second chapter I referred to how Prophet Ben has been turned into a franchiser, brand and model. OMG members are franchisees who must maintain the standard of the franchiser²⁷⁶. At the core of brand Prophet Ben is commodity consumption and an alternative to state-linked wealth accumulation and consumption. Firstly, there are a number of commodities, mainly clothes that are sold under brand Prophet Ben. Caps, t-shirts and key holders under the brand's ambit were more expensive when compared to general OMG ware. Despite being of high quality, I found buying a cap for USD 20 too expensive. OMG members bought the caps and t-shirts, some bought more than one. It was not about the price, but the brand and person it stands for. One congregant told me that nothing was cheap about the prophet. Concomitantly, anything that represents him must be expensive and exclusive. Commodities sold under brand Prophet Ben were far too few, at one time only fifteen caps were sold. The 'scarcity' of the commodities increased competitions among congregants bidding for the commodities. There were people inquiring about the availability of the caps and t-shirts. Brand Prophet Ben team kept its ware few for a purpose. The team has a good understanding of market forces of demand and supply. However, what we see here does not follow market economy to the end. Prophet Ben uses market forces of demand and supply to create value for the commodities and also for him. The scarce commodities confirm the extraordinariness of Prophet Ben in the eyes of the OMG members. If supply of caps, and t-shirts increases, they would become too common. Scarcity is creates value.

OMG Pentecostals set themselves apart from the rest of the population through dressing in OMG regalia. Dressing is a visible way of differentiating OMG members from non-members. OMG members dress in purple and gold which are part of the OMG logo. Apart from these clothes, wrist-bands, caps, car seat covers, blankets and wrapping clothes popularly known as *zambia* all form a visible way of asserting

²⁷⁶ I heard of this image of franchiser during a radio programme on ZiFM on 08 September 2016. Prophet Ben was the preacher.



OMG membership. This regalia make it easy for anyone to identify OMG members. I rarely saw OMG members in clothes with national emblems and colours.

OMG regalia also serve as a point of connection with Prophet Ben. Donning OMG regalia draws prophetic covering to the person. Religious commodities represent Prophet Ben. This brings 'Prophet Ben' closer to everyday lives and situations of his followers in a way that the state fails. The state remains abstract and distant in people's everyday lives. The presence of prophetic power through OMG commodities gives OMG members hope and spiritual safety that otherwise would have been derived from the state. Numerous police roadblocks, corrupt and extortionist police force widens the rift between citizens and the state. The Police are agents of the state, aiming at punishing drivers on the road. On several times Nyasha either sped-off from police roadblock or turned away from the police. Nyasha's Vehicle Licence Fee (VLF) was eight months overdue. He told me that he no longer paid the VLFs because his safety was now in the prophet and not the government which only milks him through spot fines and VLF.

Baba I'm protected by the prophet, the wrist band and the oil keep me safe in these potholed roads, there are no functioning robots²⁷⁷ in Harare but I haven't been involved in an accident, why? It's the anointing. For eight months I haven't paid for my vehicle and the police haven't arrested me, even at tollgate, it's the prophet.

Nyasha had lost hope in the government and state institutions. He did not feel guilty nor had second thoughts about his failures to pay the fees and fines. He placed his hope and security in the prophet. The consumption of religious commodities is both a marker of identity and an alternative source of security. As citizens' trust in the state dwindles, they opt for God and the prophets at OMG to provide them with spiritual security from accidents and the state itself (Ashford, 2005:156-170). Nyasha drove with a wrist-band on the gear lever of his vehicle. Most of the roads in Harare are in a sorry state, they are neither maintained nor rehabilitated. Nyasha derives his safety from the OMG wrist-band which he places on gear lever of his vehicle.

²⁷⁷ Traffic lights are referred to as robots in Zimbabwe.



7.3.6 Religious paraphernalia as commodities

Religious commodities consumed by some OMG members are an extension of other persons. In consuming and displaying these commodities, individuals are inviting and invoke the person and spiritual agents associated with specific clergymen. The religious biography of one wrist-band fascinated me. One of my interviewees told me of an incident that occurred before my fieldwork commenced. Pastor Danny attended a mid-week zonal meeting, there he gave the wrist-band he was wearing to one of the attendees at the gathering. The attendee failed to put on the wrist-band. The interviewee told me that the failure to put on the wrist-band was a sign of different levels of anointing between Pastor Danny and the congregant. It took Pastor Danny's prayer for the congregant to don the wrist-band. The wrist-band is an extension of Pastor Danny's charisma and anointing. The wrist-band has the capacity to carry with them the power, charisma and or sins/dirty associated with the giver. As I highlighted in chapter 5, commodities given as gifts carry with them the charisma and spirit of the giver (Mauss, 1990; Parry, 1986). For the interviewee, and for the attendee present, that particular wrist-band is different from others because it came from Pastor Danny and carried with it his charisma. Belk's (1988: 148) observation that "possessions are a convenient means of storing the memories and feelings that attach our sense of past" rings true when contextualized in the above account. Religious commodities are memory banks that condense our relations, histories and aspirations. Keith Hart (2001) has applied the term *memorybank* to money but as shown above commodities perform the same function of reminding us about our relations, ailments and persons who came to our assistance.

7.4 OMG Foodscapes

Reading consumption within the Pentecostal milieu opens new avenues in understanding how different categories of people discursively incorporate commodities into local religious context. Consumption is not neutral, it is filled with various meanings and intentions (Douglas & Isherwood, 1979; Kopytoff, 1986). In this section I focus on consumption of food. Appadurai (1981: 494) notes that if there is anything that stands as "highly condensed social fact" it is food. The consumption of food among Zimbabweans stands as the marker of social status. The



consumption of foreign food comes with higher status when compared to local staple of sadza²⁷⁸, green vegetables leaves and or beef. The consumption of foreign and expensive food such as white rice, pasta, pudding, fruit juice is a marker of status and social distance from the general population. The economic hardship, shortage of cash and food further exacerbates the distance between consumers of exotic and those that eat local foods.

I dedicate this section to the discussion of consumption of food among OMG members. OMG members engage in a ritual which they call *feasting*. The ritual is a direct opposite of fasting²⁷⁹. Feasting involves elaborate consumption of food as a way of worshipping and petitioning God. I discuss this ritual in detail because it is an uncommon practice among Christians and Pentecostal Charismatic movements. I am yet to come across literature of similar ritual. Furthermore, the ritual speaks to the current economic situation in Zimbabwe.

7.4.1 Feasting: Hopes and Aspiration

Prophet Ben has used food as one of the ways in which he projects the future he wishes for his followers. Prophet Ben and his followers engage in elaborate ritualized food consumption. In 2017 Prophet Ben instructed OMG members not to engage in fasting rituals. God had told him to introduce *feasting*²⁸⁰ instead. On announced dates, congregants prepared their favourite dishes, which are usually European dishes. The ritualized consumption of food was followed by a Eucharist ritual. For the Eucharist ritual OMG members were instructed to partake red grape juice and unsliced bread. I partook in two different feasting rituals during fieldwork, with different families. When we *feasted* at Nyasha's home, the wife prepared a three-course meal - with starter, main meal and dessert. After the dessert, we

²⁷⁸ Thick porridge made from pounded maize

²⁷⁹ Fasting involves abstinence from food for a specified period of time. Christian fasting comes in many forms.

²⁸⁰ Prophet Ben taught that God is not a God who enjoys to see his people in pain, fasting is a painful way of worshipping. God encouraged feasting and not fasting, he read through a number of biblical verses when feasting was summoned by God. 2017, he declared, was a year in which OMG members follow the desires of God through feasting.



performed the Eucharist ritual. The following day after the ritual Nyasha expressed his desire to continue consuming such meals in future.

Yesterday we ate like kings, *baba*...I think this is close to what prophet has every day, he employed a chef. He is pushing us towards his own style of living. Have you ever felt his skin, its smooth, velvet-like, it's because of nice food?... I enjoyed the meal. It's something I will work towards... When I checked in at OMG Prayer Resort, the food that I ate, I told my wife about it and told her that it's something we must aim for in our life... its heavenly...

Clearly the consumption of certain foods is not an ordinary event. At particular times, consumption of food has transformative potential to allow OMG members to experience the future envisioned by the prophet. Consumption of food reveals the standard of living OMG members wish to attain (see also van der Veen, 2003: 409). Feasting rituals offer OMG members an alternative life radically different from the gruelling life most Zimbabweans live. Most Zimbabweans cannot afford to have three meals a day²⁸¹. The other time I joined another family for the *feasts* I observed that the family was expectant. The dinner was treated as an extraordinary event, with the family in clean and creased clothes. The excitement was evident among the members of the family, and comments on how delicious the food was were expressed by everyone. The wife who had prepared the food just remarked that the anointing of the prophet has enhanced the taste of the food. The husband made a comment which interested me. He thanked the prophet for introducing him to fruit juice which he had avoided because of high price.

At workplace, my managers consume these 100% (fruit juice), I always told myself that it's for the rich. The prophet's grace has elevated me to the extent that I will have it at dinner, this is not the last time that I buy these beverages, I will have them every day with my family... that's how we grow. Everything has its beginning ...

100% fruit juices are pricey when compared to other fizzy drinks. On average a litre of fruit juice goes for over US\$2.50 while a litre of fizzy beverages goes for US\$1.00. Consumption is an arena where Pentecostals signal and symbolize the transformations and vision they have. The transformation and vision are spurred by the Pentecostal religion rather than the government. The act of eating and the food

²⁸¹ Often most families skip lunch or delay breakfast and combine it with lunch (brunch). Zimbabweans also refer to this as 011, 101 and 001 with ta 0 denoting the skipped meal.



are ritualized endowing them with new meaning beyond the ordinary need of sustaining the physical bodies through provision of nutrients. Through feasting OMG is reminding its members of a better future they could lead but cannot afford due to mismanagement of the economy by the ZANU PF government. OMG members catch a glimpse of the future through the ritualized consumption of food. This ritual captures and materializes the hopes and aspirations that most Zimbabweans have but lack the means of achieving.

There are spaces and places of consumption that concretize the future and the version of society OMG has to offer. OMG Prayer Resorts, which I discussed in the last section of chapter 4, are models that showcase the future OMG promises and a different life from the one most Zimbabweans are familiar with. The consumption of food at The Prayer Resorts conveys this clearly. The consumption of food at Prayer Resort is different in a number of ways from the everyday foods that most congregants are used to. I will focus on food and Wi-Fi. The food served at Prayer Resort is typical English breakfast consisting of bacon, eggs, sausage and baked beans, bread and tea or coffee. Furthermore, lunch and breakfast are served with a wide varied of foods to choose from. These food items are unaffordable for most Zimbabweans thus the Prayer Resort represents the lifestyle most Zimbabweans desire but cannot lead due to the economic hardship. Furthermore, internet bundles are expensive in Zimbabwe, at the Prayer Resort there was free Wi-Fi though erratic. Such experiences of free wi-fi and different food at Prayer Resort had a lasting imprint on most guests. Some of the guests made it clear that this was the lifestyle they longed for and desired but fail to materialize due to increasing levels of poverty. I now turn to everyday consumption and exchange of food among OMG Pentecostal Charismatics.

7.4.2 Food and Social Hierarchies

Exchange of goods is a way of binding OMG members together, simultaneously preaching to them through the goods that God has provide to the giver. As I have shown above through inviting and ferrying their neighbour to church services and work, the Moyo's claim a higher social position as compared to the neighbours they assist. Congregants who allow fellow congregants access to commodities tend to



occupy a higher moral position than the receiver. In displaying their commodities and distributing some to others, OMG Pentecostals are making a statement about their position *vis- a- vis* the receiver. This brings us back to the distribution of clothes and food to prisoners and orphans that I discussed in chapter 6, the display and distribution imitate the potlatch in which commodities are distributed to the person of lower social and economic position as a way of reinforcing the givers' higher religious, social and economic standing (Graeber, 2001).

