

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

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DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

IMPACT OF NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN CHRISTIANITY:

(A case study of Repentance and Holiness Ministry in Kisumu City) //

BY

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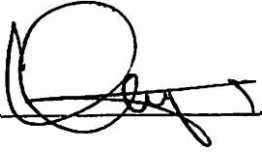
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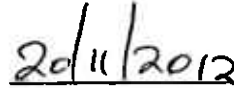
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### Declaration

I declare that this is my original work that has not been presented for a degree in any other University for an academic award.



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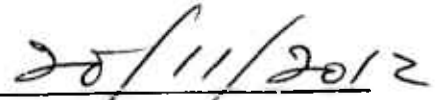


DATE

This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as university supervisor.



PROF. N.W. NDUNG'U



DATE

TO THE HONOUR OF MY FATHER

Rev. Dominic Otieno Oduk

“I know that this man..... is a holy man of God ` 2 king 4:9

AND MY MOTHER

Mrs. Eunita A. Otieno

“Her children rise up and call her blessed

Her husband also, and he praises her”

Proverbs 31:28

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## Abstract

This study is focused on the impact of New Religious Movements in Christianity, with specific reference to Repentance and Holiness Ministry in Kisumu City.

It is a descriptive and evaluative study that tends to critically consider the challenges of the society at the time of the foundation of this movement, and how these challenges historically escalated into the New Religious movement in question. It also relates how they shaped the nature of the teachings of this movement and how these teachings positively or negatively influence the society in Kisumu.

In attaining this, the four congregations of Repentance and Holiness Ministry in Kisumu were selected. A pastor, three leaders and five members were selected from each congregation and interviewed. The researcher also conducted several interviews among other churches that have been in existence in Kisumu and their perception about this new movement was considered. Two Catholic Parishes, an Anglican Church, an Africa Inland Church, two Pentecostal Churches and two African Instituted Churches were selected and two leaders from each church interviewed.

The research realized that membership into this new religious movement is mainly composed of people who formerly belonged to the Pentecostal Charismatic prosperity churches. The study also through a critical evaluative approach, found out that the prosperity gospel had become less appealing to people of the middle and low class who had considered such churches as economic exploitative faiths. With this respect, Repentance and Holiness Ministry (R.H.M) was revealed to be most appealing to masses because of Dr. Owuor's approach of *free worship* where congregants pay no money during the worship services.

In this process, the Pentecostal churches were revealed to be the mostly affected while the Catholic Church is the least affected. This is based on the observation that the Catholic Church does not focus so much on the gospel of money.

Besides these, attaining membership in Catholic Church is a very long procedure that involves discipleship, unlike the Pentecostals that only focus on the concept of salvation and spirit filling.

The research also evaluates the doctrines of R.H.M. This is achieved through personal attendance and active participation in the meetings, critical review of the available literature and examining the lives of the followers. The study thus establishes that eschatological beliefs are the most vocal in the movement because many people, who are frustrated in this life, easily withdraw their attention from the present and reflects to the future as the only option of self fulfillment.

This study also evaluates methods of attracting followers into this movement. In this process, the study confirms that women are the majority of followers. This is based on the fact that the African society exposes women to more challenges than men, making them to be quick to follow New Religious Movements (N.R.Ms) in their quest for solutions to their social and economic challenges.

Finally, the research discovers that the main cause of splinter groups in Christianity is based on the fact that many religious founders focus on different aspects of Christology rather than Christ in wholesome. Furthermore, the differences that are experienced between the N.R.Ms and the existing churches are always based on personal differences, rather than in the interest and defense of the faith.

## **Abbreviations**

A.R.M.	-	Alternative Religious Movements
C.M.	-	Charismatic Movements
D.L.M.	-	Devine Light Mission
E.R.F.	-	Eckanikar and Ranjees Foundation
ISKCON	-	International Society of Krishna Consciousness
M.R.M.	-	Marginal Religious Movements
N.R.	-	New Religions
N.I.V.	-	New International Version
N.R.M.	-	New Religious Movement
O.R.M.	-	Old Religious Movements
R.H.M.	-	Repentance & Holiness Ministry
U.C.	-	Unification Church

## Definition of Concepts

**Altar:** An elevated place/structure within a Christian place of worship where Eucharist and other ordinances are administered. In R.H.M it refers to the entire place of worship for a local congregation.

**Apocalyptic:** Sub genre of prophetic writings and teachings that is mainly concerned about the end of the world.

**Doctrine:** A set of codified teachings or principles that form the basic foundation of a religion or a religious denomination.

**Eschatology:** A branch of Christian theology that focuses on the destiny of humanity with specific reference to death and afterlife, heaven and hell, rapture and last judgment.

**Glossolalia:** The act of speaking in a language that is out of one's own human understanding "tongues" during worship and prayers and is mainly common among Pentecostal movements

**Holiness:** A spiritual virtue that depicts a sense of purity of the heart, mind and body and living a sinless life.

**Jo-Owuor :** Luo term translated to *People* of or followers of Prophet Owuor

**Jo-Toba :** A combination of Luo and Kiswahili terms translated to "People of confession". It is a name used to refer to members of R.H.M based on their act of public confession of sins.

**Jo-ogunde :** Luo term translated to "people of the sacks". It is a mockery name used to refer to members of R.H.M based on their wearing of sack clothes.

**Ministry:** A spiritual institution that is organized under a particular charismatic leader and tends to pursue a particular vision as propagated by the leader.

**Rapture:** To be abruptly caught up and taken to heaven through a spiritual force.

**Region:** A church administrative geographical area governed by a bishop or an overseer.

**Repentance:** The act of publicly pronouncing one's own sin or sins of others as a way of showing remorsefulness and asking for forgiveness from God.

**Sin:** An act or a state that violates God's will and distorts the ideal relationship between man and God.

**Tribulation:** A form of spiritual affliction that is perceived to be beyond normal human suffering and is expected to mark the end of the world.

**Vision:** A spiritual scene that appears in the mind of an individual and is meant to symbolically or directly reveal certain incidences that are likely to happen in the society.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1.1. Background Information**

The study of New Religious Movements is not only one of the most recent developments, but also an issue of great concern in the field of religion. Even though the first attention on this concept was not drawn from the religious field as one could perceive, but from sociologists and anthropologists, today it is a matter that no scholar in religious studies can close his / her mind to. Every religion or denomination(s) in one way or the other has experienced or continue to experience growths of new movements emanating from main stream churches which either operate within them, or parallel to or sometimes even outside of them.

