Article

Missionizing Church Governance: Transfiguring Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: Pentecostalism has experienced massive growth and evolution, both within Africa and beyond, as is evident through the emergence of dynamic neo-Pentecostal movements, including independent, prophetic, and charismatic churches. However, all its establishments have been primarily characterized by problematic governance. While neo-Pentecostal founders and leaders often asserted that they were breaking away from regressive bureaucracy and supposedly "cold" spiritual practices to embrace a more dynamic approach that advances the *missio Dei* and *missio ecclesiae* through expressive and demonstrative ministries, they paradoxically ended up becoming similarly, if not more, regressive. Rather than being focused on serving others (being other-centred), they became self-centred in their actions and priorities. Drawing on missional ecclesiology, extensive engagement with relevant literature, and in-depth phenomenological observation, this paper undertook a qualitative examination of their polities. It interpretively and descriptively assessed and explored the fact that all ecclesial governments exhibit both strengths and weaknesses. In light of this analysis, the paper argues and proposes that churches should integrate their predominant governmental systems with inclusive and empowering principles from other polities. By doing so, they can transform their administrative structures and enhance their *missionality*.

Keywords: classical pentecostalism; neo-pentecostalism; church; missionality; governance; transfiguration; sustainability; Opus Dei

1. Introduction

Zimbabwe is a landlocked, tropical country in Southern Africa which has a population of plus or minus 15 billion people. According to Mutangi (2008, p. 530), Zimbabwe's religious demography is fluid and "no recent reports have been published which accurately depict the demographic distribution in matters of religion statistics". However, Gaga et al. (2023, p. 69) found out that 85% of the Zimbabwean population subscribe to Christianity and African Traditional Religions (ATR). Locally, Christianity rose out of foreign and indigenous missionary efforts respectively. Notably, Togarasei (2016, p. 2), who historicises Pentecostal Christianity in Zimbabwe says that the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe (AFMZ) is the mother of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe, followed by other denominations such as the Assemblies of God (AOG). Since Pentecostalism originated in Los Angeles in 1901, and was brought to Africa by missionaries (Anderson 2007), it has experienced remarkable global expansion (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005, p. 388). Likewise, Vigen and van der Haak (2015, p. 1) highlight that "one quarter of the two billion Christians in the world are Pentecostal or Charismatic", making Pentecostalism one of the "fastest growing religions in the world". Presenting itself in a wide variety of forms, ranging from the conventional classical to neo-Pentecostal mega-churches, it has embraced contextually expressive and demonstrative methodologies, including televangelism, print and electronic advertising, and banner posters. Numerous scholars, including Mayrargue (2008, pp. 2–5), Lindhardt (2018), and Machingura et al. (2018, pp. 7–9), are in agreement that Pentecostalism has displayed impressive growth and adaptability, both outside, and within Africa. This is

evident by the emergence of more dynamic, self-governing prophetic and charismatic churches (Gunda and Machingura 2013). In spite of that, Zimbabwean Pentecostalism is problematized by ill-governance. This is well demonstrated by Nhumburudzi and Kurebwa (2018, pp. 47–48) in their study on the AFMZ and Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA)—the largest Zimbabwean Pentecostal churches—most classical Pentecostal churches operate under flawed administration which can be abused by either leaders or subordinates for selfish interests. On the other hand, neo-Pentecostal governance is individualized, pastor-centered, and vulnerable to leadership manipulation. As White and Pondani (2022, pp. 3–4) put it, "[N]eo-Pentecostals are independent churches that came into existence after the charismatic renewal of the 1960s and 1970s both within and outside of mainline Protestant Churches...".

Interestingly, neo-Pentecostal founders and leaders have been widely claiming to be liberating themselves from dying spiritualities and restrictive governance. In concurrence with Chitando et al. (2013, p. 154),

> [C]harging that the older churches were preaching a 'cold' gospel, they announced their arrival on the Zimbabwean spiritual market in a dramatic style. Abrasive and creative, they forced the existing religious gerontocracy to reassess its relevance in a rapidly changing religious and spiritual context. Using highly developed media strategies, they developed a niche on the spiritual market...