OMG Pentecostals perceive themselves as a family. Exchange of food and groceries is at the centre of tying together OMG members into a family with stronger relations and bonds. My observations at OMG re-echoes Haynes (2012) finding among Pentecostals in Zambia. The exchange of commodities is at the centre of weaving intimate relations among Pentecostals in Nsofu. On several occasions I witnessed Nicky purchasing groceries for Stenny whose truck was accident-damaged. While Nicky shared food items to reinforce his higher standing when compared to Stenny, the two families had stronger ties. Each knew the parents and siblings of the other despite that both of their parents were neither members of OMG nor resided in Harare.

Commodity exchange and distribution among members informed moral construction among Pentecostals. As I indicated in chapter 1 and 5, I often took with me few groceries to some OMG families that I visited. Food was prepared for me, and I ate. That was how they showed gratitude for the groceries. Nyasha and his wife incessantly thanked me for the groceries I bought during my stay, even when I brought something for the children. These incidents would find their way into prayers, instructing God to bless me more. In return I received a number of religious commodities from a number of OMG members. I received a bible, wrist-bands, posters, note books and pens. These commodities served as means of welcoming me into OMG family. Contrary to claims running through literature that commodity consumption is detrimental to intimate relations, among OMG members commodity consumption and exchange mediate intimacy, cohesion and lasting relations.



Prophet Ben and Prophetess Jane's birthday, I discussed in the previous chapter as ways of reaching out to the wider society through religious systems of welfare, are also incidents of food consumption. I have come across images of the birthday celebration, showing huge quantities of food on tables. OMG members who have attended the birthday celebrations described in detail the large amount of food during these occasions. The pictures show that prophet(ess)'s birthday parties are "large-scale consumption events... at special locations" (van der Veen, 2003: 415). The selection of locations is crucial, in 2016 Prophet Ben held his party at Rainbow Towers while Prophetess Jane opted for Chukurubi Maximum Prison. The locations of the parties and the exotic dishes serves to legitimize the position of the prophets. Such events are similar to potlach (Graeber, 2001: 191-192) and patron-client feasts (Dietler, 1996: 92) in which the host aim to reiterate their high social and economic position. The prophets view the birthday celebrations as yearly events in which economic capital is converted to symbolic and cultural capital.

The ability to feed OVCs exotic 'luxury foods', and the consumption of fruit juice going for over USD 2.50 in a country with more than three quarters of the population living on less than a dollar a day serves as a way of segmentation for OMG members. The consumption of exotic food is not mere imitation of foreign culture or "senseless pastiche" (Ger and Belk, 1996: 296), it is an attempt to effect and construct certain level of living standards associated with OMG. The government's failure to raise standards of living is being countered by the OMG which is creating and ritualizing its own living standards. I have discussed the consumption patterns among OMG members, ethnographic observation has made it easy for us to read into the meanings that Pentecostals place on their consumption. From an outsider's perspective, Pentecostal consumption can be mistaken for mere "showing off" yet there is more to it. It is important not to place the consumption of global commodities by Africans as imitating Europeans, Americans or the middle-class, OMG Pentecostals creatively incorporate commodities into every day and religious life. Consumption is a way of engaging with the failure of the post-colonial government.



7.4.3 Swallowship and Pentecostal Networking

Consumption and exchange of food is at the centre of knitting together OMG community. OMG members organize events where they come together and share food. These events are called *swallowship*. These events serve two purpose, namely fostering relationship and fellowship among OMG members; and to acquaint OMG members with activities that are common among the upwardly mobile Zimbabweans. Sections of the Zimbabwean society that have experienced upward mobility economically (socialites) and politically have popularized the weekend braai joint. Colleagues bring food and beer to the joint, where they discuss various issues over the braai. The same idea of joints is present among OMG Pentecostals, in a number of ways the joints mirror those of socialites. The religious joint has been renamed *swallowship*²⁸² to differentiate it from other weekend joints. The weekend *swallowship* are organized at zonal level. Pentecostals bring meat, snacks and non-alcoholic beverages to the *swallowship*. It was more of a bring-and-share arrangement. It brought OMG Pentecostals together on some Saturdays. *Swallowship* joints serve another function, smoothening the ethnic, political and economic division that characterize Zimbabwean society in general and OMG members in particular. Furthermore, *swallowship* joints removed the divide between sacred and profane, as consumption of everyday foods is combined with worshipping. Consumption serves as a mechanism for facilitating the collapse of this barrier. Miller (2005) argues that sharing and exchange of commodities, in this case food, helps to index and express warm relations among OMG members.

The setup at *swallowship* joint is similar to that of socialite joints in Zimbabwe and middle-class people in South Africa as discussed by Krige (2011) and Taru and Settler (2015: 127- 132). Through *swallowship* OMG Pentecostals make a statement about their aspiration and hope in performing rites associated with the elites in Zimbabwe and South Africa. What distinguish the two joints is that the *swallowship* opened and closed with a prayer and that it lacked alcoholic beverages. The performative aspect of *swallowship* is a clear indication of the aspiration of

²⁸² A compound word built from *Swallow* (eating) and *Worship* to give swallowship – an event where Pentecostals meet for braai while discussing and encouraging each other.



lifestyle associated with the elite in Zimbabwe. Consumption of food indexes the hopes and aspiration of Pentecostals as they organize events that are mainly associated and or resemble elite joints. *Swallowship* is one way through which congregants develop intimate relationship outside of the church premises. During Men's Clinic session²⁸³, I also observed that the last event was a braai. These activities, the days and time mirrored those the Zimbabwean socialites gathered for their joints. Pooling together food and sharing that knit together the Pentecostals into a family (van der Veen, 2003).

Consumption of particular food is an act of making social, economic, political and religious statement about the persons involved (Krige, 2011, Ger and Belk, 1996, Wilk, 1995). In discussing the transformation from other types of beers to *Castle Light*, Krige (2011) argues that males in Soweto were not only indexing the upward mobility they were undergoing, they were also pointing to their aspiration. Consumption of food is a rite of passage into new social categories and segmentations (Appadurai 1981). In the case of males discussed by Krige (2011), it was a sign of movement into higher social and economic position, into the middle-class. OMG Pentecostal's consumption of certain food indexed shared lifestyle modelled around the vision Prophet Ben has for his followers.

7.4.4 Consumption theologies

Consumption is discursively framed as a salvation. One's ability to consume certain commodities is a sign that one is blessed and living within the accepted doctrine. If a member works hard, tithes faithfully, follows all teachings and is prayerful, God would reward him with material wealth whose manifestation is in consumption and indulgence. Through consumption, Prophet Ben and OMG members aim to show Zimbabweans that Christianity is not about being poor or living in deprivation. He emphasised the idea that God is wealthy that the "sidewalks of Jerusalem are paved with gold". While preaching a sermon titled *Light* Prophet Ben dwelt much the book of Daniel 10 verse 5. He explained to his followers that an angel from heaven dressed in fine linen and had a belt made from gold. Prophet Ben reasoned that if such opulence is acceptable in heaven, it must be the norm on earth. This was

²⁸³ Men's Clinic were held irregularly by usually on Friday evenings



received with wild cheers. On this basis, most congregants believe they have every reason to be rich and consume all commodities that convey status. One congregant told me that Jesus, Daniel, Abraham and Solomon were wealthy Christians. In the congregant's opinion Prophet Ben was only continuing with the trend. Consumption is a way of confirming one's good standing with the God. Commodity consumption is also a way of evangelizing and preaching the type of God whom OMG believe in.

The commodities consumed are closely tied to the self- an extension of one's social and spiritual self (Belk, 1988; Mittal, 2006). Congregants often referred to commodities such as houses, vehicles, house property as *blessings* from God. Some congregants noted that when one is in God's favour, God opens means for the person to prosper materially. Amongst OMG Pentecostals display of wealth through consumption is not frowned upon, instead it is encouraged and celebrated.

7.5 Entrepreneurship

In this section I shift from consumption to production with the aim of showing that OMG has a number of initiatives that help some of its members to afford extravagant lifestyles. When I first encountered OMG members around 2010 its members relied on mantles - piece of fabric believed to be sacred - which Pentecostals used to wipe commodities they desired. In such instances, consumption was mediated through supernatural means, sacral mantles and the ritual of wiping the commodities that one desired to consume (see Taru and Settler, 2015). To some degree, Comaroff and Comaroff (2001b) are correct, Pentecostal Charismatic consumption is mediated through occult economies, and the discussion above confirms this. However, when I returned to OMG in 2016 a lot had changed. OMG had put in place programmes that equip congregants with knowledge in financial literacy, saving and ways of making God sanctioned money through hard work. Furthermore, OMG has created a housing cooperative to help members own houses in OMG City. There is a shift towards pragmatism. As I noted in chapter 4 OMG has become a church with membership from all sectors of the economy. The inclusion of professionals amongst its membership, with some of them holding key position may partly explain the shift from over-reliance on supernatural means of acquiring wealth to practical ways of wealth accumulation. As I have discussed in chapter 5, OMG is encouraging



entrepreneurship among its members and engages corporates such as Old Mutual to train members on saving, financial management and investments.

7.6 Conclusion

I have argued so far that OMG is appropriating aspects of chieftaincy whilst simultaneously filling the gap left by the post-independence government. OMG adopts a number of strategies to achieve this. In chapter six I have shown how the construction of OMG city will serve as a mirror to the post-independence government. Consumption is another arena in which OMG members find alternatives in areas where the government is lacking. I re-emphasise a point I made earlier, that the post-colonial Zimbabwean state is powerful and continue to exercise power and authority in some aspects while absent in some. Despite exercising authority and wielding power, the Zimbabwean government lacks legitimacy in the eyes of many citizens. Its inability and unwillingness to formulate policy that might alleviate the plight of the majority erodes its legitimacy²⁸⁴ in most Zimbabweans' eyes. Some have 'voted with their feet', submitting themselves under foreign government. Zimbabweans who have remained home have shifted attention from the government to other 'islands of security'. Historically, categories of population marginalized by the government develop alternative 'sovereignties' and 'island of securities' to cushion themselves and as a resistance to the state's position (see chapter 8 in Krige, 2011). The emergent sovereignties are "constituted as sites adjacent and parallel to the state, at once parasitic and depended" (ibid, 318). The same process is unfolding with OMG which is developing alternative systems through a number of ways, in which consumption is one. Consumption by OMG members is producing 'new' subjects. OMG's alternative is hinged on a number of state institutions and chieftaincy but is diametrically different from both.

²⁸⁴ Since 2008 ZANU PF government has suffered from legitimacy crisis. There have been cases of election rigging, voter intimidation and violence. Recently, 2018 election were decided through the court amid Zimbabwe Electoral Commission downward reviewing of Emmerson Mnangagwa's votes.



ZANU PF government has unsuccessfully tried to foist national identity among Zimbabweans²⁸⁵. The citizens remain divided along ethnic and racial divisions. Citizens have been banned to carry or wear the national flag, severing citizens from national symbols²⁸⁶. OMG is creating stronger networks and social formations among its membership. Commodity consumption and exchange facilitate this process. Events such as swallowship and feasting unite OMG Pentecostals and their families.

As I have showed consumption is a multi-layered practice with a multiple meaning among various categories in society. OMG Pentecostals discursively insert consumption of commodities into their religious and everyday lives in a creative way. Commodity consumption takes part in the moral and material construction of selfhood among Pentecostals. Some religious commodities are extension of persons, carrying with them the charisma of the giver. Commodity value is not based on the monetary value of the commodity but the giver's religious life, position on hierarchies of charisma and social position. Commodity consumption is a way of embracing, fashioning, and indexing Pentecostal hope, aspirations as well as life world they wish to create on earth. Consumption has a political side to it; it forms

²⁸⁵ The attempts to unite Zimbabweans are evident in national holidays such as Unity Day celebrations held on 22 December; Heroes' Day in August and Independence Day in April. Furthermore, the government has organized musical galas across the country to unite Zimbabweans in celebrations of national heroes. The setting up of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission is a pointer towards attempt by the ZANU PF government to foster unity in post-colonial Zimbabwe. These efforts have failed because they have been run on partisan basis.