Their claim to have discovered a new form of spirituality that restores the lost truth has made them to attract many followers mostly from the mother churches from which they emerge. Repentance and Holiness Ministry (RHM) is one of such movements within Christian faith founded by Dr. David Edward Owuor. Though many people do not know the background of the founder, he claims to be a Kenyan born in Nyanza Province, Siaya County in Yimbo.

Before receiving his prophetic call, Prophet Owuor is said to have been a man of excellent spirit, refined scientist and devout researcher. Not much information is available about his early academic life. He however started his undergraduate studies at Makerere University in Uganda before getting a transfer to the University of Nairobi due to political crisis that was in Uganda in 1980s. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree from University of Nairobi in 1988, and then got a scholarship that enabled him proceed to Israel where he studied Biochemical Genetics in Ben Gurion University. He briefly returned to Kenya where he worked with the United Nations up to 1994 then he went back to Israel to do Doctorate program in Biochemical Genetics, specializing in D.N.A sequencing – Haifa University.

After completing his Doctorate program, he left Israel to do further researches in University of Chicago in the US, University of Medicine and Dentistry in New Jersey where he worked as a lecturer and as a Cancer and Tumor specialist, a position he held up to 2003 when he left the job as compelled by the prophetic call upon his life.

On his arrival to Kenya, he began his prophetic teachings by openly condemning evils of his generation, beginning from the house of the Lord (Church). The church, as he claims the Lord had shown him was very evil. The preachers were preaching for money, miracles were sold for money, wickedness of immorality and corruption had penetrated into the altar of God, yet the blind sheep kept on following the lost shepherd whose sacrifices were no longer acceptable. This was a sad scenario with the view of the fact

that Christ's return had drawn nearer than any other time in history – the Rapture was not even a stone throw away.

It was upon this that he called Kenya and other nations to *repent, return to God and be holy for the rapture is not just near, but here with us*. The movement finally acquired its name as "*Repentance and Holiness Ministry*".

At the initial stages, many people especially Bishops, Pastors and prominent church leaders did not accept his message. But with great zeal, commitment and with God's grace evident through working of miracles, his crusades began to pull crowds up to hundreds of thousands and sometimes up to a million in a single meeting. Such crusades have been conducted in Nyanza, Western, Rift Valley and Nairobi. Specific towns where the impact have been practically experienced include Kisumu, Homa Bay, Kakamega, Kisii, Eldoret, Nakuru, Eldama Ravine, Njoro, Kericho and Kasarani in Nairobi just to mention a few. Today, the ministry has a global impact with several repentance meetings held across the globe in Asia, North and South America, Europe and the rest of Africa. It is with no doubt that the small fire that begun in 2003 through a medical doctor and University lecturer has turned out to be a religious flame consuming villages and cities of the world. As some of his followers comment, no one can successfully stand before a moving train and survive. Everyone has to join the train, give way or be crushed, but the train has to move.



According to the prophet's teachings, his call has been validated not only through miracles, signs and wonders, but also through the fulfillment of his prophecies such as earthquakes, famine, drought, warfare and tsunamis. Such prophecies include the 2007 / 2008 Kenyan Post Election Violence that according to him was a manifestation of God's wrath because Kenya had refused to repent.

Though the prophet claims not to have a duty of planting churches, several congregations are witnessed in towns' halls, schools and colleges as well as in rural villages that claim to be his followers. Several churches have been closed down as the congregants join the movement and embrace the teachings of the prophet.

His teachings are far reaching beyond ordinary crusades. This is propagated through radio stations especially Jesus is Lord Radio, magazines, C.D. and D.V.D. records, websites and all other available channels of modern communication.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

The current situation of Christian faith is very ironical in the reflection of the deep expectation and prayer of Jesus in the scripture i.e.

*“.....I pray for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them*

*the glory you gave me that they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me, that they may be one as we are one.....”*

*John 17:20 – 23 (NIV).*

The Christian faith today has very little to answer in response to this prayer made by Jesus. Besides the fact that Christians proclaim one faith in Jesus, with one God (Yahweh), one savior (Christ), one revealed word (the bible), many religious movements have sprung up within this one faith. The older denominations have been continually seen as losing grips with the faith and creating a spiritual vacuum that the N.R.Ms rise up to fill. Furthermore, the interaction between these new religious movements and the existing churches has remained very cold and divisive rather than integrative. This has made the world a host of “*Christianities*” rather than Christianity as a solid and united faith in the same Lord.

Repentance and Holiness Ministry has emerged as one of these new religious movements in Christianity. Even though it is perceived to be one of the youngest, it has attracted millions of followers across the world. Furthermore, very little is known about the movement and its founder despite the fact that there are several criticisms against it. This therefore creates the need to investigate the background of the founder, the nature of his teachings and prophecies so that the movement can be understood better from a scholarly perspective.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

This study was guided by the following objectives:

- i) To identify the major challenges in the society at the time of the emergence of R.H.M and show how the movement addressed them.
- ii) To explain the main teachings of this movement and show how they are communicated within the organizational structure.
- iii) To identify various categories of members and their main attractions into the movement.
- iv) To identify the practical impact (positive or negative) of R.H.M.

### **1.4 Rationale of the Study**

The Kenyan population is presumed to be more than 80% Christian who live both in rural and urban centers. Though some religious leaders argue that majority of those who call themselves Christians are not Christian in action and character but just nominal, influence of Christianity still remains high therefore anything that touches on Christian faith has to trickle down to the entire society hence worthy of study.

The whole concept of New Religious Movement is not new to Christianity, but has continued to be in existence since the foundation of the faith. Christianity itself was at first viewed as a NRM from Judaism, likewise to Protestantism from Catholicism.

At the emergence of R.H.M in Nyanza, Rift Valley and Western regions in Kenya, the movement was at first rejected especially by prominent church leaders. It is thus a great surprise that currently the movement that has hardly taken eight years commands a following that is estimate up to two millions of congregants from various parts of the world in a single meeting (See Appendix 3.2 and 3.3). Such a drastic growth and public following makes the movement viable for an academic investigation.

It is also an indisputable fact that the rate at which religious groupings emerge in society is increasing not only in number but also in influence. This therefore demands that a clear understanding of a particular society does not only require knowledge on the pre- existing religions, but also on new religious movements.

On the other hand, a neutral perspective of this study should be a great eye opener to the so called Old Religious Movements. It should help the existing churches to realize the most critical needs of the people at every season and adjust their nature of services in order to address these spiritual needs hence maintain relevance to the society.