In view of Koffeman's (2014, p. 8) postulation that church polity needs to be informed by normative ecclesiology, and Niemandt's (2015, p. 2) assertion that "the church governs what is does and does what it is", all Pentecostal governance contradictorily turned regressive by adopting self-centred instead of *missionally* other-centred administration. Thus, this paper reviews classical and neo-Pentecostal churches and their polities. Observing that governance affects *missionality*, it recommends reformative mixed polities which reconcile leadership authority with accountability for missionary accomplishment and integral ecclesiological sustainability.

2. Redefining Classical and Neo-Pentecostal Churches

Over the past decades, Pentecostalism has undergone colossal evolution, shaped by both international and local contextual factors, including globalism, economics, and politics. Initial developments which brought about classical Pentecostalism can be traced to the manifestation of *glossolalia* and other pneumatological and evocative gifts that were experienced at Charles Parham's Bible school in Topeka, Kansas, and Azusa Street, Los Angeles, between 1901 and 1904. While instances of expressions and demonstrations of the Holy Spirit had definitely occurred before, the remarkable and sporadic outpouring in America, reminiscent of the events in Acts 2 on Pentecost, marked a significant turning point. Led by figures such as William Seymour and others speaking out in tongues, rising to champion a series of revivals and related acts by the leading of the Holy Spirit, broke records as it yielded the establishment of massive spirit-powered and styled missionary work and churches, not only within America but also across Africa and other regions worldwide. Numerous scholars (such as Defoe 1978, p. 4; Loder 2000, p. 2; Lawance 2001, pp. 2–3; Kgatla 2016, pp. 323–25; White 2016, p. 252) are in agreement that classical Pentecostalism placed much emphasis on *glossolalia*, miraculous encounters, wonders, deliverance, holiness, and attracted the attention of millions of people from the United States of America (USA) and across the globe. Kgatle (2017, p. 2) aptly explains:

> Classical Pentecostalism believes in salvation through confession. Classical Pentecostalism believes in the baptism in the Holy Spirit followed by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the gift of speaking in tongues. The Holy Spirit baptised person will live a holy life. The saved person is patiently waiting for the second coming of Jesus. As such, the gospel of classical Pentecostalism is a full gospel.

Likewise, Tagwirei (2022, p. 4) notes that the Azusa Street Revival took place from 1906 to 1915. It inspired countless people, and subsequently led to the development of numerous

denominations globally. The revival appeared to be categorical and revolutionary. It was characterized by long prayers, prostrations, loud weeping unto God, and expressions of visible enjoyment. Some outstanding features included that those who personally encountered the Holy Spirit experienced visible manipulation of their faces and bodies as well as involuntary utterances in new tongues as the Holy Spirit inspired and enabled them. The revivals eventually spread globally and featured some repetition of the first Pentecost, with a renewal of apostolic experiences as recorded in Acts 2, coupled with principles of non-racialism and non-tribalism. Therefore, the term "classical Pentecostal church" refers to all denominations that embody the characteristics mentioned above.

Neo-Pentecostalism originated in the 1950s and 1960s, but the focus of this article pertains to the more contemporary African versions that emerged from the 1980s to the present day. Specifically, this submission will delve into the faith, healing, miracles, and prosperity movements within Neo-Pentecostalism during this time period. Unlike classical Pentecostals, neo-Pentecostal churches have rebranded themselves as dynamic Pentecostals who strive to surpass the faith and deeds of classical Pentecostals by actively manifesting the power of God in both their individual lives and collective endeavors. According to Orogun and Pillay (2021, p. 2), "[N]eo-Pentecostalism emerged in the 1950s and 1960s". However, it must be noted that the coming of neo-Pentecostalism occurred in waves, spreading to different countries at various times. Thus, while the first waves reached some American and African countries from the aforesaid years, most African countries saw neo-Pentecostalism from the 1980s onwards.

This paper notes the prevalent presence of prophetic and charismatic Zimbabwean movements, exemplified by influential figures such as prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa of United Family International (UFI), prophet Walter Magaya of PhD Ministries, apostle Judge Dube of Wealthy Word International Ministries (WWIM), Apostle Tavonga Vutabwashe of Heartfelt International Ministries (HIM), prophet Euebert Angels of Good News Church (formerly Spirit Embassy), and multiple other holistically disruptive, mega, hybrid faith, prophetic, miracle-working, delivering, prosperity, health and wealth ministries, as well as African Independent Churches (AICs). The study covers the period from 2008 up to the present day.