²⁸⁶ This is another example of how the state invoke lawfare to punish its citizenry. I have discussed issues of lawfare in chapter two. On September 20 the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs warned citizens against using the national flag without government's approval. The offence is punishable by a fine of UD\$ 200, and or a jail term of up to six months. Flag of Zimbabwe Act (Chapter 10:10) and Flag of Zimbabwe (Use and Application of Flag) Regulations, 1987, Statutory Instrument 194 of 1987 made it illegal to "burn, mutilate or otherwise insult the national flag ... in circumstances which are calculated or likely to show disrespect ... or to bring (the flag and nation) into disrepute." 'Disrespect' 'otherwise insult' and 'disrepute' are vague and broad term that any act may be define as such by the state.



the basis upon which power is contested by harnessing symbols of power associated with the political leadership (Friedman, 1994; Krige 2011). The failure of the government to manage the economy, create employment and economic opportunities for its citizens creates a rift with its general citizenry. The emergence of Pentecostal movements cultivating trust and embracing ordinary people provides people with an alternative to the government. OMG construct themselves as moral communities, something which the Zimbabwean state has failed. OMG capitalise on the inadequacies of the state to build its movement by 'filling in' the crevices in the state structure.

While consumption is central to OMG members, production and social reproduction are important. OMG has several ways for opening avenues for its members to earn money that supports both the ministry and their consumption of commodities. A number of initiatives such as conferences and workshops on saving, investment and financial literacy; trainings, housing initiatives and offering tenders to members are some of the ways in which the ministry is assisting members to accumulate wealth and money to finance their consumption and display of commodities. The popular 'occult paradigm' that runs across several ethnographic accounts on Pentecostalism in Africa are appealing but what obtains at OMG is complex and cannot be read as mere occultation. There are pragmatic approaches that OMG is encouraging among its members. These approaches come at a time the state has failed to deliver of its election promises and has drastically withdrawn from social welfare provisioning.

The ethnographic evidence discussed in the last three chapters illustrates ways in which OMG sits somewhere between socialism and neoliberal capitalism. OMG is notable for its distribution of wealth, almost like socialism, with a huge welfare state-type operations. Simultaneously, OMG promotes a western form of modernity through consumption of western commodities. Consumption of western commodities is at the centre of OMG theology. Whilst these comparison with socialism and neoliberalism have supporting evidence present in previous chapters, they also have their limits. I have raised the comparison as an analytical device to show that, - *perhaps* - OMG is a combination of neoliberal type of tough luck



(mirroring 'the west') and the socialist-type of welfarism that is attractive to contemporary Zimbabweans.



8. SPIRITUAL HUSTLING : SUITS AND CROOKS

When you see all these guys in these double-breasted suits you would think they got it from the same shop where Prophet Ben buys his. These guys go to Dublin House²⁸⁷ and order (double-breasted) suits and African attires that are similar to those of the prophet. Mu-dhabhirwa²⁸⁸, zhing zhong²⁸⁹ from Dublin House. These sons of the prophet lower papa's level, if you look at prophet's suits, they are good quality, not these ones you see those boys in (pointing at some boys at a distance)

[OMG congregant during a conversation while we waited for the second service]

8.1 Introduction

In this final ethnographic chapter, I discuss the everyday lives of Pentecostals with regards to consumption among some of OMG members at a time the Zimbabwean economy is poorly performing. In this chapter I argue that through consumption the clergy and OMG member who sit in the VIP section at OMG trivialize the state in the eyes of their members as they claim that their access to global commodities and luxuries is mediated by God rather than the state. Commodities such as clothes, vehicles and church equipment such as state-of-the-art public addressing system²⁹⁰ are understood by OMG Pentecostals as blessings from God at a time the Zimbabwean government pursues its 'Look East Policy' which has opened up avenues for commodities that most Zimbabweans consider inferior in quality. The bulk of Asian goods are generally called *zhing-zhong* or *fong-kong* because most Zimbabweans perceive them as inferior to European and American commodities.

While some OMG members 'manage' to consume commodities that the clergy encourage and promote, a lot of activities go on in supporting such consumption.

²⁸⁷ A building in Harare's Central Business Unit. There are cheap tailors housed there.

²⁸⁸ A colloquial word derived from 'dubbing'

²⁸⁹ A colloquial for counterfeit goods especially of Chinese origin.

²⁹⁰ The Italian made PA system was used at Emmerson Mnangagwa's inauguration ceremonies. OMG members claimed that the government needs the church more than the church needs the government. To them, the government has to run to OMG for assistance. Furthermore, OMG musicians and choir performed at the events. For more detail on the PA system see the second footnote in chapter four.



As I highlighted in chapter two, OMG members are drawn from a cross section of the Zimbabwean population. The composition of OMG members consists of members in the informal economy, the formally employed, corporate executives, the working class, farmers and political elites among others. In this chapter I present the everyday realities some OMG members go through to sustain materialism and consumption informed by the specific variant of Pentecostalism they are part of.

In this chapter I aim to vividly situate performative aspects of commodity consumption within the obtaining objective realities in Zimbabwe. While consumption ethos is shared by most of the congregants I interviewed and interacted with; the means through which some of these members become part of consuming groups is fraught with actions that may assist us in understanding what goes on behind the scenes. I wish to shift to the 'back stage', the hidden and concealed aspects of 'spiritual hustling' that remain secluded in most studies on consumption that focus on the 'front stage.' A lot of shortcuts and underhand dealings remain unseen in some ethnographic accounts on consumption by Christians (Meyer, 1998b; Taru and Settler, 2015; Stambach, 2000). I shift away from the brands and brand-showcasing to how the products become owned or displayed by the congregants.

This chapter aims to answer the following questions: Who mediates access to these commodities? How are commodities acquired? How are the commodities displayed and how do other members of OMG and those in the social circles of the congregants respond to the display and consumption of commodities? Consumption is a practice that goes beyond the mere act of consuming and displaying the commodities.

8.2 Pentecostalism, Commodities and Fetishism

For long discussions of the consumption of commodities have been dominated by introduction of foreign commodities brought with it alienation and commodity fetishism that result from the inception of societies into the global capitalist system whose operations were different from the one the societies were familiar with. For example, Taussig (2010) offers insights into how Bolivian and Colombian peasants



reacted to their incorporation into capitalist system. For Taussig, inception of market economy complicates life through the separation of production and consumption process. This complicates the use-value by imposing market-value. Bolivians could not account for the whole process of production, thus creatively incorporated the idea of the devil to comprehend the shift that market economy had brought. Foreign commodities, acquired from market economy, are fetishized. Foreign commodities were attributed a “life, autonomy, power, and even dominance” over Bolivians (Taussig, 2010: 31). The association of foreign commodities with market economy (devil) had a “dismembering” effect on social relationships (Taussig, 2010: 31).

In Africa among Ghanaian Pentecostals, Meyer (1998b: 751) has made similar observations. As Ghanaians Pentecostals come to terms with the ‘enchanted global economy’, commodities are fetishized. Foreign commodities that Pentecostals desire to consume and display are often thought of as being imbued with evil spirits that harm the consumer. Commodities such as pants and dresses are perceived as doorways through which mishaps, problems and ailments come into a Pentecostal’s life.

There is thus evidence of an established ethnographic record which points to a general perception that if Pentecostal focus on global commodities, their attention is diverted from God. In the same vein with Taussig (2010: 231), Meyer (1998b: 752) notes that shops, commodities and market economy are associated with the devil. There are dangers in commodities and market if they are accessed or consumed without caution. For Taussig (2010: 231) luxury commodities acquired through pacts with the devil dismember social relations stifling social reproduction. Meyer (1998b: 756 – 767) observes that commodities affects intimate relationships with God.

In order to de-fetishize commodities, Pentecostals either avoid excessive association with foreign commodities or pray for the commodities before purchasing or make use of the commodities (Meyer, 1998b: 752). In both these studies commodities are portrayed as having a domineering influence on their owners. Fetishism reduces agency in people but imbues higher degree of power and autonomy to commodities. People have the means to creatively incorporate



commodities in their lives without losing control and sense of direction. People allow commodities to be an extension of their being²⁹¹, as well as a means of objectifying their lifeworld (Miller, 1987). The mediatory role of commodities in bridging the flow between the global and the local is crucial. However, explaining it in terms of fetishism reifies social life. Studies on commodity consumption need to go beyond fetishism to reclaim the creativity and agency in humans (Miller, 1990: 101–102). I do not dismiss the commodity fetishism thesis completely, commodities may be endowed with some degree of autonomy and special qualities that people may revere, however, the agency of the people must not be downplayed. I will start by outlining ways in which OMG Pentecostals creatively interact with commodities. I will then show a salient form of relationship OMG Pentecostals have developed with commodities and things. There are some commodities whose reverence and awe are derived from persons such as prophets, for example, a wristband given to a congregant by Pastor Danny (discussed in the previous chapter). The commodities are neither autonomous nor powerful on their own, but in relation to specific persons who are in turn believed to have specific relationship with the divine.

8.3 Consumption and everyday realities in Zimbabwe

Below I shall discuss the ambivalence that characterized consumption among some Zimbabweans in general and OMG Pentecostals in particular. Unlike Pentecostals discussed by Meyer (1998b) OMG Pentecostals are interested in commodities, they are part of what it means to be a Pentecostal. OMG Pentecostals seek after commodities, though they know of the dangers that some commodities carry, especially those from potentially jealousy relatives and friends. Framing OMG consumption patterns within Zimbabwean political economic environment and OMG theology will bring us close to understanding the dynamic at play. The multi-layered crises that Zimbabwe has experienced have had a toll on citizens' lives. Incomes were eroded that most Zimbabweans failed to maintain a lifestyle they had been accustomed to. At this time, the government of Zimbabwe shifted its focus to Asian countries as most European nations had imposed smart sanctions on Zimbabwe. It

²⁹¹ Marcel Mauss elaborates this idea when he discusses the *hau* the spirit of the person found on the gift he gives.



became difficult and expensive to directly purchase European and American commodities for Zimbabweans, especially ordinary citizens due to lack of foreign currency and a weak Zimbabwean dollar. Government's 'Look East Policy' opened Zimbabweans to Asian commodities. At a time, most Zimbabweans are consuming and displaying Asian commodities, the clergy at OMG is consuming and displaying European commodities such as Italian PA system, German vehicles (Mercedes Benz, Rolls Royce, Lexus), holidays (in USA, UK) and clothes (Stefano Ricci, Angelo Galasso, Christian Dior, Prada and Saint Laurent). As I will show in this chapter, OMG becomes the avenue of availing to members commodities they desire but have been blocked due to government's policies and ideologies. In a subtle way, OMG Pentecostalism is opening up geographical locations and some commodities that the current Zimbabwean government has abandoned and ignored. In the previous chapter I presented a case of an OMG respondent who received a British made SUV through a fellow congregant. OMG gift-related exchanges are allowing OMG members to access commodities that are difficult to obtain for most Zimbabweans due to sour relations between Zimbabwe and most European countries.²⁹²

8.3.1 Beyond the acts of display

To comprehend consumption patterns among particular sections of society calls for research that engage with the practice at different levels. Focus on the practice and display of commodities may narrow our understanding of what goes on before the commodities are displayed. By focusing on the act of consuming and displaying, the autonomy of the actor is stifled (Hahn, 2008). Furthermore, interviewees and

²⁹² It is not only in commodities that OMG is facilitating access to European goods, there are some OMG members that have travelled overseas either accompanying the clergy or after invitation from fellow OMG members. During a sermon on 31 July 2016 one of OMG pastor noted that his "last born child was delivered in Dallas through the grace of the prophet." They had travelled to United States of America on church business for some time and his wife gave birth during the period. The pastor boasted that he was a father of an American. Zimbabweans find it difficult to visit most European and American countries due to high visa cost imposed after the FTLRP. This restriction is blamed on the government that withdrew from the Commonwealth and its bad policies that soured relations with the West.



respondents may not offer 'behind-the-scene' details on how they came to own or possess certain commodities. A sanitized version is often recounted to researchers. From my stay with some OMG members I observed that a lot went on before commodities could be displayed or consumed. Such tales rarely find their way into monographs or see the light of the day. While accounts on discursive incorporation of commodities are important on consumption studies, more needs to be explored outside the 'displaying moments' to contextualize the practice of consumption within the objective reality of a given nation. For the above reasons, I shall focus on forms of acquisitions that I observe.