In addition to these, the findings of this research should help in bridging the gap between the NRM and the existing churches; hence limit sharp rebuke and rejection based on personal differences of the leaders. It should instead encourage unity within diversity and appreciation of one another based not on propaganda, but on the

practical contribution and transformation realized for the good of the church and the society both in the present and for the future.

Besides these, the findings of this research should be very useful to the leaders and adherents of the NRM itself. It should enable them to exercise self evaluation by comparing their theoretical expectations against the practical results realized. This should help the movement to discover the impact that their teachings has caused in the society and also evaluate whether such impact is positive or negative.

This study should also be useful to the government in making policies that govern acceptance and registration of Religious Movements. Being that the rate at which churches and religious movements seek for registration and recognition is higher than any other category of movements whether political parties or trade unions, points out that the government has to be keen in this process of legalizing new religious movements.

Findings from this research should inform the concerned policy makers in what factors to consider in allowing the operations of a religious movement in their territory. It should help them have at least certain standards of expectations on teachings, doctrines and values so as to only legalize those movements that add value without contradicting the ethical standards of the society.

Finally, this being a very new spiritual movement which is still in its formative stage, an academic research done at this level is of great significant especially for future scholars who may develop interests in research and study based on this very movement. As it is already seen, RHM is no longer regional or national movement, but it has spread to touch other continents of the world. This movement that spreads like a fire consuming dry grass will soon attract attention of scholars and researchers who may need scholarly information on specific places it first touched. This therefore makes Kisumu a justifiable case study because it was among the first towns to embrace the whole idea of "Repentance and Holiness".

### **1.5 Limitations of the Study**

It is true to make an observation that the concept of NRM has been widely researched on. However, a great limitation was realized based on the fact that no movement that was once viewed as a NRM may remain new forever. As time goes by and as the movement gains popularity and acceptance with the people, its newness disappears. This therefore creates a limitation on this research since illustrations drawn from the prior NRMs may not be perfect as some of the movements might have ceased to be new.

On the other hand, R.H.M is a very recent movement that has been in existence for less than a decade. The movement is still in its formative stage hence lacks very stable administrative structure. Furthermore, the structure that exists today may only be temporal hence may either change or take different forms as the movement gains

further stability. The structure discussed in this research is therefore considered as interim hence creating room for adjustments in the future.

In addition to these, no N.R.M can spring up from a religious vacuum. This movement just like others has grown up from existing churches. It is thus important to note that in observing the population, the samples may not be purely new, but might have a lot of continuity from the older churches. Assumption that every observation and conclusion drawn from the subjects has all to do with the R.H.M may therefore not be perfectly accurate. Since many adherents of R.H.M once belonged to other churches, it may be technical to draw a clear cut between what they have acquired in the NRM and what they have inherited from their former movements. A comparative view of membership in relation to other Christian churches was therefore necessary in order to generate a clear understanding of the unique traits to the movement in question.

It is also true to observe at this juncture that at the formative stage of any religious movement, they might suffer from sharp rebuke and opposition from other existing denominations. This makes the members to be over suspicious hence may not open up to give information and to be observed fully as expected. Even though neutrality of an academic research was expressed to win their attention and confidence, still some few did not believe it. They still expressed fear based on the assumption that the information may turn out to be used as propaganda against them. An acceptance letter from a pastor of each congregation selected was thus very useful for such cases.

Besides these, the issue of nominal believers remained a great challenge. Even though very many people have been seen to gather around this movement, it was hard to tell the genuine members who clearly understand, embrace and exercise the teachings. It would therefore be very unfortunate if the sample landed on nominal adherents whose way of life may not measure up to genuine followers. Since nominal followers can give faulty information that may water down the validity of the findings, stratified sampling that focused on long term members was very useful. The recommendation of a pastor of every congregation about true converts could also not be ignored.

Finally, the fact that this movement is at the time of the research the most recent N.R.M known in the area, made it very viable for research; but also exposed the researcher to a critical challenge. Very little has been written concerning this movement therefore there was deficiency of secondary sources of data. Furthermore, the few writings in circulation were mostly full of criticisms based on personal difference and not neutral, scholarly and research based. The research therefore gave a lot of focus to primary data as a compliment to the limited literature.

## **1.6 Literature Review**

The concept of new religious movement, just as religion itself is a very complex phenomenon. Before the term NRMs was used, the term New Religions (N.R.) was commonly used to refer to the religious movements that emerged from the mainstream world religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism.



As Walgrave observed, the concept of NRM or N.R.s is used in widely differing ways, yet their application is not arbitrary but is conditioned by historical, theological and academic considerations.<sup>1</sup>

For him, the concept is used as an umbrella term for a stunning diversity of phenomenon, ranging from doctrinal deviation within world religions and major churches to passing fads and spiritual enthusiasm of a questionably religious kind.<sup>2</sup>

In seeking for a uniform scholarly and acceptable definition of NRMs, scholars have been exposed to great challenges. Just like religion in totality, adherents of NRMs have made very little attempts to define their own. It is a common technicality in the study of religion that religious founders, teachers and followers make very little attempts to define themselves or their movements yet when scholars do it, they are viewed as outsiders who may have a hidden agenda in their minds. Early Western scholars who developed studies in this concept like Rodney Stark, William Sims, Eileen Barker, James T. Richardson and Timothy Miller among others were either sociologists or anthropologists therefore did not have purely religious perspective concerning the phenomenon.

To further his argument on the complexity of this concept Walgrave observed that:

*'New forms of religiosity are only new in relation to the earlier expression. The usage of the term NRM is thus relative to both time and space'.<sup>3</sup>*

Melton J. Gordon also confirms the argument that the concept of New Religious Movements is very relative to both time and space. In his essay entitled: "An introduction to New Religious Movements (2004)", he observed that the United Methodist Church was one of the largest and dominant religious movements that was widely accepted in United States, while in Greece, it was viewed by the government as a very destructive cult.<sup>4</sup>

For him NRMs may only be used to refer to movements at a particular stage of evolution and development and that when they fully mature, they cease to be new. He further gives an example of the Worldwide Church of God in the United States which was viewed as a NRM and a cult up to 1990s but when the movement changed certain beliefs and practices and finally joined the National Association of Evangelicals (N.A.E.) the cultic perception ceased.<sup>5</sup>

Even the Pentecostal Movements in America were never exceptional. They were viewed as cultic movements at their initial stages but this perception changed with their initiative to join N.A.E.<sup>6</sup>

From the Biblical Christian perspective, Christianity was for a long time viewed as a N.R.M. that emerged from mainstream Judaism. As the scripture records:

*“Some of them however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene , went to Antioch and begun to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord’s hand was with them and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord ..... The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch”.*

From this portion of the scripture, it is clear that Christians were not called Christians parse by Jesus himself, neither did they give themselves that identity, but they were called so by outsiders who viewed them as followers of a N.R.M. whose name they did not know. The name “Christians” was therefore a mockery statement that associated them with a Jewish Religious Monk who because of his teachings that were controversial to his people, more so his claim to be the Christ and the Messiah, died a shameful death by being hung on a tree.