As Khanyile (2016, p. 15) delineates, neo-Pentecostals accuse classical Pentecostals of having silenced spiritual gifts and claim to have risen as a "radical renaissance of the gifts of prophecy, speaking in tongues, gifts of healing, hyper-evangelism, inspired preaching and spirit-filled worship... As opposed to Classical Pentecostals, neo-Pentecostals idolize the miraculous, healing, deliverance; success and the enactment of bizarre church performances often performed by charismatic and highly influential spiritual leaders". Thus, Defoe (1978, p. 5) observes that "neo-Pentecostals have modified many of the doctrinal views of their traditional Pentecostal forebears and in so doing have presented the sociology of religion with a few unexpected puzzles. We believe that it is especially significant that of all the Christian denominations and points of view, the conservative, fundamentalist churches are today growing fastest".

In Zimbabwe, neo-Pentecostals can often be identified as having originated from traditional Pentecostal churches. For instance, United Family International (UFI) church of prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa; International denominational School of Deliverance of Oliver Chipunza; Heartfelt International Ministries of Tavonga Vutabwashe; and Life House International Church of Talent Chiweshe broke away from the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe (AFMZ) (Togarasei 2016, p. 6). This study also uncovered that Harvest House International Church (HHI) has its roots in the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God in Africa (ZAOGA), and Wealthy Word International Ministries (WWIM) came from the Assemblies of God (AOG) church, just to mention a few. These denominations assert themselves as trailblazers, seeking to modernize while downplaying classical Pentecostal practices, as they proclaim to pioneer innovative approaches and open boundless opportunities for showcasing God's power, which they contend was lost among classical Pentecostals. As a result, they exalt the significance of miracle-working, prophesying, and liberating

individuals from various afflictions, evil spirits, attacks, and problems. Their preaching emphasizes that God answers all prayers and encourages believers to surpass the deeds of Jesus Christ, as stated in John 14:12–14:

> [12] Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. [13] And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. [14] You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it (NIV).

Considering that African life is problematized by multifarious social, economic, and political issues (Tagwirei 2022, p. 10), Zimbabwe, in particular, has endured the harsh impacts of economic and political instability. The Zimbabwean population has suffered greatly, grappling with poverty, diseases, and a host of related issues, leaving them vulnerable and desperate. In response to this context, neo-Pentecostal churches have emerged as prominent entities that have attracted thousands of followers with their health, wealth, and total deliverance gospel. Having conceptualized and problematized Pentecostalism, the next subsection reviews church governance in view of the biggest AOG and AFMZ denominations.

3. Understanding Church Polities

God Almighty is the Sovereign Leader of the church. Thus, the church is scripturally premised on Jesus Christ as her head (Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians. 12:13). As well articulated by Avis (2022, p. 5), "[T]he Church should reflect the twofold truth that Christ is its true Governor and that the whole body is endued with the Holy Spirit to enable it to take collective responsibility for its life, worship and mission". Nonetheless, I agree with Hill (2016, p. 4) that churches differ about who is competent to make final decisions. As such, "a church may have an Episcopal, Presbyterian, congregational and other form of government as required or permitted by its conception of divine law with Christ as the head" (Hill 2016, p. 5).

Furthermore, it is essential to consider that the church operates as both an organism and an organization (Msiska 2020, p. 41). This dual nature is evident as it manages its institutionality, necessitating the need for an operating system to guide its decisions and engagements effectively. Consequently, she needs structures of order or authority for her government. Such administration of the church is her polity. Scholars define polity as the predominant way that a denomination or particular group of churches is governed and how she runs her affairs. Overall, remembering that the church is both invisible and visible (Magezi and Tagwirei 2022, p. 4; Stibbs n.d.), church polity is simply understood as the sacred science of government for the visible church (Vorster 2003, p. 1). Basically, as Zeze (2012, p. 65) puts it, "[I]t is a particular form or system of government, e.g., civil polity, ecclesiastical polity. It is also a condition of being constituted as a state or other organized community or body, and also a government or administrative regulation of any institution or organization". Furthermore, Mburu (2016, p. 47) defines church governance as "the instituted authority over the church or flock. Hence it is ordained by God and acts on his behalf *(if doing what is right, just, lawful-in accordance to the law of God)*". Ideally, therefore, church government is the Godly ordained authority over the church instituted by and through the church, with "established and agreed structures through which and by which the church operates. The Church does not operate in a vacuum, there must be order, law and regulations clearly spelt out and followed for the benefit of all. The leader and the led. The governing and the governed" (Mburu 2016, p. 47).