In this chapter I present a comprehensive approach that captures from forms of acquisition to possession and display of commodities. I adopt Ger. and Belk's (1996) concept of *consumptionscapes* developed from Appadurai's conceptualisation of flow of the global and local in terms of *-scapes*. The concept of *consumptionscapes* accommodates the "fragmented and heterogeneous character of consumption" that is mediated by social and economic classes (Hahn 2008, 11). The recognition of such imbalances in access and flow of commodities among individuals implies differences in acquisition of commodities and the nature of commodities that are displayed.

Copious literature has accounted for social agency that Africans have in localizing global commodities through incorporation into local cultural milieu (Appadurai, 1986; Friedman, 1994; Nyamnjoh, 2005). I wish to add to this body of literature by focusing on the forms of acquisition and motives behind the Pentecostal acquisition and consumption. Friedman's (1994) analysis of consumption among the *La Sape* bounces between France and Congo in a bid to give a comprehensive analysis of the practice. Insights from France acknowledge but shed less light on the hardships that made France "closer to hell" for Congolese whose aim was to organize elegant return parties in Congo, as well as display the commodities (Friedman, 1994: 128). Friedman (1994: 128 - 129) notes that imitations were lowly ranked, affecting the placement of the person in urban economies of prestige. Authentic Westin shoes, for example, conferred higher status than other brands. Literature on consumption among *makorokoza* has been on the increase. However, most studies have been



interested in patterns and nature consumption in the beer, sex and flashy vehicles. Furthermore, the drudgery and risky nature of mining is juxtaposed to the snippets of opulence among *makorokoza* (Cuvelier, 2011, 2017; see Nyota & Sibanda, 2012 in Zimbabwe; Geener, 2015 in Democratic Republic Congo).

8.3.2 Pentecostal ethos: God respects intentions

Pentecostalism is a religious movement that emphasizes personal salvation. The practice of calling converts to the podium to confirm their individual decision to be baptised is interpreted as attesting to this practice of personal salvation. Meyer (1998a) has added another example to support this line of thought. Pentecostals cut kinship and other cultural social formations after conversion. Writing about UKCG in South Africa, Van Wyk (2014a) notes that money from another person is not accepted as an offering to God. Only money that one earned was acceptable before God. UKCG produced individualized relationships with God in the absence of intimate social relations among congregants. The continuous rotation of the clergy limits warm relations between the clergy and the laity. To some extent, the neo-liberal individualism is slowly creeping into religious movements producing different versions of individualism.

Evidence from African Initiated Churches in Zimbabwe, Pentecostal movements included, is contrary to the personal and individualistic claims among Protestants. Christians in AIC continue to cultivate social relations with relatives and parents in rural areas through provision of money and groceries (Engelke, 2010). The observations by Engelke are evident among OMG members; they create intimate bonds among themselves as well as with the wider society including non-member parents, relatives and siblings. Several times during the OMG tithe and offering segment, Pastor Danny instructed attendees to

Check if the person next to you is holding something in his/her hand. If the person is holding nothing please give them something, a dollar or more so that he doesn't miss the opportunity to be blessed by God. The person may be lacking today by God will bless him or her next time...

Giving money to other attendees to donate as an offering to God is acceptable. The blessings expected from the counter-gifts accrue to the person who places the money in the buckets. The relationship with God is not atomized; it is collective as



some congregants assist others to forge this relationship through provision of notes and coins. God accepts such money and gifts because God reads the mind and intention of people. This idea of God judging intentions was supported by a number of congregants through biblical verses such as Matthew 5: 28 and Mark 12: 41-44 which elevate intentions and motives over action. Intentions and actions are equally important for OMG Pentecostals. The application of these 'principles and proclamations' are not limited to tithing and offerings only, OMG Pentecostal extrapolate the same principle of giving to other areas such as consumption and judgement of their actions and deeds. Having laid this background I turn to Pentecostal *consumptionscapes* in which this principle's application is evident.

8.4 Pentecostal Consumptionscapes

In this section I present some of the discrepancies I observed between the display of commodity consumption and everyday realities experienced by some of the Pentecostals I encountered. The section is not an expose, OMG members are sincere Pentecostals who wake-up to pray at midnight or at 3am, earnestly follow the teachings of prophet Ben and believed in the God of the prophet. Commodity consumption is one of the ways their sincerity to God of the prophet manifest and a means to be part of the OMG society. The dire economic situation forces some Pentecostals to cut corners so as to be part of the 'blessed few.' For some Pentecostals, theirs is what Mansvelt (2005: 82) termed 'aspirational consumption.' Congregants consume to become part of the OMG society. This type of consumption is close to a general phenomenon in Zimbabwe where people at times 'fake it till they make it'.

8.4.1 Borrowed robe and salvation

Consumption of commodities especially double-breasted suits and African attires is a way of asserting membership to OMG and implicitly heralding that the tithing system has been bearing fruits for some members. Some of the youthful members I interacted with at OMG were also displaying and consuming 'expensive-looking' clothes and gadgets that did not match the narratives and realities of their life experiences I observed during fieldwork. The clothes, electronic gadgets such as Apple tablets, smart phones and even vehicles that are displayed during services



and at other OMG events were borrowed from families members and friends. There is a performative side to the consumption and display of commodities by some of the youthful members. I must hasten to note that the young Pentecostals are not consuming to be part of the global consumerism culture, which is incidental. This observation contradicts finding by Nyamnjuh (2005), Mate (2014) and Stambach (2000). Nyamnjuh (2005) and Mate (2014: 139) highlight the illicit and intergenerational strategies that Nigerian university students and youths in frontier towns employ to be part of the global consumer culture. Stambach's (2000) discussion of Tanzanian youth reveals that Christian youth associate western clothes with modernity and being global. For OMG youths, the main driver of the consumption is the need to be part of the OMG community in which consumption indexes ones' relationship with the God of Prophet Ben. As I have noted in chapter five, faithful tithers are supposedly rewarded financial and consumption points to wealth and financial prosperity of OMG members. The account by one youthful congregant attests to this:

... Everyone will be dressed to kill, in their best clothes. You cannot come in old jeans and t-shirts. My friends are always in suits sent by their relatives in diaspora, some are working and buy their own clothes, and not all of us can afford it. The economy is a mess, but I also don't want to be left out... I take my brother's clothes and tablet for church service at times, I explained it to him. Through selling CDs and DVDs I can't realize much... life is tough my man, you have to look for ways to dress like other guys. Have you seen the VIP the jackets and the shoes that those guys wear is something else aah!...

Youth are innovative when it comes to consumption. Despite the economic hardship experienced in Zimbabwe, Pentecostal youth continue to display commodities that are far beyond their reach. The need to be part of the religious community pushes many young people into displaying commodities they do not own but have access to. From the above narrative, even from the respondent who received an SUV from Britain, there is a subtle attack on the government for failing to cultivate relations with European countries. Relatives and fellow OMG members in the diaspora are providing commodities and services that Zimbabweans would otherwise have obtained on their own had the government not withdrawn from Commonwealth or embarked on FTRLP. OMG in its own way is reopening relations and exchanges between its member at home and those in the diaspora.



Borrowed clothes give a wrong impression about the lifestyle and the blessing that members claim. The social/religious biographical account of things approach has the strength of unearthing such incongruences among the consumer. The display of commodities by those in the 'VIP section' continues to give hope and inspiration to other congregants who are yet to realize their breakthrough. Hope and trust are derived from the VIP section which continues to display commodities that are desired by the youth and other members who cannot afford them. The youth devise ways of imitating in what is out of their reach. They opt to 'borrow' from others. When it comes to consumption, the youth are creative; they find ways of accessing commodities through other people. Where their access is denied, youths depend on the older generations in the form of brothers, sugar daddies and NGOs act as conduit for accessing global commodities (Mate, 2014, Nyamnjob, 2005 and Stambach, 2000).

8.4.2 The suit, the crook and the crooks in suit

Consumption is about moralities and values, the choice of one commodity over another, the thoughtful consideration about the self and the impression the commodity has on others illustrates this. There are issues of ethics that consumption brings. What does one consider when buying a commodity? Which values inform his choice? What goes in the mind of a person who display what is not his / hers? The consumption and exchange of commodities follow the social and economic hierarchies that inform relations among OMG members. A few days before ANNP member of the security department were given instructions on the uniform/clothes they would put on the day. A black suit, white shirt and red neck-tie. Nyasha called me to accompany him to purchase the 'uniform.' He already had similar clothes in his wardrobe, but he did not want to wear them. Knowing his financial position from our previous conversations a few days earlier, I discouraged him from buying new set of clothes but to wear the old ones he already had. Nyasha took no heed of my advice; he had decided to withdraw some money from his business so that he could buy new clothes for the event. We scouted around the CBD for the clothes. Nyasha wanted new clothes visibly differently from the one he had, at the same time he wanted them cheap so that he reduces the amount withdrawn from his business.



Nyasha took me to a shop that sells clothes at lower prices. We perused through the clothes in stock until Nyasha found a white shirt, black suit and shoes that he bought. As we left the shop, Nyasha thoughtfully said to me

These clothes are not the ones I should be buying, but I can't afford expensive clothes. If the prophet would find out that this is where I buy my clothes, he would not be happy. Look at the shoes, I don't like the finishing, but I have no option, I have to buy them, I cannot be seen in my old shoes, they are too common now, everyone at our department knows them. I will attend the all-night in these (new shoes) then I will give the shoes and the suit to my young brother. He will be happy and will think I spent a fortune on them. I cannot be seen in these shoes and suit, look at the jacket no no no!

The consumption and display of 'elegant' clothes are riddled with underhand dealings. Such clothes are both a parade and parody of elegance as some of the clothes are cheaply acquired. If consumption is a sign of being blessed, then at times some of the OMG Pentecostals are deliberately giving the wrong impression through consuming and displaying cheap clothes. The practice of consumption in this context is mere performance of being blessed – but – it could be argued, that this is a microcosm of the entire Pentecostal enterprise.

I later learnt that the shop we bought Nyasha's clothes from was in the habit of placing label associated with elegance on clothes sewn by their tailors. The clothes carried labels that gave decency and elegance to the wearer, yet they were fake. I inquired how Nyasha came to know of the shop, he told me that he has bought many clothes from the shop and oftentimes people always mistaken the clothes for the ones bought from Edgars and Truthworth or other exclusive retail shops. Nyasha was tricking fellow believers through consumption of cheap clothes which he presented as expensive and elegant. As I highlighted above, OMG members believe that God reads and rewards their intentions and aspirations of consuming better quality of commodities than the current ones. If consumption is a way of indexing one's aspirations, then faking it is not an issue but a bold claim to one's aspirations and hopes. This phenomenon must be read within this context in order for us not reduce OMG members to phony Christians who knowingly deceive others.

Nyasha later on gave the pair of shoes and the jacket to his young brother who is also a member of OMG. Around November, I met Nyasha's young brother during a



service, he was in the pair of shoes that Nyasha had given to him. For the young brother, who was waiting for his Ordinary Level²⁹³ results, the pair of shoes was a blessing. I inquired if the pair of shoes was a perfect fit, the young brother noted that it was his right size. He told me that for some months he has been praying for new clothes, and God responded by sending the pair of shoes and the jacket to him through Nyasha. He was visibly happy with the pairs of black shoes, especially the style. He was in grey trousers and a maroon shirt, clean and creased and the black jacket. The young brother explained the shoes as a blessing from God. He displayed the well-polished shoes which were made more prominent by the white socks he was putting on. The same pair of shoes Nyasha had 'reluctantly' displayed in August, were the same shoes his young brother was displaying as a blessing. For Nyasha, the shoes were just a temporary measure of index financial blessing, while they were God-sent for his young brother. The religious biography of the pair of shoes and jacket is complex, shifting from being a temporary measure to a blessing.