Furthermore, as Christianity gained popularity among the Jews first before it spread to the gentile world, it ceased to be a New Religious Movement especially at Jerusalem but became new to the Gentile world. Christianity was therefore not a New Religious Movement in Jerusalem when the book of Acts was written, but it was new in Antioch.

On the same note, when Christianity was introduced in Kenya in 1840s by Western Missionaries it was a totally new movement in Kenya but not in the West.

Today, the perception of Christianity has clearly changed such that it is no longer a NRM. but rather several NRMs have developed within the movement of Christ. A definition of NRM with reference to Christianity during the apostolic age may therefore not be applicable today.

It is also clearly revealed that the definition of this concept of NRM is a technical task based on the fact that the terms used to refer to these movements have always tended to acquire negative connotations. The terms such as "*cults*" and "*sects*" have been the most common yet they attract resistance from the adherents. The followers of such new forms of spirituality thus reject such perception and treat them as forms of spiritual attack. hatred and persecutions that they need to overcome with time.

For instance, scholars such as Eileen Barker, James T. Richardson, Timothy Miller and Catherine Wessinger argue that such terminologies as "*cults*" and "*sects*" have become too negative therefore scholars should consider dropping their usage in academic work.<sup>8</sup>

A cult in this context refers to an outgrowth from a mainstream spiritual movement or church that is viewed to be extremely manipulative and exploitative. The spiritual authority is always bestowed upon the founder who is presumed to be the only one who has the revelation of the truth, otherwise all the rest are lost. The founder is associated

with divine powers such that his words or actions cannot be questioned by the followers, but are taken as of great spiritual significance as the scripture itself.

In many cases, cults are very secretive and only followers have the real taste of what it is, though they must not share their secrets with outsiders. Cults also have a unique character in that they tend to build around one teaching or doctrine that becomes the backbone of the movement rather than the whole balanced teachings of the faith. If one accepts to follow a cultic movement, he takes an oath neither to leave it nor to disclose their secrets.

New Religious Movements therefore from a scholarly neutral perspective, can be defined as the movements that emerge from the mainstream spiritual movements with an intention to reform, oppose or strengthen it or with the claim that they have discovered a better way to teach the truth.

Scholars have suggested several terms for this concept. For instance, Miller calls them "Alternative Religious Movements (ARM), Elwood calls them "Emergent Religious Movements" (ERM) while Herper and Le Bear call them "Marginal Religious Movements" (MRM).<sup>9</sup>

Other positive terms such as Revival Movements (R.M.) or Evangelistic Movements (E.M.) have also been used, especially if the NRM in question does not literally operate outside the mainstream, but within it as attempts to strengthen and win more converts into the existing movement. They claim to do a spiritual excavation in order to re-open blocked springs within the existing faith. Other movements have also been referred to as

Charismatic Movements (C.M.), which are basically grounded upon the charismatic leadership of the founder.

From a historical approach, Masimo Introvino observed that the concept of NRM was first used in Japan after increase of religious innovations following the Second World War. He further observed that the Westerners adopted the use of this terminology as a substitute to the word 'cults' that had emerged since 1880's but by 1960s had began to acquire a very negative connotation and was subsequently used by lay critics to disparage groups whose doctrines they opposed. <sup>10</sup>

When the term became popular in the Western European society, it specifically referred to movements of Asian origin such as Unification Church (U.C.), International Society of Krishna Consciousness Church (ISKCON), Divine Light Mission (D.L.M.), *Ecknar* and *Ranjeesh* Foundation (E.R.F.) <sup>11</sup>

Wilson Bryan R. on his study about social dimensions of New Religious Movements suggested that the concept of minority should be included in the understanding of NRM. For him, NRMs are minority movements that emerge from the dominant denominations.

<sup>12</sup>

However, Wilson's perception did not consider the fact that in some states, the famously known mainstream denominations can actually be the minority e.g. Catholics in England and Episcopalians in Scotland. Furthermore, the movements that may be perceived to be

NRM may also be dominant in certain areas e.g. the Adventists in Southern Nyanza. in Western Kenya. <sup>13</sup>

Wilson Bryan also observed that the study of NRMs has only been given little scholarly touch, despite its dominating trends in almost all societies. As he puts it:

*“Such indeed is the profusion of sects and so many are those who are committed to one or another of them, that it may confidently be said that sects today constitute a field of greater significance than that which is traditionally explored by the discipline of probably more people leading lives as self conscious and active sectarians than there are people living now as active tribesmen”* <sup>14</sup>

He therefore noticed an anthropological error that though anthropologists focus more on the study of tribal communities, the NRMs or sects are greater in number and influence as compared to the existing ethnic tribes in almost all societies of the world.

He therefore suggests that the study of NRM should be treated with more seriousness and scholarly researches should be engaged since they have become more dominant than the tribes. The study of NRMs should be the new order of studying the society. <sup>15</sup>

Mugambi J.N.K. in the process of expressing his perceived significance of any religious phenomenon on society stated that:

*“Religion is the “fabric” with which human beings as individuals and communities weave the web of their social existence”* <sup>16</sup>

Understanding the modern society therefore implies that one has to understand the current need in religiosity as manifested in the NRMs since they form part of the complex of complexes in the society.

The need for a sociological study of NRMs is further echoed by Beckford A. James, a scholar of sociology of Religion who commented that:

*“Religion is intensely personal and unavoidably social”.* <sup>17</sup>

For him, any manifestations of new patterns in religious activities is not only manifestation, but also an inter- play of various social forces. He further noted that a concrete study of NRM does not only reveal the change in the field of religion, but in all aspects of society since religion is a reflection of all dimensions of society, whether economic, social or political. <sup>18</sup>

Through this observation, it can be therefore concluded that NRMs are ways through which deep wounds of society, frustrations, excitements, joys or achievements are expressed.