Historically, church polity is known from a Reformed perspective as a theological issue of institutional guidance for order under the authority of Scripture. This is why John Calvin (1509–1564) developed the "Institutes" and the *"Ordonnances Ecclesiastiques"* (Ecclesiastical Ordinances), which were adopted in Geneva as church order in 1541. These documents aimed to apply Biblical principles on the church's organizational order for public worship and ministry (Msiska 2020, p. 45). Church polity is also known from a Presbyterian

perspective as ecclesiological administration through the offices of elders, deacons, and ministers. Additionally, an episcopal perspective governs the church with bishops, priests, and deacons. Thus, Zgambo (2021, p. 1) views church polity, or government, as the manner in which ecclesiastical authority, operations, and order are exercised within the church. Zgambo (2021, p. 1) further defines the term 'government' as "the system of management used to lead, direct, command, and control an organization". Bearing in mind the indispensability of structure in any governance system, Zgambo (2021, p. 1) adds that "the word 'structure' means the arrangement of and relations between the parts of something complex, the quality of being well organized, or give structure to something".

So, within churches, there are bishops responsible for overseeing and caring for the congregation (1 Timothy 3:1–5). Pastors, on the other hand, fulfill the role of caring for the people, guiding, protecting, and bringing them closer to God. They nourish the congregation with God's Word through preaching, teaching, and counseling, taking on the sacrificial and protective nature exemplified by Jesus Christ (Jeremiah 23:1–4; Ezekiel 34:11–16; John 10:1–5). Elders, or *presbuteros*, play a crucial role in providing governance within the church, as highlighted in passages such as 1 Timothy 5:17, Titus 1:7, and 1 Peter 5:1–2. They are also responsible for teaching and preaching, as stated in 1 Timothy 3:2, 2 Timothy 4:2, and Titus 1:9, and are entrusted with stewarding sound doctrine as mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:13, 2 Timothy 3:13–17, and Titus 1:9. Deacons, on the other hand, are appointed for *diakonia* or serving, as shown in Acts 6:1–7. Additionally, the church has other organizational and departmental leaders who administer specific issues accordingly, ensuring the smooth functioning of the congregation.

In the same way, Seni (2018, p. 2) says that "Church polity means government of the church, by which the church operates". Agreeably, ecclesial polity carries the idea of ruling, controlling, or exercising authority over the affairs and actions of an organization or institution. Therefore, while the church is primarily a spiritual organism with Jesus Christ as her head, polity still matters because institutionally she needs a structural administration. Generally, churches utilize one or a combination of two or more polities, such as episcopal, Presbyterian, autocratic, congregational, or free polity, as delineated below.

3.1. Episcopal Church Government

The term "episcopal" is derived from the Greek word "*episkopos*", which means bishop. Episcopal polity vests authority in a hierarchy of bishops and clergy, groups churches in dioceses under a bishop, and the bishop's decisions are comprehensively binding. According to Awuku–Gyampoh and Asare (2019, p. 103), this polity is one of the earliest forms of church governance which mainly consists of clergymen, bishops, and management committees, focusing on a structure of priesthood with local congregations governed or overseen by bishops. This is mostly used in mainline churches such as Catholic, Anglican, and Methodist churches.