While there are some elements of dishonest in Nyasha's story, the story brings another dimension to religious consumption. OMG members retool the notion of prosperity through consumption of cheap clothes. For the unemployed and the poor, the mere act of buying clothes is defined as the first step towards prosperity. The clothes Nyasha gave to his young brother were read by the young brother as a sign that Nyasha was prospering financially. He expressed his joy for his brother whom God was blessing so that he can bless others. The young brother lacked information of how Nyasha came to buy the pair of shoes and the jacket and why he gave him the clothes. I had such information and knew that Nyasha had given him the clothes because he felt that they were not in line with what the prophet expects from them. It is only the young and the unemployed who accept such clothes as a sign of prosperity. Nyasha's young brother was not ashamed to display the shoes as a sign of God's blessings in times of economic and political crisis. Prosperity is after all relative to one's social and economic position in society. Different categories and individuals redefine what prosperity means to and for them. Furthermore, Nyasha's donation to his young brother illustrates ways in which consumption may enable

²⁹³ General Certificate of Secondary Education



some Pentecostals to strengthen social relations between relatives and friends. It is common for Pentecostals to 'bless' fellow Pentecostals and relatives with clothes and gadgets.

8.4.3 Spiritual Hustlers: Faith it 'till you make it

The situation portrayed in the opening vignette is common among OMG members. They have managed to imitate and look like prophet Ben, through consumption of cheap and counterfeit commodities. The act of consuming such clothes give semblance of upward mobility in unison with the prophet and the prophet's vision, yet in reality, the commodities consumed are cheap and phony. There are some congregants who had mastered the art of imitating and the performative aspect of consumption. Such congregants had their own way of being part of the consumption rituals. I once accompanied three OMG members to a boutique operated by prophetess Jane at a posh mall on the leafy-side of Harare. For some time, we inspected the clothes in stock. As we drove back to the CBD each of the three congregants spoke of the clothes designs and styles that they would imitate. The congregants instructed their tailors to make garments similar to those in prophetess' shop. Such clothes came with more prestige among congregants who had knowledge of the clothes in stock at the prophetess' shop. The clothes at her shop are held in high esteem by most congregants. The values associated with the clothes is derived from the prices charged for them, as well as from being similar to some of the clothes that the prophet wears. The display of clothes similar to the prophet's marked entry into OMG economies of prestige.

The congregants justified their consumption patterns in a number of ways. One of the congregants noted that at least he was not acquiring the clothes through 'stealing.' His actions were a means through which he confirms and accept his membership in the OMG economies of prestige. The other congregant told me that he was acquainting himself with the consumption and lifestyle proclaimed by the prophet. The store was instructive of the type of clothes they should wear. The congregant expressed his desire to buy clothes from the shop one day. The prices of the clothes were high with most shirts going for over USD 75. The congregants could not afford the clothes and opted for tailors who would produce a similar shirt



for less than USD 15. The vignette at the beginning of the chapter highlights the aspirational consumption prevalent among OMG congregants (Mansvelt, 2005: 82). Congregants are at pains to be part of the OMG economies of prestige through imitating the clothes being sold by the prophetess. Congregants approach backyard tailors to make clothes that enable them to be part of prestige economies. There is vibrant 'hidden economy' at Dublin House and a number of buildings along Chinhoyi Streets in Harare where imitations of more expensive clothes are made. The majority of the tailors making imitations garments are OMG members²⁹⁴. For these members, they made the garments with full knowledge that they were imitations of prophet Ben's and prophetess Jane's clothes as well as clothes at prophetess Jane's boutique. Here we start to see OMG Pentecostal heavily borrowing from the situation in post-colonial Zimbabwe where the informal economy is dominant. As I noted in chapter three, the majority of Zimbabweans operate in the underground informal economy as the formal economy has shrunk. The post-colonial state has taught Zimbabweans in general and OMG members in particular that there are underground ways of accessing commodities. Some OMG members are *kukiya kiya* through spiritual concerns in the same manner their hustle through life on a daily basis.

For some congregants in the same situation as the three congregants I accompanied to prophetess' boutique, consumption of clothes is more than just the act of self-fashioning. These forms of consumption are both prayers and petitions to God. One of the congregants told me that in wearing the cheap imitations, God sees the aspiration in her to put on expensive clothes and cosmetic similar to those worn by the prophetess. In putting-on imitations, the congregants are challenging God to provide the congregants with the commodities that they aspire to own and display. The general phenomena of 'faking it till you make it' in Zimbabwe is replaced by 'faith it till you make it' for OMG Pentecostals. Consumption is way of challenging

²⁹⁴ Nicky and I visited one of the places where these imitations are made. A couple from OMG had employed other four members and were making clothes. OMG members bought less expensive imitations from them. This reflects the situation I discussed in chapter three. The informal economy has grown bigger than the formal economy.



and petitioning God to provide means for the congregants to access the authentic Mac and Flori Roberts cosmetic and clothes. The belief that God reads the mind and knows human intentions and aspirations informs congregants creative motives behind the consumption of cheap imitations.

8.4.4 “This is who we are...!”

The cases I have discussed above give one side of the story: OMG Pentecostal Charismatics are cheats and phony. This is not the complete truth. I encountered a number of OMG members who consumed and displayed commodities that they had purchased, owned and were bought or imported from overseas. I interview some congregants who could afford to buy commodities from exclusive shops. The commodities ranged from brand new German-made vehicles, clothes, home furniture and appliances. The commodities were part of who they are. One female congregant showed me a number of clothes she had bought from United Kingdom and Italy when she visited. Commodity consumption is a way of reinforcing Pentecostal identities promoted at OMG. Clothes, vehicles and house are ways through which some OMG Pentecostals assert their identities. For such congregants, commodities consumption project the identities OMG Pentecostals want the world to see. They are connecting to the sermons, visions and hope that prophet Ben has for his followers. The interviewee once remarked that:

We (OMG members) have to be different from the other people out there, we are not same, we have a special covering and lifestyle. We dress, eat, walk and pray in way that show who we are. We are God's chosen ones, we are blessed, highly favoured. We wear expensive and quality clothes *zvakaoma kudaro*²⁹⁵ *munyika yasekuru*, this is who we are *tiri vana vemuporofita*²⁹⁶ we are not limited by anything...

Consumption is thus expressive of who OMG members are, furthermore, it indexes the prosperity and upward mobility experienced by some of the congregants. The dressing, the vehicles, the amounts such members donate to OMG and their houses are testimonies that point to other OMG members as well as non-members what OMG offers. The prophet is the icon when it comes the showing the world what God wants his followers to live like. Prophet Ben wears bespoke Angelo Galasso,

²⁹⁵ In such trying times in Zimbabwe under a nonagenarian leader

²⁹⁶ We are the followers of the prophet



Christian Dior, Prada and Saint Laurent shirts, shoes and suits. The suits come in different types and styles: double and single breast; shawl and peak lapels as well as half and full canvass lining suits. On 08 August 2017, 12 August 2016, 29 September 2016 and 27 July 2016 prophet Ben was posted on Angelo Galasso Facebook page donning their bespoke suits. Comments from different people I suspect to be OMG members²⁹⁷ read:

Angelo Galasso is a designer labels of sons of prophets (sic) (08/08/2017 post)

in our family we wear classic designs... (27/07/2016 post)

it's in our blood... (27/07/2016 post)

kingdom statesman papa looks regal (on 08/08/2017 post)

These post by what I think are OMG members shows how consumption marks and points the transformation that OMG aims to effect among its members and the world. The prophet's consumption inspires his followers to work hard and acquire brands that define and differentiate them from 'other Zimbabweans' (Miller, 1990: 107). In dressing differently, OMG members find alternative means of objectification different from that of most Zimbabweans and also the one driven by ZANU PF.

8.4.5 Revered commodities and money

I opened the chapter by a caution that as researchers we must not over-emphasise the commodity fetishism to the extent of painting people as hopeless in the face of commodities. Here I discuss a novel form of fetishism I observed among OMG members. There are some commodities ranging from wrist-watches, wrist-bands, socks, suits, handkerchiefs to oils whose fetishism is neither derived from the 'enchanted global economy' (Meyer, 1998b) nor from the severance between places of production and consumption (Taussig, 2010). The aura and mysticism in some commodities is derived from the commodities' association and relationship with the particular persons, especially prophets and prophetess. Among OMG congregants, there are commodities that have been elevated and assumed some qualities associated with persons involved. I heard story of wonders performed by commodities that had been received from prophet Ben, prophet Danny and prophetess Jane. One congregant shared a story of a wrist-band received from

²⁹⁷ I made this conclusion judging from particular words in the comments. Words such as gunship, serial seer, heaven's own and papa are commonly used in OMG circles.



prophet Danny.²⁹⁸ The wrist-band was treated with awe and was considered as religiously powerful due to the power it derived from its previous owner and his proximity to divine interventions. Such commodities were treated differently, stories of miracles associated with the commodities are retold and memorialized.

There are a number of such commodities among OMG congregants. Congregants in possession of these commodities develop ethics that enable the commodities to remain powerful and effective. Nyasha, for example told me that the anointed oil he had worked effectively when one does not engage in extra-marital liaisons and is a faithful tither. When there was an altercation between Nyasha and his wife, his line of defence was

How can I be seeing someone when we have the oil? You know that if I cheat my business will go broke...²⁹⁹

There is a form of shared morality that religious commodities impose on OMG believers. Nyasha and wife believed in this morality. The wife suggested that Nyasha's business was on the low probably due to his cheating. Some commodities inform morality and structure behaviour of persons. There is a form of fetishism that is associated with commodities directly link to the prophets.

I turn to another example to further illustrate ways in which some commodities are elevated through their contact with clergy. The religious biographies of commodities help us understand values that certain commodities accumulate over time. I learnt of an event that occurred earlier before my fieldwork commenced. Prophet Ben auctioned clothes that belonged to one of his friends, a prophet at another Pentecostal Charismatic movement in Zimbabwe. The clothes that were auctioned fetched high prices due to the prophet who possessed them. For each item of clothes, the prophet stated 'special anointing' the item carries to the next owner. A good example is a pair of socks which were sold for US\$ 1500 because they came

²⁹⁸ See previous chapter

²⁹⁹ I made reference to this issue in chapter one on methodology section. In my view, Nyasha could have used this to silence his wife. The affair is but one example of underground and hidden 'small house phenomenon' that Zimbabweans have become used to (see Mushinga, 2015).



with an ‘anointing of speed and overtaking’. The items of clothes are fetishized but the fetish has its origin in the person who owned the commodities. Furthermore, religious biographies of things allow insights into ways items accumulate value outside the market system. The price of the pair of socks is not based on market principles but on the item’s association with the person of a prophet. Neck-ties were sold for US\$ 700, a portrait of the two prophets and their spiritual father - prophet Mark - was sold for US\$ 7500. OMG and other Pentecostals outbid politicians and businessmen at the auction as most the Pentecostals wanted to keep the ‘anointed items’ within the Pentecostal community. The purchase, consumption and display of such items partly reasserts the existing hierarchies of charisma, trust and the charisma that hold together OMG and other PCC religious movements.

There are congregants who sacrifice a fortune to own commodities that are believed to be endowed with prophet Ben’s supernatural power and anointing. The commodity’s value is derived from its link to prophet Ben. The anointing in a commodity such as anointing oil is not inherent in the oil but is from prophet Ben. When I left the Prayer Resort, I received a gift of anointing oil and it as written “*From the hands of Prophet Ben and Prophetess Jane*”. This shows the anointing in the oil is the prophets. The inscription is a way of authenticating the oil because there are lot of fake anointing oils that circulate in Zimbabwe.

As I read through comments by OMG members on Angelo Galasso Facebook page, some people fetishized the suit on the basis that prophet Ben donned it. A number of comments brought this out, for example, comments such as:

Blessed is the suit... (27/07/2016 post)

He (prophet Ben) makes the suit look good for sure (08/08/2017)

The brand and the suit are elevated and revered by the congregants because prophet Ben wears it. Do all congregants afford these commodities? At times their lifestyle points to the opposite. I will consider these issues below, after I briefly revisit the idea of altar money that I raised in chapter four and five.