Lewis James in his comment also realized that the study of NRM has been disadvantaged and marginalized for several decades, especially in the field of Religious Studies. For him, this was a fact that could have occurred as a Historical accident. As he observed, the concept of NRMs emerged first in Japan in the Post World War II period and were perceived to be decisive in nature. Because of their decisive perception the study became bread and butter for sociologists who take pleasure in studying issues of social conflict.<sup>19</sup>

Lewis also observed that the early studies of NRMs were also dominated by main stream scholars who also had a negative perception about them as cultic. mind control and brain – washing movements.<sup>20</sup>

Even in the modern approach of study to these movements, this negativity has not been fully dealt with. Bromley David for instance in his article: “Violence and New Religious Movements (2004)” pointed out that;

*“Given the radical stance of the prophetic NRMs it is not surprising that according to conventional wisdom, these groups are dangerously unstable and prone to involve in violence”<sup>21</sup>*

The Assumption that NRM is associated to violence can thus be challenged by the fact that scholars who take this stand tend to ignore other social factors that may not be actually religious, but cause conflicts. Furthermore, Bromley’s view also actually assumes the fact that even in cases where religious violence have been experienced, the

main stream religions have been in the fore front of the battle e.g. Catholic and Protestants in Northern Ireland, Israel and Palestinian war in Middle East. Muslim and Hindu wars in India, Catholics and Protestants war in Uganda and many other similar cases.

In African context, Shorter Aylward who is a famous Catholic scholar and missionary observed that NRMs are rapidly taking over the place of African Instituted Churches. His research that was basically based in Nairobi revealed that just in the same way the Independent Churches dominated various parts of Kenya in 1960s and 1979s, so have the NRMs taken over the towns and cities in the region. He therefore suggested that a study of the NRMs should reveal not only their impact on the mainstream churches, but also the needs of the society that the mainline churches, (denominations) have failed to meet yet are met by the NRMs. <sup>22</sup>

For him, even the Catholic Church can not avoid this reality. He gave an analogy from the Mirian Faith Healing Ministry (*Wanamaombi*) by Father Felician V. Nkwera of Tanzania. He thus concluded that even the Catholic Church should learn from these movements and know what to avoid and what to include in their liturgical masses in order to meet the needs of the people. <sup>23</sup>

Prior to this, Shorter had also made an observation in his book; *Jesus and the Witch Doctor, An approach to healing and wholeness (1985)* in which he stated that NRMs or the so called millennium movements are manifestations of deep sicknesses and wounds of the society. For him these are the rituals of the so called "communities of affliction" or

“clubs of the sick” that practice mental dissociation and *glossolalia* (speaking in tongues). For him, *glossolalia* seems to have therapeutic value that should edify but not divide a community.<sup>24</sup>

James Richardson who also made a more recent research on this concept took another dimension by trying to investigate how states tend to control the influence of NRMs. In his article: “ Legal Dimensions of New Religious Movements (2004)”, he found out that the extent to which states exercise control over NRMs depend on the constitutional framework of that particular state.

For instance, he observed that the American Society has been a breeding ground for many NRMs simply because of their constitutional provision that considers Religious freedom as part and parcel of human rights.<sup>25</sup>

The need to defend the fate of various vulnerable groups within NRMs also demands that states’ legal interventions in these movements are necessary in order to maintain checks and balances. As Hardman E. Charlothe in his Article: “Children in the New Religious Movements” observed, children have suffered frequently within the NRMs. He confirmed that cases of child abuse that include mental and sexual abuse, child custody and child sacrifice have been witnessed. He concludes his argument by insisting that legal interventions is necessary in NRMs with the view of investigating how innocent children gain meaning and order from the religious and cultural patterns in which they live and what they (children) think about religion and spirituality.<sup>26</sup>

It is also important to acknowledge that feminist theologians have not been left behind in the study of NRMs from a feminist perspective. One of the feminist scholars who took this approach is Susan Palmer J. In her study about the role and the fate of women in NRMs she wrote an article entitled: "Women in New Religious Movements (2004)," in which she argued that the radical and experimental nature of women in NRM raises a lot of anxieties about the future of the family.<sup>27</sup>

She observed that besides the fact that majority of NRMs are founded by male prophetic leaders, women are not only the majority of followers, but also suffer greatly from negative consequences of such movements. For instance, she points out several incidences where women in Hindu Swamis (*satchitanda of Integral Yoga and Shyam of Kulu*) have complained of Spiritual incest with celibate enlighten *gurus*. She also reports of the claims that unifications women stop menstruating and the "Dianic Wiccans" who exclude men from all circles and celebrate same sex eroticism.<sup>28</sup>

Even in cases where NRMs are founded by women leaders, women still face certain challenges. For instance, Raelian religion whose founder was Rael advised women not to give birth. In her teachings, she ended up creating a group of women that Susan J. calls "Order of Pink Angels" who are young women that want to save themselves by avoiding association with the males.<sup>29</sup>

In such movements, Susan reports that fears of Spiritual Pollution justifies sexual segregation or tightly controlled and limited sexual relationships in marriage.<sup>30</sup>

This area being very sensitive and critical, calls for more excellent feminist researchers and scholars to arise and do thorough investigation on the fate of women in NRM. As Susan already noted, this shall be very important in maintaining the image, order and integrity of the family unit.

Attempts to answer the question as to how and why do people join the NRMs is perhaps the most controversial. For Marc Gallanter, the typical reason why people join these movements is to search for community and spiritual quest.<sup>31</sup>

According to Rodney Stark and William Brainbridge, they strongly question the utility of the concept of conversion. In their observation, people join N.R.M. not through conversions but because they want to be affiliated to it. They therefore suggest the use of the term "affiliation" as a substitute for conversion.<sup>32</sup>

According to Jerry Hadden, people belong to N.R.Ms because it is a natural human activity to belong to any new group. For him, a person chooses to belong to a NRM for the same reason he was in the older one, but for this case, he chooses the new movement just because it is new.<sup>33</sup>

With this perception, Jeffrey concludes that conversion is nothing, except an emotionally changed experience that leads to a dramatic reorganization of the convert. Conversion may be part of, but not the only reason why people join NRM.

From these reviews, it can be argued out that the concept of NRMs is as old as the time that more than two faiths began to interact on the surface of the earth. As long as one movement preceded the other, the latter has always been seen as a NRM.

However, the current studies about the NRMs have not been very exhaustive. Furthermore, much of the existing works have been done by either sociologists or anthropologists who have also focused on the negative, divisive and "conflictual" factors of these movements and tend to ignore their positive aspects and influence in the society.