Conversely, some classical Pentecostal churches, like the AFM, use it with the president at its top national office, and overseers overseeing some regions and districts. Neo-Pentecostal churches, such as Harvest House International (HHI), also use it with her founder at the top as the visionary, deputized by his self-appointed apostolic council and assisted by senior reverends (whom the denomination also refers to as bishops) who oversee regional churches. According to Seni (2018, p. 2), the episcopal government has an office of bishops playing a very key and authoritative role. Similarly, in Zimbabwean charismatic and prophetic churches, founding leaders, whose titles differ from one denomination to another, such as prophet, archbishop, or apostle, use founder/leader/pastor–centred governance. They form apostolic councils, appoint regional bishopric overseers and local assembly pastors, but manipulate all of them to secure their (founders'/top leaders') powers.

Across all denominations, the episcopal governance is generally drawn from the Bible, as Bird (2019, n.p) remarks:

. . .First, there is the chain of succession from apostles to the bishops who maintained orthodox teaching. The apostles are regarded as special authorities, who appointed bishops/overseers/elders in local congregations to succeed them in apostolic ministry. A chain of succession—leading to the formation of a historical episcopate—is alleged from Christ's appointment of the apostles (Mark 3:14–16; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11), to the apostles' appointment of certain persons to overseeing ministries (Acts 14:23; 2 Tim 1:6; 1 Clem. 42.1–3; 44.1–2), and other positions of leadership (1 Timothy 5:22; Tit 1:5; Hebrews 6:2). This is why bishops/overseers have such a prominent role in the early church (see Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1; Tit 1:7). Second, Peter and James are thought to be among the first bishops of their respective jurisdictions. . . The Jerusalem church was initially led by a cohort of 'apostles and elders' (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22–23; 16:4), with the apostles having the priority as former companions of Jesus and witnesses to his resurrection, and deacons were appointed by the apostles to serve the needs of the community (Acts 6:1–6). However, a sole bishop appears to have emerged in Jerusalem after the departure of the apostles. . .

In concurrence with Seni (2018, p. 3), the episcopal government is advantageous because it simplifies decision-making, involves an economy of action, easily cascades doctrine from the top to grassroots, and unites the church. Accordingly, it fosters efficiency and speed in executing the *missio Dei*. Nevertheless, it has its own weaknesses such as being vulnerable to abuse, autocracy, and bureaucracy, as authoritative bishops tend to dictate and delay making decisions when handling issues that need national and local leaders.

3.2. Presbyterian Church Government

Presbyterian Church government is a system of ecclesiastic governance in which control is vested in representatives of sessions which make up presbyteries, synods, and assemblies. In agreement with Awuku–Gyampoh and Asare (2019, p. 103), Presbyterian governance provides an equilibrium between the denomination and the congregation by enhancing authority to flow from the congregation up and from the denomination down. The congregation elects the leaders in the denomination in order to prevent the emergence and development of dominant hierarchies under the command of one person, which is toxic to the growth of the church. With this system, once elected, leaders would begin to exercise power over congregations. Local congregations govern themselves through elected boards. They also run with regional groups of congregations known as presbyteries, which regularly come together to form a synod.

As described by Zeze (2012, p. 67), Presbyterian governance is defined by a structure based on offices of ruling and teaching eldership within the church. These elders work together under the authority of the Synod or General Assembly, which is considered the highest ecclesiastical court. Mburu (2016, p. 48) observes that "if the Presbyterian system is well followed with good order, boundaries and discipline, it helps to bring order in church, maintain church discipline and guards the flock from manipulation and base gain from an individual". However, pastors or parish ministers are not empowered to make decisions because they are always at the mercies of the elders. If there is a difference of opinion or disagreement between the pastor and the elders or committees, it could lead to tensions and difficulties. Thus, in cases where elders and subordinate leaders are influenced by some malicious motives, they can easily scheme against pastors and disrupt pastoral work as well as the *missio ecclesiae*.

3.3. Congregational Church Government

Concurring with Zeze (2012, pp. 51–52), "[C]ongregational Church polity or Congregationalism is a system of church governance in which every local church congregation is independent, ecclesiastically sovereign, or autonomous". For Awuku–Gyampoh and Asare (2019, p. 104), the involvement of congregationally sensitive representatives and various substructures in congregational governance "emulates the New Testament idea of

the priesthood of every believer. They include individual leaders that are accountable for entire congregations and therefore carry out the planning as well as management of church activities on their own accord".