As I have discussed in previous chapters, OMG have some notes and coins that are kept in altar, representing their request for certain commodities that enable social reproduction. The coins are a form of a petition to God for vehicles, houses,



marriages among various other requests and petition presented before God. These coins carry the demands, wishes, burden and personal problems of their possessors. There is a form of anointing associated with these notes and coins. They cease to be like other notes and coins in circulation. They represent the current challenges faced by congregants in Zimbabwe and congregants' future aspirations that OMG promises. The notes and coins are kept in home altars, set apart from other notes and coins the congregant may have and those in circulation. These notes are neither exchanged nor touched by other people, even children. Rituals of praying over the coins and application of anointed oil by the pastor set apart these notes and coins³⁰⁰. In chapter seven Taussig (2010) discuss rituals involved in transformation and personalization of a *peso* through baptism. Such notes and coins are viewed as different and are highly recognized with the owner or possessors. Fetishized notes and coins lose their impersonality as they are silently withdrawn from circulation. Their existence and function are highly tied to the lives of the congregant who have the notes and coins. While the baptised *peso* discussed by Taussig (2010) brings fortune to their owner at the expense of retailers and others, I have not heard of stories of home altar money bringing misfortunes for others.

8.4.6 Consumption, morality and social relations

The selection of biography of thing as a research tool was informed by the need to capture the social life and networks created through exchange of commodities among OMG members. Commodity consumption is at the centre of fostering relations between Pentecostals themselves and with non-Pentecostal relatives. The exchange of commodities maps a network of social relations that congregants have. One's social network can be traced by the exchange of commodities as gifts. This exchange of commodities strengthens relations and also facilitates patron-client relations among those involved. There are some congregants who are economically more stable than others and distributed gifts to others. There are congregants who bought items such as groceries, clothes and furniture for the other congregants. The

³⁰⁰ By extension the notes 'cease' to be under state's control. They are personalized and removed from general circulation. If the mix with others, OMG members believe the notes will be contaminated and their hopes shattered.



exchange of these commodities as gifts is never neutral, it elevates the social standing of the giver (Mauss, 1990; Graeber, 2001). Nicky for example assisted two fellow congregants and they consulted for his opinion before making decision on issues that affected or involved Nicky. Often the congregants would get to the venue early and reserve a seat for Nicky and his family.

Exchange of commodities among congregants facilitate patron-client relations among the laity. There is a young congregant who narrated a story of how he was invited to a house by one of the pastors. After dinner, he was instructed to go take a pair of trousers, a shirt and a pair of shoes from the pastor's wardrobe. The young congregant was grateful to the congregant who gave him the clothes. He narrated that the pastor had acted in a fatherly manner. The youthful congregant remarked that when resources permit, he would reciprocate accordingly. The exchanges of gifts tie individuals in a web of relations and hierarchies. The exchange of gifts is complicated when it involves the laity and the clergy. I witnessed interesting interplay between hierarchies of charisma and economic hierarchies. One of my interlocutors, Nicky, bought a chair, groceries and recharge cards for a zone pastor. Nicky respected the pastor due to the pastor's charisma, the prophecies he gave which are "forensic" to use Nicky's words. On the other hand, the pastor respected Nicky due to the groceries he provided for him. Ultimately, the hierarchies of charisma dominated over the economic hierarchy. Nicky always claimed that it was the pastor's and prophet's prayers and blessings that allowed Nicky to make more money than most of his competitors. Everything is subsumed under the hierarchies of charisma; this keeps the religious movements system intact and operational.

From the above ethnographic description two issues can be teased out to illustrate ways in which OMG is replacing segments of the post-colonial state. OMG acts as a network of support for its members during a period of economic hardship. Some OMG members rely on fellow Pentecostals for their well-being through provisions of food, clothes and employment. State welfare system has been crippled by lack of funds. Unemployed citizens, the elderly and OVC heavily rely on non-state actors of their food and clothing. Nicky bought groceries, food clothes and transported the families to and from services for fellow OMG at a time breadwinner are not



employed. The same is true with some pastors who provide for members under their care. OMG is slowly playing the role of some state institutions. Some of OMG members have managed to find employment in OMG. As I indicated in chapter four OMG has a studio, television channel, prayer resorts and a fleet of buses where some OMG members are employed. OMG creates some employment opportunity for its members.

OMG has managed to keep its members through the intimate relations it cultivates and the support that members receive. This is similar to the strategy adopted by ZANU-PF led government that has maintained the support of some Zimbabweans in the basis of land, employment opportunities and relations of patronage it has fostered. Both OMG and government retain members and supporters through elaborate exchange of commodities and goods. OMG has an edge over the government because its exchange networks are based on religious beliefs while those of government are characterised by corruption and nepotism.

8.5 Conclusion

OMG has constructed its self as a solid Pentecostal movement that aims to meet most of its member's needs. The hierarchies of charisma, religious beliefs and exchange of gifts are all pulled together in an orderly manner to enable members to establish intimate relations amongst themselves and with the clergy. The same relations are networks of assistance and support during times of need. OMG machinery differs from the welfare system that the post-independence government has put in place. The government social welfare lack funds to start with. Corruption is rampant and government officials are uncaring, this hampers the development of intimate relations. Between the two, OMG is better organized to meet the needs of its members.

OMG is opening the world for its members to travel the world at a time most government officials are on travel bans. The Zimbabwean government is under sanction which reduces the chances of most ordinary Zimbabweans to easily travel to some parts of the world. OMG members are assisting one another to meet the strict visa requirements. A number of OMG members have been to Europe, Australia



and America either on OMG business or through invitations by fellow members in the diaspora. OMG Pentecostalism is a gateway to the global world which remains shut to most Zimbabweans and the political leadership.

Prophet Ben and Prophetess Jane provide hope and leadership to their followers. Most OMG members imitate prophet's dressing. The prophet embodies the future that his followers desire, he demonstrates the materialisation of prosperity to his followers. His success is a good indicator that one can achieve prosperity outside the government patronage systems. He bears witness to his followers that God can bless and make one thrive during times of crisis. The state and the government become less significant as OMG Pentecostals thrive at a time the government is incapacitated by lack of funding. While Prophet Ben embodies the prosperity that comes with his version of Pentecostalism, the belief that God reads the mind and rewards intentions needs further interrogation. OMG Pentecostals imitate Prophet Ben but somehow deliberately ignore him as they engage in aspirational consumption. The members seek to directly petition God through consumption of cheap imitation of clothes that Prophet Ben dons. In their consumption, OMG members seek to link directly to God rather than the prophet. This brings us back to the idea of the hidden economy that I discussed above. OMG members are aware that there are always underground ways of achieving their desired results. The post-colonial state has taught citizens to hustle and operate in the hidden economy. This is what OMG members do, they are hustling their ways through spiritual issues by avoiding the prophet and linking directly to God who reads their minds and intentions. OMG members are developing an underground and hidden economy to their spiritual lives by by-passing prophet Ben in this economy of prestige. Living in post-colonial Zimbabwe characterized by *kukiya kiya* disastrous economy may be responsible for this.

What happens to the vast numbers that failure to prosper? OMG Pentecostal Charismatics either retool prosperity to something that they already have but read as a gift from God. As I have shown in chapter five, some OMG members retool prosperity to mean being alive, having a healthy family or merely employed. There are also young Pentecostal Charismatics that I discuss in this chapter that resort to



‘faith-ing / faking it till they make it’. For this category of young Pentecostal Charismatics with the dire economic situation in Zimbabwe, they are likely to continue faith-ing / faking it for a long time. From the interviews, some have faith-ed it / faked it for close to a decade that the faking it has become a way of making it. There are no prospects of accumulating wealth any time soon due to the dire economic situation that Zimbabwe is currently experiencing. The performative aspects by young OMG points to the hurdles that some OMG members face in connecting to the prosperity that prophet Ben preaches. Spiritual hustling has become the new way of making it. For these OMG members, Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity is a kind of a religion which brings them closer to the commodities they aspire, but they cannot afford. God ties together the act and sits on top of OMG system in a way similar and important way market economy ties together and govern neo-liberal economic system.

In chapter 4 I noted that schisms are common among Pentecostal movements. The presence of a category of OMG Pentecostal charismatics that by-pass the prophet and engage in spiritual hustling may, in the future, lead to a split of OMG. The failure to prosper materially may lead to disillusionment on the part of some members. Disillusionment could breed contempt and the questioning of Prophet Ben’s charisma. Disillusioned members may follow any leader who offer new promises and new avenues of taking them to the Promised Land. It is not my intention here to prophesize the future for OMG, rather I have attempted to shed some light on the historical and contemporary dynamics which have made this church so successful. However, history does have a habit of repeating itself.



9. TAKING SPIRITS SERIOUSLY

“[T]here *is* spirit stuff... it isn't a matter of metaphor and symbol, or even psychology.”

[Edith Turner 1992]

“[W]hat is it that creates this special harmony, this peculiar atmosphere I have called 'flow.' . . . So many disparate and contrary emotional ingredients: it's frightening and funny, violent and gentle, deadly serious and lightly playful, weird and erotic, all somehow combined in *ngulu* at its best.”

[Roy Willis 1999: 96]

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter I re-emphasize the pith of the dissertation. Furthermore, I revisit some methodological issues that I introduced earlier in chapter one with the aim of capturing ways in which fieldwork has affected my spiritual life and understanding of Christian God. I will give a commentary on the belief and existence of spiritual actors and agents in the lives of OMG Pentecostal Charismatics.

9.2 Recapping the arguments

Through the chapters of this dissertation, I have put forward three interrelated arguments and illustrated as well as advanced them with the support of ethnographic data. The main argument that has been advanced is that *OMG has strategically position itself to assume some of the functions that the post-independence Zimbabwean government and state has abdicated*. In chapter three I presented the background of the nature and operations of the Zimbabwean state, its institutions, officials, policies, successes and challenges. Of importance is notion that Zimbabwe is not a failed or collapsed state but that the ZANU PF government has strengthened and captured institutions concerning military and state security whilst neglecting institutions concerned with social welfare, health and education. By prioritizing and capturing segments of the state such as the military, the security services, home affairs and the justice system the government has extended its grip on power while neglecting those concerned with citizens' well-being. Government-run social welfare system has collapsed. This collapse has left gaps and crevices that are capitalized on by OMG to hinge itself on the state and fulfil the neglected



areas and services. In chapter six and seven I focused on the elaborate welfare system that OMG has put in place, especially for the less-privileged and the economically marginalized. OMG provides food, clothing and water for OVCs, widows, the elderly in rural areas, chiefs and prisoners at a time when the post-colonial government is both unwilling and claim to be incapacitated. OMG extends these provisions to wider society through initiatives such as rehabilitating clinics and hospitals, offering scholarships, clean-up campaigns and construction as well as rehabilitating schools.

Zimbabwe has a rich body of literature that documents the activities of mainline churches' engagement with wider society and the state as part of missionary activities (cf Dorman, 2002: 75-76; Bompani, 2010: 310). Literature on local Pentecostal Charismatic movements' social engagement however remains lacking. Of note is Gukurume (2018) who focuses on PCC engagement with society and the state within the confines of a university. His study is localized to University of Zimbabwe (UZ) and is restricted to issues that his respondents face as tertiary students. Within the context of UZ, Pentecostal Charismatic movements continue to plug in the holes that are left as the UZ fails to adequately provide the services that students require. Literature on Pentecostalism in Africa has for long focused on two aspects namely spiritualization of problems and challenges faced in most post-colonial African states (Gifford, 1994a, 2002), and the spread of the occult economy in which wealth accumulation is underwritten by supernatural means (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001a,b).

As OMG fills some of the crevices that have developed in the post-colonial state, *OMG appropriates repertoires of chiefs as well as some rituals and symbols associated with the post-colonial state*. In chapter four I discussed the machinery of OMG which simulates the organization and operations of the both the state and chiefs which are discussed in chapter three. OMG borrows heavily from military metaphors and security systems that have been developed by the state. As I have shown, prophet Ben make use of state-trained security personnel as his security details. Furthermore, prophet Ben has appropriated rituals such as motorcade, detailed security systems and well-choreographed grand entries that are associated



with national presidency. Apart from militarizing charisma, prophet Ben is building a large bureaucratic institution manned by professions and qualified personnel. OMG structure and its departments are highly bureaucratic. The involvement of professions such as medical doctors, journalists, business executives and security personnel give OMG some pragmatism that is absent in most Pentecostal movements. The ability to engage with wider society, come up with programmes that benefit members and to appeal to the Zimbabwean population can partly be explained by this positioning of professions at strategic positions within OMG.