Just like any other new movement, R.H.M has attained this negative and divisive connotation. The prophet has been to a wide extent considered by his rivals as a propagator of false doctrine and an agent of division in the church. Extreme differences have resulted to frequent security threats to the founder, a fact that his followers believe is a form of persecution.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to these, the value of NRMs has not only been in the field of religion, but also in other aspects of society. This is based on the fact that these movements always emerge as a result of laxity in the existing mainstream movements and their failure to address

certain challenges of humanity. Furthermore, they tend to reveal and express the existing disorders in the society in general, whether economic, political or social. The most significant role played by R.H.M in the history of Kenyan politics was through the peace initiative crusades in which Prophet Owuor attempted to reconcile the warring communities after the 2007/2008 post elections violence. The movement thus became more uniting than divisive.<sup>34</sup>

R.H.M also fulfills this trait in various ways. The approach that the prophet gave to the injustices of society was not only religious but also political. According to him, the leaders had failed to fulfill their God given responsibility and had to be called back to order through a divine power manifested by God through a prophetic figure<sup>35</sup>

The perception that N.R.Ms are meant for minority groups and are ethnic dominated is greatly challenged by R.H.M. As the prophet believes, his call is to all the nations of the world. His movement has within a time span of less than a decade gained popularity among millions all over the nations of the world.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, since NRMs have become a common phenomenon in almost all existing religions, especially the so called “faiths of the scriptures”, the future of such faiths rely heavily on the future of NRMs. This is based on the observation that the mainstream movements have continued to lose membership, especially women and youths who find NRMs more appealing to them. Owuor’s movement therefore shall remain to affect the Christian faith in one way or the other in various parts of the world.

## 1.7 Theoretical Framework

From the theoretical philosophical perspective, Rodney Stark tried to come up with four theoretical models that may partially or fully contribute to formation of any NRM.<sup>37</sup> For him, the foundation of a NRM in any society can thus evolve around one or several of these theories.

The first model in his opinion is the **Psycho – physiological Model**. In this case, the founder goes through intense torture caused by both physical and psychological suffering, out of which he / she develops a movement in order to solve the problem for him / herself. People therefore gather around such a person as he seeks for a self psychological therapy, that his followers embrace thereafter.

The second theory is that of **Entrepreneurial Model**. In this case, the founder acts like an entrepreneur who tries to develop a religion which he / she thinks will be most potential recruits, often based on his / her experience from previous religions. It is clear that the objective of the founder may not be purely spiritual, but dominated by material gain though this may remain a secret hidden from the followers.

The third theory is that of **Social Model**. Here, a movement is founded through a social imposition in which members dramatically reduce their emotional bonds with non members and dramatically increase and intensify such bonds with certain members. This



situation encourages formation of movements based on their shared belief systems and rituals, but interwoven by their own emotions.

Fourthly, NRMs can take the model of **Normal Revelation**. Here the founder chooses to interpret an ordinary natural phenomenon as supernatural. They end up even ascribing their own creativity in inventing the movement as that of deity.

Psycho-physiological and social models can be considered to be the most relevant in this research. To the founder, his psycho-physiological experiences especially as a war victim in Uganda and as a medical researcher whose main focus was to seek for a cure of deadly diseases like cancer could have exposed him to more mental and psychological puzzles than fulfillments. He therefore ended up propagating a movement that would address issues of injustices and health conditions that only religion through prophecies and faith healings could address.

To the followers, social model could be the most applicable. In this case, the society was going through a combination of challenges, with serious effects on particular class of society. The most vulnerable people being women and youths from the middle and low class ended up propagating or following a teaching that best explains and responds to their problems. Their gathering around this movement could have been bound by their common problems as they reduced their social ties with other members of the society.

## **1.8 Hypotheses**

The research was meant to test the following hypotheses:-

- i) Repentance and Holiness Ministry emerged as a result of failure of the existing churches to address certain challenges of the society.
- ii) There is no much newness in R.H.M as compared to the existing churches.
- iii) Women are the majority of followers in R.H.M
- iv) The future of R.H.M relies much on the followers rather than the founder.

## **1.9 Methodology of the Study**

The study was basically based in Kisumu city. Kisumu was selected because apart from it being the nearest and biggest city to the prophet's home place, has hosted the prophet's meetings more than any other town in that catchment.

Even though the Kisumu crusades have been attended by hundreds of thousands of people from all over Kenya and the rest of the world, only four churches had been planted by the beginning of this research. However, the number grew to 15 by the end of the study.

In this research, four churches based in Kisumu Township were selected. These are based at Kikomi, Nyamasaria, Nyalenda and Kondele estates.

A total of 40 informants were interviewed from all the churches. (See appendix 2). In each of these four churches (congregations), a pastor, three leaders and five members were selected. Deliberate / purposive sampling was used to identify members who are known by the leaders as genuine members of the movement and questionnaires were administered to them. (See appendix 1). Five other National leaders of the movement were also interviewed. These include the founder prophet, presiding Bishop, Bishops of Nairobi and Kisumu as well as the general administrative secretary of the movement.

Several email interviews with the founder himself were very paramount. This helped to accurately describe matters of doctrine and also shed a light on the future of this ministry, based on the direct information given by the vision bearer.

Eight church leaders in the region who are not members of R.H.M were also interviewed. Out of these were two Catholic priests from St. Teresa's- Kibuye and St Josephs-Milimani, two mainstream protestant pastors from Africa Inland Church- Arina and St. Stephen A.C.K- Kibuye. Two pastors from Pentecostal churches (P.A.G – Ondiek and Deliverance Church –Kondele) and two others from African Instituted Churches (Nomiya Luo Church- Nyalenda and Legio Maria-Kachok) were also interviewed. This enabled the researcher to discover the most affected churches and how they relate with and perceive this new movement.

Besides these, participatory observation was used. This was done by the researcher himself, and also with the help of three research assistants. They attended several worship services and public crusades and tape-recorded several sessions of worship and sermons.

Concerning the time frame, the research was scheduled for December 2011 – June 2012, after which a comprehensive report of the findings, conclusions and recommendations were compiled.

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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF REPENTANCE AND HOLINESS MINISTRY**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In the formation of any movement, a historical background is not a matter to be sidelined. This section thus covers the historical background of the founder, political, social, economic and religious challenges in the society at the time of the formation of this movement and how each of these shaped the movement. The section also critically considers the call of the founder as well as the major historical landmarks of the movement leading to its popularity as experienced today.