Jentile (2021, p. 3) adds that congregationalism gives equal powers to all individual church members to participate fully in the life and administration of the church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ as the highest court of authority. On that account, deliberations and decisions on administration, pastoral work, pastoral welfare, diaconal ministry, liturgy, missionary work, ecclesial economy, and everything is determined by the congregation collectively, and sometimes delegated to committees or individuals with particular expertise. According to Awuku–Gyampoh and Asare (2019, p. 105), congregationalism imparts and nurtures "a sense of belief to the congregation who in turn devote themselves to the various services of the Church to ensure its growth and development". Unlike Episcopalians, who adhere to a hierarchical structure with singular figures like bishops, and Presbyterians, whose governance runs under elders, bishops, and committees, congregationalism distinctively gives autonomy to local assemblies through which some committees or office bearers, such as deacons and ministers, are elected to carry out the will of the congregants. Thus, congregationalism is democratic as everyone's concern is respected. While it is advantageous to congregants, it denies ministers freedom to exercise some authority, thereupon risking to pursue the will of the people at the expense of *Opus Dei* (the work of God).

3.4. Mixed Church Polity

Having experienced, discerned, and deliberated that all the common Presbyterian, episcopal, and congregational ecclesiological polities have both strengths and weaknesses, I recommend churches to mix their government systems with ideals from either polity. For example, the following sub-sections provide a detailed overview of mixed church polity by looking at two of the biggest classical Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe—the AOG and AFM.

3.4.1. Mixed Government Example A: Assemblies of God (AOG)

Historicized by Lephoko (2010, p. 165; 2018, p. 62) and Motshetshane (2015, p. 166), the AOG traces its roots back to the significant Azusa Street Revival in California, Los Angeles, in the USA in 1904. Missionaries brought the movement to South Africa in 1908, and it was eventually embraced by the Black community, thanks to the efforts of Nicholas Bhekinkosi Bhengu. This led to its spread beyond South Africa, reaching Zimbabwe in the 1950s (Chibango 2021, p. 73; Mpoko 2019, pp. 15–170). Tagwirei and Masango (2023, p. 2) chronicle that Nicholas Hepworth Bhekinkosi Bhengu envisioned, institutionalized, and operationalized evangelisation and the planting of churches in and beyond South Africa, which led to the formation of the AOG in Zimbabwe in 1959. Apostle Bhengu oversaw the church from South Africa with a mixture of episcopal, Presbyterian, and congregational governance. Tagwirei (2022, p. 112) heralds that "while Nicholas Hepworth Bhekinskosi led with an apostolic authority, he structured his subordinate leadership in an episcopal manner and established local branches with congregational autonomy".

> After Nicholas Bhengu's death in 1985, the [National Executive) NE took supreme custody of the national oversight of the church, applying a mixture of Presbyterian, Episcopal and congregational governance. A number of attempts have been made to consider an exclusively episcopal governance in vain because delegates of the decisive national conference kept disagreeing and the matter has been repeatedly deferred indefinitely... The AOG NE is a nine membered national leadership elected after every two years in a national conference which comprises delegates from all regions (pastors, elders and deacons). It upholds the autonomy of recognized assemblies, polices and oversees the church in view of her constitution, by-laws, and procedures and facilitates the election of District Councils (DCs) to administrate regions. The DCs, also elected after every two years at a district council which comprises delegates from all local assemblies

(pastors, elders and deacons), administers regional work, human, material and financial resources. Complementarily, the local assemblies are administrated by their self-governing committees, departmental committees such as men, mothers, youths and girls committees... While the pastor remains in charge of the assembly, the assembly committee is set to support him/ her towards effectuation and development of the church vision and mission. The pastor is usually invited to be present at every committee meeting to take part in all decisions as reflected through Acts 6:1–4 and Exodus 18:14–22. The model also liberates the pastor from being overburdened and overwhelmed by each group's needs (Tagwirei 2022, pp. 112–17).