In chapters five and six I draw parallels between OMG and the post-colonial state, showing ways in which both depend on 'public funds' (tithe and taxes) yet OMG projects itself as an organisation that is morally upright when compared to the state. OMG channels its funds to social welfare activities that directly benefit people, and take every opportunity to make such activities public. These activities also pose as critique to the post-independence government by showing some form of financial transparency. Chapter six expanded on the initiatives that OMG has embarked on which portray OMG as a sovereign that aims to control its land, demand loyalty from members and probably amassing its wealth through its members (Including Prophet Ben) who has ventured into gold mining.

OMG is simultaneously reproducing a system of leadership that replicates that of chieftaincy. Chieftainship in Zimbabwe is a mixture of lineage based appointments as most of the personnel come from certain families; a heavy bureaucracy of council members (*dare*) who are selected on the basis of their expertise and wisdom; and also charisma as some of the members of the council are ritual experts. OMG has reproduced a machinery along these lines and appropriated some of the symbolic functions of chiefs. Prophet Ben declared that he was mandated by God to collect tithes and distribute them to the less fortunate in society. This replicates – both symbolically and actually - the *zunde ramambo*, a redistributive system that pools together foods, services and other basic necessities for the less privileged. *Zunde ramambo* has been on the decline, however, and OMG is reproducing a similar system to assist its members and other Zimbabweans. As argued in chapter six, OMG is mimicking the state and chieftaincy machineries and functions. Prophet Ben



recreates a chief-like system at a time most Zimbabweans have lost faith in chiefs whom they blame for being partisan and contemptuous of the justice system. The resentment of chiefs is worsened by chief's attendances at ZANU PF annual conferences and congresses as well as utterances by the president of the Chief's Council that all chiefs are ZANU PF functionaries³⁰¹.

The last two chapter examined how money and consumption are at the centre of critiquing the state and the post-colonial government. OMG members' interactions with money and commodities downplays the role of the post-colonial government, as members root these two in their religious discourse. OMG Pentecostals access to commodities and money is linked to religious networks that OMG facilitates as well as a spiritual economy that OMG Pentecostals participate in. My argument has thus been that by critiquing the post-independence government's policies and practice, and proffering alternative avenues and approaches, OMG has gained popularity and slowly replaced the relevance of the post-colonial government and the role of chiefs.

The popular appeal of OMG to most Zimbabweans is due to its ability OMG to open up parts of the world that ZANU-PF has attempted to seal off from most citizens. OMG has cultivated networks and relations across the globe which members can benefit from. In this sense, OMG is a network of support and opportunities that most Zimbabweans do not have access to, and joining OMG becomes increasingly attractive. Members' access commodities through fellow members in the diaspora. Apart from a network of support, OMG is a gateway to the outside world (and particularly to 'the West') in a country that the government is increasingly casting its focus to 'the East'. Members have access to European goods, and foreign visits courtesy of fellow OMG members in the diaspora. This partly explain the high number of youthful members at OMG. The youth a attracted by what OMG offers which is similar to western modernity (cf Mate, 2014: 14-16).

³⁰¹ The sentiments have been expressed for long time by the leader of Chiefs' Council. He reiterated the same sentiment in Esgodini during ZANU PF conference (14/12/2018).



A number of elderly members of OMG that were adults in the 1980s have joined OMG because of nostalgic and sentimental attachment to older forms of government in the country. OMG's leadership, machinery and departments that were united together through charisma, bureaucracy and patrimonialism distinctly resemble the postcolonial government of the 1980s, which effectively expanded health, education and housing to black Africans who had been marginalized by the colonial state. The government made efforts to improve the lives of Zimbabweans. Politically, the post- independence government made frantic efforts to create a one-party state with Robert Mugabe as its leader and strong-man. These same characteristics are present in OMG where it has made efforts to provide for the services and venture into areas that the post-colonial government has neglected. The drive towards social welfare provisioning and targeting those outside state list of beneficiaries as well as those that receive insufficient provisions from the state. OMG is reminiscent of the strong and 'effective' Zimbabwean government of the 1980s in the eyes of elderly OMG members. The conflating of traits of neoliberalism and socialism that I discussed in chapter seven is attractive to different categories within OMG.

Prophet Ben and his acolytes present themselves as both a critique and alternative to the ZANU PF politicians and members whose wealth and prosperity are acquired through alleged underhand dealings and defrauding the post-colonial state through opaque privatization of state resources and enterprises. Prophet Ben's prosperity seems to be based on moral values when compared to that of the apparently current crop of politicians. Recently, in November 2018, the government opted to maintain the Bond Note at a time it has greatly devalued. Prophet Ben contributed to this national debate and advised the government to abandon the surrogate currency and adopt the Rand as the official currency (Sermon, 02/12/2018). This generated heated debate in Zimbabwe with newspaper siding with prophet Ben against the government. In essence, OMG seems to offer spiritual security and protection, that the government and the state cannot offer, through a number of rituals such as Eucharist rituals, feasting and baptism. These rituals attach members to OMG more than to the post-colonial state that they view as the source of their suffering.



9.3 Rethinking Spirits in Anthropology

The discipline of anthropology has for long grappled with issues of spirits and spirit possession and their place in the discipline. Anthropologists interested in spirits have for long being confounded by what Niehaus (2013: 210) calls the “uncomfortable question” of reconciling ontological reality expressed and experienced by research participants on one hand, and epistemic orientations that often downplay the reality of spirits (Combs, 2010; Perman, 2011; Titeca, 2019). The limitations inherent in academic anthropology as a European and Enlightenment discipline continue to inform many anthropologists’ conceptualizations of reality. Western inspired anthropological theoretical toolboxes lack adequate equipment to deal with issues that transcend the material world that cannot be comprehended by our senses (see also Combs, 2010; Fontein, 2014; Titeca, 2019). Despite anthropologists’ scepticism, there are spirits that indeed interact, inform, possess people and as part of the social world of our research participants and interlocutors. Studies that attest to the ubiquity of spiritual truth are however on the increase in anthropology as it continues on its decolonial journey (see Ashforth, 2005; Fontein, 2014; Niehaus, 2013; Nisula, 1999; Nyamnjoh, 2012; Perman, 2011; Turner, 1992; Turner, Blodgett, Kahona & Benwa, 1992; Viveiros de Castro, 2003; West, 2005; Willis & Chisanga, 1999). Despite this growing body of literature, many scholars find it profitable and more acceptable to reduce spirits to either a metaphor pointing to some structural issues; neurological and psychological conditions or Durkheimian social facts. As Edith Turner (1992) and Willis & Chisanga (1999) point out, spirits are real entities and actors that anthropologists often encounter if they abandon classical epistemic and ontological stances.

Fontein (2014) calls for an overhaul of classical anthropological epistemological and ontological stance to allow for “possibility of other possibilities”. Spirits are not discursive truths for OMG Pentecostals, they are a reality. Pentecostal ontological realities need to be taken seriously if we aim to understand and get closer to the world of the people that we study. By immersing myself into OMG rituals and processes I managed to gain entry into the realities and worldviews of OMG members, encountering the spiritual actors and agents that are part of their



everyday lives. These spiritual actors induce emotions, feelings, visions and states of being that are beyond the mundane. Roy Willis (1999) adopts the same stance of an observer and participant in his study of the Lungu of northern Zambia. From his study, Willis transcends from the familiar everyday world into the unfamiliar *mpanga* ecological realities which are palpable and real. Similarly, Edith Turner (1992) emphatically claims the *reality of spirits* that she encountered among the Ndembu healers whose ushering into the spiritual realms helped ‘opened her eyes’ to the blobs moving in patients’ bodies.

Perman’s (2011) study of the Ndau possession in Zimbabwe, West’s (2005) study of Muedans in Mozambique and Fontien’s (2014) study of a Zimbabwean family in the United Kingdom portray ways in which most black Africans toggle between the material and spiritual realms. This transcendence produces visible indicators that are observable and alter everyday practices for the people involved. Furthermore, spirits produce behaviour that are discernibly observable. For OMG members, spirits (malevolent and benevolent) possess humans, driving people into actions that they would otherwise not have done. Spirits heal, console, advise and warn. My own encounters with the spiritual actors and agents altered my understanding of spiritual life, dreams, control of emotions and visions.

Going beyond classical anthropological epistemological and ontological stances through the use of my body in OMG rituals was a “transcendent manoeuvre” that gave me access to a spiritual realm that most OMG Pentecostals narrated during interviews and conversations (West, 2007: xi). As Viveiros de Castro (2003: 18) notes we need to allow for the “ontological self-determination of the world’s people”. This allows researchers to explain the world in the terms of the studied and not accounts that are in line with anthropological canons erected during the Enlightenment period. Most accounts that involve spirits translate cosmological reality into simplified stories due to limited disciplinary language (Perman, 2011: 62).

9.4 Methodology reconsidered

As I noted in the introduction that I will return to and discuss methodological issues later. Methodological issues are not mere extensions of epistemology. Methodology



is selected on the basis of pragmatism and relevance to the study at hand. My choice of methodological ludism was informed by recent ideas in anthropology, that in turn informed my research and analysis. Methodological ludism involves learning, immersing and accepting the realities of people under study and suspension of one's own religious belief and epistemic stances as the preconditions of knowing the world of my hosts. In my case, as a practicing Christian, this placed me in a desirable and a problematic position. On one hand, I could be 'part of it', I could 'see'. On the other hand, I was aware that this could pull me into infinite subjectivity. It was in striking a balance between this and political economy that I sought to take spirits, and the politics surrounding them, seriously. Fieldwork among OMG Pentecostals was an eye opener and a dispositive exercise. Listening to sermons by Prophet Ben, attending bible lessons and OMG rituals had a profound, lasting impacting on me. I entered the field as a 'kindred spirit' – Christian – although my eschatological and liturgical stance differs from those of OMG members.

Despite all this, fieldwork transformed my spiritual life in several ways. I experienced what OMG Pentecostal Charismatics call spiritual growth. I developed understanding of 'tongues'. I could experience an unexplainable force within me, making me feel buoyant and hear an inner voice spurring me to speak a language that is foreign to me. I had dreams in which I saw myself praying in tongues. The practices of tongues and of carefully reading dreams were new to me, as a member of Seventh Day Adventists. Dreams and tongue were not part of my religious life, and I had previously considered them to be part of a healing repertoire, loosely associated with aspects of traditional authority which I have covered extensively above. These practices were distant and I had not cultivated them.

Furthermore, I was used to a pre-millennial religious dispensation. At OMG I found a theological orientation that was distinctly post-millennial in orientation. For OMG members, God wants them to materially prosper in the here-and-now and material prosperity is a sign of God's favour. I was used to theological orientation that emphasized 'holiness' and interested in securing eternal life-after-death. In Seventh Day Adventist liturgy the earth is portrayed as a 'transitory place' in which we must not invest much in. However, at OMG I encountered facets of the same Christian



God that I thought I knew from my own Christian background. Fieldwork among OMG Pentecostal Charismatics has transformed my understanding of the relationship that I have with 'things'. I have opened up to the ideas that there are religious paraphernalia endowed with power to protect and change our lives. I have wrist-bands and anointed oils whose potent potential I am now aware of, despite frowning from my Adventist wife and friends.

My ethnographic journey in this thesis has been an intersubjective exercise in which reality was constantly constructed and re-negotiated between OMG Pentecostal Charismatics and my own lived experiences. It was a process of "mak(ing) ethnography" in which I was both a participant in rituals and religious processes whilst still observing (see Willis, 1999). Furthermore, I transcended the material and everyday world into the spiritual realm, interacting with spiritual actors and agents. Continued interaction with and participation in everyday lives of OMG members brought me closer to Pentecostals' reality. My aim as a researcher was not to legitimize the world of OMG Pentecostalism but to paint it as they understand and experience the "inescapably inchoate world" of Pentecostal Charismatics (West, 2007: 69). In order to achieve this, I moved beyond observation and interviewing. I developed experimental methods which I think of as *religious biographies of things* and had to engage in multi-sensory ethnography in which my body was often the main instrument of collecting data. Concomitantly, my write-up does not aim to textually distance and objectify the social world that I encountered (Fontein, 2014: 78).