#### **2.2 THE FOUNDER PROPHET**

##### **2.2.1 The Birth and the Early Life of the Founder**

The ministry of Repentance and Holiness was founded by Dr. David Edward Owuor. Though many people who follow his teachings have little knowledge about his background, he traces his roots from the Western part of Kenya close to Kenya-Uganda borders. His clan is known as Yimbo of Luo community in Nyanza Province, Bondo District in Siaya County.

Born in Goma village in 1966, Owuor found himself a second born in a family of six girls and three boys. His father Helekia Owuor was a civil servant who worked with East Africa Community Prison Service and rose up to the rank of Sergeant Major, the position



he served in till his retirement. His mother the late Margret Achieng'Owuor was a house wife, peasant farmer and a dedicated Christian of Anglican tradition. From his own confession, his humble but spiritual background was not by accident but he believes God was preparing him for his future call.

### **2.2.2 Educational Background of the Founder**

Dr. Owuor is described by many as a man of excellent spirit and a highly trained scientist and researcher whose spiritual discipleship perhaps has been shaped by his academic excellence. He enrolled for his primary education at Wambosa Primary School in Yimbo. but also studied in other schools including Jusa Primary, Luzira and Kitalya in Uganda. The transfer of his father to Uganda made him to spend much of his early childhood and studies outside his home land. Upon completion of his primary education at Kitalya Primary, he joined Mbale Senior Secondary School where he sat for his 'O' level exams. after which he proceeded to St. Peters College in Tororo for his 'A' level.

After performing excellently in 'A' level, he joined Makerere University for a Bachelor of Science degree. However, due to political instability in Uganda in 1980s, he was forced to transfer his credit to University of Nairobi where he graduated in 1988. He then proceeded to Ben Gurion University in Israel where he pursued his masters program in Biochemical Genetics. With his master degree, he only returned to Kenya shortly in 1993 and worked as a volunteer with Environmental Liasion Centre International (ELCI), a program which was under joint coordination by the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and Intergovernmental Committee and the Contention for Biological Diversity. He soon afterwards returned to Israel for his doctorate at the University of

Haifa at Mt. Carmel. He later proceeded to Germany to work on a project that involved a virus that could not be imported in the laboratory to Israel because of international quarantine of pathogens.

As he always concludes his academic profile. 'It is the doing of the Lord. I acknowledge what God has done in my life that he has seen me excel in academic work. God lifted me from nobody to somebody. Put him first before you do anything', he says<sup>1</sup>

### **2.2.3 His Professional Career**

Upon completion of his doctorate program, Dr. Owuor spent most of his life outside his mother land studying and doing research in scientific and medical fields. His major point of focus was in cancer chemotherapy and drug metabolism in the human body. As a scholar, he also remembers his publications in scientific journals and his discoveries that were frequently aired in U.S media, especially the New Jersey Channel Radio and Television.

While living in Chicago, he worked as a post-doctoral fellow at the centre for Pharmaceutical Biotechnology at the College of Pharmacy of the University of Illinois. He also served in the Department of Pharmaceutics and Drug Metabolism in Earnest Mario School of Pharmacy at the State University of New Jersey, before proceeding to work as a lecture and researcher in University of Medicine and Dentistry-New Jersey and at Cancer Institute of New Jersey (CINJ). He was later appointed as a specialist in aircraft medicine where his main interest was to improve aerospace medicine that could detect fatigue among pilots and develop a molecular signature for detecting performance

impairment while flying a plane. He also had an opportunity to work with American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists.

His long profile in the field of medicine as can be revealed, could have just exposed him to how much human knowledge is limited hence propelling him to seek for faith healing that he could only achieve through and in a religious exercise.

#### **2.2.4 The Call of the Prophet**

The experience that suddenly transferred the medical doctor from the Lecture rooms, hospitals and laboratories into the pulpit must be both unique and interesting. His religious background, academic socialization and global world view could have shaped his call in one way or the other.

As he explains his path of life, this experience begun in 1980 during his studies in Uganda. The political crisis in Uganda in 1980s has a great deal to influence the call. As he claims, it was in 1987 that he for the first time came into a serious consideration of Christianity at a personal level. On one of his journeys from Western Kenya to Uganda and back to Kenya in an attempt to transfer his credit to University of Nairobi, he offered a prayer that he believes has influenced his faith up to date. He asked God in a vow that if God could give him safety amidst political darkness in Uganda, then he would consider surrendering his life to God and live for him. Surprisingly as he recalls, the Uganda soldiers deed him no harm, but remained helpful to him throughout the process. He believes his spiritual journey must have begun at this point. As he states,

*“I did not notice it at the time but my spiritual journey with God had actually begun. I was never serious with him, but he still pursued me”<sup>2</sup>*

The only lesson he could learn from his journey is that God answers prayers and protects the innocent. He began to develop a deep passion for peace in human society.

After the Uganda journey, the next scene happened when he was in his office in Haifa. As he claims, some Jewish colleagues would peep through the window or the door and shout jokingly, “remember Moses.” Most of these Jewish friends as he recalls were neither Christians nor Judaists, but their reference to Moses left him wondering whether they were talking about himself or any other person.

Later on when he moved to the United States, the same experience occurred in a clearer manner. As he recalls, it happened on a day that as he walked through the streets of Chicago, a man drove and stopped near him and said:

*“Man, are you aware that as you were walking, a brilliantly blinding light had enveloped you, thus blocking my view of the way? ”You know, just like Moses, Do you remember Moses?”<sup>3</sup>*

It was then that he begun to seriously pray and ask God whether it was really him (God) who had put a brilliant light around him such that all were seeing him like Moses.

In the same night, Prophet Owuor reports that the Lord appeared to him in his apartment house in a manner that frightened him to the extent that he tried to run away but he could not. In the vision, he explains that God sent him the Holy Spirit who begun to talk to him about the mission he would carry out .The Lord also showed him different churches of

the world and the things that were happening in them, including sexual immorality, economic exploitation and other evils that were against the will of God.