As such, the AOG employs a mixed governance system. Although she does not regard her national leader as her Bishop mainly because constitutional amendments are still slowly ongoing, the AOG NE still runs with Episcopalian, Presbyterian and Congregational governance attributes. Her NE chairman provides national oversight, comes up with the church's annual plans, discusses, endorses, casts and pursues them with subordinate members through regional and local assemblies. While the NE head and his team have such powers, the Presbyterian part of AOG's polity forces them to be consultative. Arguably, that protects them from being dictatorial and self-serving. More-so, the church's Procedure manual (n.d) obliges the NE to present their vision-bred goals to District Councils (DCs), local assembly leaders and representatives at annual General Conferences for robust discussions, recommendations, resolutions and endorsement. Subsequently, DC and congregational leaders consult their assemblies and submit feedback to regional and national secretaries respectively, for NE considerations. So, the church runs with reciprocal engagements between the NE, DC and local leadership. Notably, all AOG assemblies are constitutionally autonomous, and that upholds the church's congregationalism. As a result, AOG leaders are aware that if they disregard voices of congregants, they lose their moral, financial, material and human resource support. Now, when national, regional, assembly leaders and representatives cooperate, they promote and yield respect, harmony, collectivity, transparency, accountability and achieve a lot for the advancement of *missio ecclesiae*. That is why this article argues that mixing polities can enable leaders to advance missionary work while safeguarding them and followers from possible abuses.

3.4.2. Mixed Government Example B: AFM in Zimbabwe (AFMZ)

The AFM in Zimbabwe (AFMZ) falls within the African and Zimbabwean Pentecostal landscape as one of the biggest and oldest denominations whose origins are also traced from the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, California, 1906 (Sande 2019, p. 2). According to Ndlovu (2018, p. 114), the church was established from South Africa through the work of missionaries. Hwata (2005, p. 27) clarifies that the AFMZ was started in Zimbabwe by migrant worker who brought the movement from South Africa in 1915. He planted the church in Gwanda and as other missionaries and native converts evangelized, the church grew and got established across the country. Ndlovu (2018, p. 129) adds that:

Unlike the A.F.M. of South Africa, which in the year 2000 adopted a philosophy that sought to decentralise the Church at local level allowing the assemblies to develop their own policies in an autonomous way, the A.F.M.Z. follows a more centralised approach... the A.F.M.Z. seems to follow a more centralized form of leadership control. The A.F.M.Z.'s administration is controlled by the Apostolic Council (A.C.), which oversees the work as policy-makers, the guardians of doctrinal, ethical and liturgical matters of the church. The AC uses the provincial overseers as supervisors of the work at local level and these are key members of the A.C. However, constitutionally, the AC. is subservient to the National Workers' Council (NWC.) which should supervise all decisions and monitors the implementation of resolutions of the National Workers Council Meeting (NWCM).

That way, similar to the previously mentioned case of the AOG, the AFMZ employs a mixed governance system, combining attributes of both episcopal, Presbyterian and some

congregational structures. The church's apostolic council is headed by an elected president and consists of pastors chosen from various regions. Additionally, the AFMZ operates with district overseers, appointed senior pastors, who provide regional oversight. At the local level, the church is steered by pastors, elders, departmental leaders, and committees that complement each other in advancing *missio ecclesiae*. As well captured by Kwaramba and Dreyer (2019, p. 3), the AFMZ leadership structure is inclusive of grassroots and executive representatives such as deacons, elders, pastors, overseers and the president. I understand that, like AOG, each local AFMZ assembly has departmental leaders and representatives who engage with local, district, regional and national leaders reciprocally. My study on the church show that AFMZ leaders do not have the autonomy to decide the development of the church on their own. That is why one of the AFMZ's public Shona adage 'Basa nderaShe' (which, in English, means this work/ ministry belongs to God). Respecting that, AFMZ leadership only apply authority on areas of need, such as when enforcing discipline, while predominantly consulting and respecting views of congregants to promote God's work. Thus, this article argues that it is transformational to mix and missionize ecclesiastic governance. In light of this, the following section attempts to transfigure and missionize Pentecostal governance.