Lastly, writing a dissertation while concealing religious organizations and persons' names presents challenges when dealing with online sources of information. Online articles give away names and identities of people and organizations. This has troubled me through the write-up process. I seek guidance from examiners on ways of dealing with this challenge when I make a copy for the library or change this dissertation into a book.



9.5 The post-colonial state: A feeding trough?

As I finalized my write-up, one of OMG spokespersons and that of Heavenly Glory Ministry³⁰² were sentenced to close to seven years for defrauding a Zimbabwean Power Company of more than US\$12 000. This incident exposes the complex and subtle relations between the post-colonial state and Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity in general. For long OMG has portrayed itself as a morally upright movement that condemns the immoral and corrupt government. The criminal conviction of one of OMG spokesperson maybe the tip of the iceberg because the lives of OMG clergy are kept in wraps to an extent that the public and OMG members (not to mention inquisitive, enthusiastic anthropologists), have little access to what members of the clergy are doing. This is an obvious short coming of this work, and it is only fair that I am explicit about it. I see no way however that I could have 'uncovered' corruption in the upper echelons of the church, and to some extent I actively avoided researching in this area, for my own personal safety. Only those who work close to the clergy, such as Nyasha's brother and Sten can provide detailed narratives that are absent from the public domain or this thesis. The conviction does however raise a number of perplexing questions about the relationship between OMG and the state. Is the clergy secretly amassing wealth through plundering of state resources and publicly condemning the government? Is the clergy part of sycophant looting the post-colonial state? Has the clergy decided to join ranks with some politicians in milking state resources through a hidden spiritual/political economy?

These questions require further interrogations to establish the nature of relations that different Pentecostal Charismatic movements have with the post-colonial states and governments. As I argued in chapters three and chapter six, Pentecostal Charismatic movements need to be analysed on individual bases as each forge its own relations with state. Furthermore, these relations change over time. For example, OMG portrayed itself as morally superior to the Mugabe government and distanced itself from it accordingly. The coming in of Emmerson Mnangagwa, albeit through a military coup, has led to a reconfiguration of relations between OMG and

³⁰² On HGM see chapter three and chapter six. I wrote this conclusion in March of 2019



the Mnangagwa-led government with cordial relations developing³⁰³. Even a cursory look at the relations between Heavenly Glory Ministry (HGM), which I introduced in chapter three and also discussed in chapter 3, and the government reveals such reconfigurations. HGM worked cordially with the Mugabe regime, feeding into government programmes and policies. However, the change of leadership has seen the leader of HGM being arraigned before the public to give public apology, and also convicted by the court. Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) launched a lifestyle audit and garnished HGH prophet's personal bank accounts for allegedly evading paying income tax. Church - state relations are always in the process of being made and remade, and what the future holds for Zimbabwe is not entirely clear.

There is need to also establish the extent to which OMG church plays a redemptive or totally rejects the corrupt post-colonial state and government in Zimbabwe. two years into Emmerson Mnangagwa's administration, his government is dogged by gross human rights abuse, corruption, extravagance, abductions and shooting of protestors, in light of these events, OMG seems to be distancing itself from the government and leadership it had embraced. As I revised this thesis³⁰⁴, OMG member are engaged in prayer that seek to dismantle and destroy 'national altars' and replace them with godly altars. Prophet Ben's sermon that introduced this ritual was more of a social diagnosis of the performance of the Mnangagwa led government. Time will tell whether this ritual aims to redeem or repudiate the 'new' government. However my data suggests that the answer is a complex and constantly changing powerplay between both of these positions. As suggested by the examiners, this question has been left open for future research,

³⁰³ Prophet Ben has been named as one of the facilitators in inter-political party dialogue

³⁰⁴ October 2019



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11. ANNEXURE

11.1 Appendix A: Consent letter from OMG



Tel: [Redacted]

25 April 2016

Dear Josiah

REF: APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AMONGST [Redacted] CONGREGANTS.

We hereby confirm that [Redacted] has accepted your request to conduct your research. This permission does not extend to individual congregants. You have to seek individual consent from each congregant who would want to participate in your study.

For further information, you can contact the undersigned.

Yours Faithfully

Cell # [Redacted]

Founders: [Redacted]



11.2 Appendix B: In-depth Interviews Guide



Individual Interview Guide

This is a guide to issues that will be explored during interviews. Questions below will not be necessarily asked in the order they are presented.

1. Introduction

- Thank respondent for taking time out for the interview
- Read, discuss and sign consent form.

2. Respondents' biographic data

Age, Sex, Marital status, Employment status, Occupation, Level of Education, place of residence

When and how did you join OMG?

Were you a member of another church(es) before joining OMG?

What reasons brought you to OMG or made you join?

Probing: follow up questions on reason s/he left his previous church, what it means to the respondents being a member of OMG, how has life change after joining OMG. Issues about respondents lived realities can be captured

3. Questions on the how congregants understand their place in the world, the state and government?

Are there teachings that you have attended where people are taught about how the world should work?

From your understanding as a member of OMG, how must the world be organized?

How do people relate and interact in this world?

What differences do you think exist between our lives now and the world that OMG aims at creating?

Do all OMG congregants practice the same lifestyle?

What role does the prophet play in portraying the type of life you should live or lead?

How is the government portrayed in sermons?

Does the government facilitate or hinder the type of society prophet Ben envision?

Probing: where do ideas of a model of society come from? What is being done by the church to enable people to create this society? How will this be possible?

4. Money and consumption

What is money and where does it come from?

Are there practice in church associated with money? If yes:

When do they happen?

Who is involved?



How do they work?

Are there any spiritual issues associated with money?

In your view, is money bad or good? And why?

What is tithe? Do you tithe often?

Are you taught about tithe, its origin, reason for tithing, its calculations?

What do these practices mean to you as a Christian?

Do you know how this money is used by the church?

What type of commodities and goods are you supposed to own as a believers?

What influences your choice of clothes, cars, phone that you buy or come in to church gatherings?

Are there any commodities that you think shows that you are blessed?

Where do you get money to buy commodities such as car, tablets, phones and clothes?

Probes: the connection between their lived reality and idealized society. What type of brands do they prefer? How you do plan your household budget. Is there any influence from church?

5. Donations and charity

What activities does Compassionate Hand engage in? (Compassionate Hand is the charity wing of OMG)

What usually does the FL donate and to who?

Do you think donations and charity have a role in creating the world OMG wants or wishes for?

Where does items donated come from?

Are you helping the government in doing all these?

Probing: what feeling does it create in you to know that OMG engage in charity work? Do members of OMG benefit from this charity work?

6. Training and teaching on money, savings and wealth

Are there any training that helps you to understand money or financial dexterity?

Have you attended any conference or workshop on financial management? If so:

When and where?

Who facilitated it or addressed you?

What was said?

Have you applied the ideas you got there, and did it work?

Why is money of interest to you as member of OMG?

How are Christian supposed to spend their money?

Are there regulations/doctrines or teaching on how to save, budget and use money?

Probing: do congregants follow these teachings? Are you taught about entrepreneurships? Does the church have business that can employ congregants? Are congregants encouraged to further their education? Are you taught entrepreneurial skills?

Thank you



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11.3 Appendix C: Individual Participant Informed Consent Form



RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Prospective Research Participant: Read this consent form carefully and should you have any question, feel free to ask before you decide whether you want to participate in this research study or not. Feel free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research.

Thesis Information

Thesis Title: Money, Wealth and Consumption Patterns among Pentecostal Charismatic Christians in Harare	Principal Investigator: Josiah Taru
Supervisor's Details: Prof. F. G. McNeill (+27) 012 420 4661	Principal Investigator's Contact Details: +263 772 834 967
Institution: University of Pretoria	Level of Study Doctor of Philosophy
Location of Institution: Hatfield, Pretoria, South Africa	Contact Details of Institution: (+27) 012 420 6019

Purpose of This Research Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study designed to understand ways OMG has assisted congregants to have control over their finances, and ways in which OMG Pentecostals incorporate money and consumption into their rituals and everyday lives.

Procedures

You will be asked to take part in an individual in-depth interview (Face to face) and or group interview and your responses will be recorded via audio recorder or notes.

Possible Risks or Discomfort

The researcher is not aware of any possible risks to participants which may be experienced as a result of participating in the study.

Ownership and Documentation of Specimens

The information derived from the interviews will be used for the thesis and academic publications. Interview scripts will be safely kept by the researcher in accordance with the University of Pretoria's Policy for the Preservation and Retention of Research Data.

Possible Benefits



No benefits known

Financial Considerations

There is no financial compensation for your participation in this research.

Confidentiality

Your identity in this study will be treated as confidential. The results of the study may be published for scientific purposes but will not give your name or include any identifiable references to you.

However, any records or data obtained as a result of your participation in this study may be inspected by the thesis supervisor or by research assistants in this study, these records will be kept in as stipulated by the University of Pretoria’s Policy for the Preservation and Retention of Research Data. In order to ensure confidentiality:

- You will not be asked to indicate your names
- Do not write your name on any of the research material.

Termination of Research Study

You can choose to terminate your participation at any time

Available Sources of Information

Any further questions you have about this study will be answered by the Principal Investigator:

Name: Josiah Taru
Phone Number: +263 772 834 967

Any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject will be answered by:

Name: Prof. F. G. McNeill
Phone Number: (+27) 012 420 4661

Authorization

I have read and understand this consent form, and I volunteer to participate in this research study. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form. I voluntarily choose to participate and understand that I can terminate my participation at any time.

Participant Name:..... Signature:.....
Date:

Principal Investigator..... Signature.....
Date.....

The interviewee retains this copy



11.4 Appendix D Prayer Resort Booking Confirmation

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: Thank you for your booking [REDACTED]
Date: 07 April 2017 at 12:16
To: tarujosiah@gmail.com

Dear Josiah Taru ,

Booking Confirmation

Please print this acknowledgement and present it to the [REDACTED] reception on arrival.

Thank you for registering with [REDACTED]. Please take note of your booking reference number below. The minimum stay at the [REDACTED] is 3 Days. Your stay at the [REDACTED] will give you an opportunity for a One-on-One session with [REDACTED]. Please note that you are paying for ACCOMODATION and PRAYER RETREAT FACILITIES not to see the man and woman of God.

PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU BRING YOUR COPY OF ID OR PASSPORT, AND MEDICAL RECORDS/REPORTS IF AVAILABLE ALSO CARRY A FLAG TO REPRESENT YOUR NATION

Bookings on special offers and discounted rates will be charged in full at time of reservation and are non-refundable. You will be required to present any form of payment for the reservation at our booking offices. **ALL payments are to be made before arrival or check-in.** Check-in time is 0900hrs till 1500hrs and check-out is by 1100hrs unless prior arrangement has been made. Rooms are allocated on the day of arrival, therefore specific room numbers cannot be guaranteed. Please note photos will be taken on check-in for every guest at a fee of \$2.00.

NO-SHOW POLICY A no-show is the non-arrival of a guest on the stipulated arrival date without notification in writing by fax, email or in person to the booking offices. In the case of a no-show, a no-show fee of one night will be levied to you. Bookings on special offers and discounted rates will be charged in full at the time of making the reservation and are non-refundable.

Please kindly provide your travel arrangements if any. Airport Transfers costs are as follow:
0600hrs to 1800hrs : USD\$15 one-way 1800hrs to 0600hrs : USD\$20 one-way
Roadport Pick-ups : \$5.00 one-way

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Zimbabwe
Phone: (263) [REDACTED]

Your feedback is greatly appreciated on the booking process and your stay at [REDACTED]. Please email to: [REDACTED]

BOOKING DETAILS			
Booking Number	1491560119		
Customer Name	Josiah Taru		
CHECK-IN DATE	CHECK-OUT DATE	TOTAL NIGHTS	TOTAL ROOMS
13/04/2017	16/04/2017	3	1
NUMBER OF ROOM	ROOM TYPE	MAX OCCUPANCY	



1	MHDM (MHDM18)	18 Adult	MHDM
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PAYMENT DETAILS	
PAYMENT OPTION	Manual: Pay On Arival
TRANSACTION ID	NA

Regards,
[Redacted Signature]

[You will need to carry a print out of this e-mail and present it to the hotel on arrival and check-in. This e-mail is the confirmation voucher for your booking.]