4. Transfiguring and Missionizing Pentecostal Governance

It is well discernible that there is no perfect church polity. This is mainly because each government has its own strengths and weaknesses. For example, episcopal government seems preferable to some because it empowers apostles and bishops to authoritatively envision and oversee their churches, present and enforce the will of God, and advance *missio Dei* and *missio ecclesiae* arguably without insubordination. Despite that, the same freedom and power can be abused to advance personal interests at the expense of God and the congregants. This is well evidenced by the likes of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) where her late founder, apostle, and archbishop personalized the church into a dynasty. Biri (2020, p. 172) writes that the leader used and established an authoritarian, neo-patrimonial and dynastic governance. Similarly, Presbyterian polity fosters inclusive leadership through elders, deacons, and ministers, but tends to be bureaucratic and obstructive to the advancement of *Opus Dei*. Likewise, congregational governance advantageously secures takers-in from leadership abuse as it is consultatively all–encompassing, but it is equally disadvantageous because it promotes human will, which may not always be in sync with God's intentions, and hence can sometimes be against theocracy. Congregational decisions and implementations are often slow and obstructive, which can be challenging given today's high demand for missionary work. The process of reaching a consensus among congregational representatives can be time-consuming, and sometimes disagreements arise, further contributing to delays in decision-making and implementation. Yet, in agreement with Niemandt (2015, p. 2), ecclesial governance must advance *missio Dei* and *missio ecclesiae*.

> The church is *missional*. The church is in a permanent state of mission. Mission is at the heart of what it means to be church. Mission precedes the church and calls the church into being to serve God's purposes in the world... This must be reflected in the church order. Good governance and the prophetic witness of the church towards society are determined by the broader ecclesiological framework of what the church is.

Therefore, this article contends that incorporating a mixed church polity enhances the efficiency of the church, thereby bolstering its *missionality*. More aptly put, "good governance entails a church polity that is conducive towards the transformation of the church into *missional* life ... If the church *does* what it *is* and then *organises* what it *does*, it entails clearly a challenge of design or architecture" (Niemandt 2015, p. 2). As such, the church can, and should, consider transfiguring and missionizing her governance by blending her polities, integrating principles from different systems towards empowering leaders to enhance *missio Dei* while, at the same time, protecting them from falling into power–abuse

by incorporating accountability, transparency, and congregational involvement. So, with all the polities, ecclesiological transfiguration can be realized if governance is blended with ideologies that accommodate all leadership (autocratic, dictatorial, consultative, and participative) styles, enabling the leaders to promote *Opus Dei* bindingly.

I am aware that autocrats and dictators are usually demonized as bad because they are generalized as exclusively self-centred, as Adebomi and Omotosho (2022, p. 4) reflect, unlike democrats who inclusively accommodate followers' input. But there are situations where autocratic and dictatorial leadership styles are sometimes needful. For instance, in cases that demand swift action, such as expelling adulterous leaders from their positions upon finding sufficient evidence, or reporting a leader who embezzles church funds to the police as a disciplinary measure, seeking congregational views may be impractical and may create conflicts due to personal relationships and engagements with the parties involved. In such instances, decisive leadership becomes crucial to address the issues promptly and maintain the integrity of the church's operations.

Similarly, attributes of governance which uphold consultative and participative leadership styles, such as Presbyterian and congregational principles, are necessary, especially when developing policies and procedures. Considering all the aspects mentioned above, the church can transfigure and missionize her governance by combining elements from various polities. This can be done by integrating its ideals with attributes from all polities to balance leadership authority with accountability, transparency, and congregational involvement so as to reciprocate God, together with His people's opinions through their local, regional, national, and international representatives, respectively.

5. Conclusions

Although all church polities exhibit certain weaknesses, their strengths can be utilized effectively if the leaders who establish, follow, and govern them incorporate their philosophies. Hence, this paper postulated that if a church adopts comprehensive Presbyterian principles to encourage consultation with subordinate leaders, combines them with congregational grassroots appreciation, empowerment, and engagement, and also accommodates decisive Episcopalian ideas, its leaders can demonstrate both exclusive and inclusive accountability, transparency, and decisiveness in addressing diverse issues and contexts. Arguably, mixing, transfiguring, and missionizing church governance systems can withstand self-centredness, promote other-centeredness, and further *Opus Dei*. Given that leaders might not willingly relinquish power and the associated benefits, they may persist in manipulating their administrative systems to maintain their positions and possessions. Nonetheless, since aging, mortality, and leadership successions are unavoidable realities, emerging leaders who embrace an integrative approach can ultimately use it to bring about transformative changes and missionize their governance.

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