In another dream on a different night, he claims that the Lord appeared to him and gave him a command to go to the churches and preach against their evil. This happened on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2003 as he clearly remembers but it was not so easy for him to accept the call till God had to touch his mouth and literally lift him from one room to the next within his house through a closed door. In the next room, God made him to read an inscription that God himself had written on the wall from Isaiah 43:11 and 43:1

*“I even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no Savior”*

*“But now, this is what the Lord says,*

*he who created you, O Jacob,*

*he who formed you Israel,*

*fear not, for I have redeemed you,*

*I have summoned you by name, you are mine”*

In several other occasions, Dr.Owuor claims that the Lord God had visited him in company of biblical prophets as a testimony. For instance, he reports of an incident in 2003 while in Chicago that God appeared to him in company of prophets Moses, Elijah and Daniel, an incident that is similar to that which occurred to Jesus on his transfiguration. A replay of the scene took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> April in 2004 at 3:29am. As he clearly records, God visited him together with John the Baptist and told him to tell the

corners of the earth to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus Christ. In this vision he records;

*“The Lord gave me the rod of Moses and asked me to warn all nations of the earth to repent from sexual sin, lying, witchcraft and preaching of money in order to restore the altar of the Lord”<sup>5</sup>*

From 2003, he began to preach his sermons in churches and Crusades but many people did not believe in his message. For instance, when he preached his first recorded sermon in Mexico on August 6<sup>th</sup> 2003, people rejected him hence he prophesied an earthquake as a proclamation of judgment against them, which indeed took place within 24 hours. His claim to be the last forerunner for the Messiah could not be believed by the North American society who could not associate such an authority with a mere African. Furthermore, his attack to the prosperity gospel as well as other evils of immorality, idolatry corruption that he claimed were in the church, earned him stern rejection.

At this point, the greatest challenge to him was the demand to leave his job which was well paying and joining the preaching career where one has to only trust upon the Lord and not rely on his own strength and work. After experiencing difficult moments of around seven months of arguing with God whether he should resign or not, he had to give in, drop his job and officially begin his new profession of preaching repentance and holiness. Many people including his friends did not understand him as he neglected his lucrative academic and professional career in order to become a preacher.

Since then, Dr. Owuor has been known to be one who has extraordinary powers. It is reported by his followers that whenever he stands on pulpit to preach, some white doves fly around him and a rainbow also appears on the sky. His followers believe that these are true signs that he is a prophet of God and that God himself is with him.

His supernatural powers have also been experienced through several predictions he has made concerning major world disasters like earthquakes, floods, wars, famines and other global economic crises. As his followers believe, some of these predictions have been fulfilled while others are yet to be experienced.

After suffering rejection from the American society, he began to make a few visits to Kenya and conducted a few crusades in Nairobi's estates like Kayole, Dandora and Mathare in 2004. Although he depended on Nairobi's pastors to assist him organize the meetings, they soon began to reject and criticize him for his preaching was considered as heretic. His claim that both the pastors and the members were backslidden and that the church had been converted into robbers den through the gospel of money were not appealing to Nairobi churches. Despite the rejection in Nairobi, he eventually made Kenya his preaching base by 2005 as he began to focus on Kisumu and other surrounding towns in Nyanza, Rift Valley and Western Provinces.

In Kenya, several incidences are reported to have been predicted by him. For instance, the 2007/2008 post election skirmishes, frequent famines, fire accidents that have been repeatedly experienced, are perceived by his followers not as ordinary happenings, but rather manifestations of God's wrath upon proud and unrepentant generation.

Healing miracles perhaps could have been the reason for his popularity, especially his claim to have cured several HIV and Aids patients. Besides healings, he is believed to have powers to command forces of nature. For instance, he is reported to have at one incident commanded a heavy rainfall from a clear blue sky, and it indeed rained as millions of people witnessed in Kakamega Stadium<sup>6</sup>.

His call, teachings and works have yielded to different reactions, ranging from acceptance to rebuke. To some, he is a man of God whose authority is unquestionable while to others, the fact that he always predicts disasters could suggest that he is not of God. His critics view him as either a prophet of doom or a false prophet whose predictions are always harmful to the society.

When asked about his critics, he argues that it is not his duty to argue with them, but the duty of God to discipline them in his own way.

#### **2.2.5 The Personal Life of the Founder**

Though this is a very critical and sensitive area to handle in any personality who has attained the position of a public figure in any field whether religious or political, it is not an area to be ignored. Personal life of an individual often depicts the depth of his religiosity while public life communicates its breadth. Both public and personal aspects of life therefore are necessary in analyzing any person who is perceived to be religious or irreligious.

A journalist who had an encounter with him in his office in Industrial Area in Nairobi described him as:



*“As you talk to him, one easily notices his humble, social and down to searh manner. His deep and soft spoken voice sounds harmless. He does not miss to laugh and cracks jokes whenever something amuses him”*

In an interview, he remains a keen listener and responds to questions cautiously and intelligently just as if he were still a medical doctor attending to patients. His mastery of English language, spiced with vocabulary and American accent depicts clearly that he cannot be separated from the Western influence in his own world view.

His family life is the most unspoken of in public spheres. However, some sources reveal that he had married a Jewish woman who bore him one son, but because of the call upon his life and the nature of life he lives, the wife voluntarily divorced him and is no longer involved in his affairs. As he declares now, the prophet has resolved to be single and does not intend to marry.

He further argues that he serves the Lord 24 hours therefore does not want to share his heart with anybody since he is no longer interested in this filthy world. Most of his time is spent in solitude places for prayers, meditation and study of the scriptures. He rarely appears in public except if he has a message to pass to his followers in a public meeting.

His dwelling is under strong protection by security personnel that are deployed by the government to give him guard. This is based on his claim that many people including his rival bishops specifically in Kenya are seeking after his life to kill him. A greater percentage of his time is also spent on international missions. His diary is full with scheduled meetings all over the world. As he argues, this is the reason he is not easily

available. He has to take time to travel and fulfill his mission and also be in a lonely place to listen to what God says.

Prayer and fasting to him is part and parcel of his daily living. For instance, it is reported that before he attends any public preaching mission, he must take at least seven days in a solitary place to pray and fast. During this period, he believes that the Holy Spirit would reveal to him the exact things that would occur in the meeting and he would send a message to the Media to alert the people. These include the nature of sicknesses that would be healed and other kinds of miracles that would occur. For him, prayer and fasting is his daily food<sup>9</sup>.

He also believes that he has been called to live a simple life and perseverance of hardship. The extent to which this is practiced can only be witnessed by himself and his close allies. For instance, Dr. Owuor claims to have no personal ownership of property except his clothing and other personal effects that he mostly uses in missions. He however stays in a luxurious home in Nairobi that he reports was donated to the ministry by one of his followers. The ministry also owns a second home in an estate in Nairobi that is hardly mentioned for security purposes. This second home is occupied by mostly old women and widows who have given themselves fully to pray and fast for the ministry. In his home of residence, a few young men are reported to be with him in order to minister to him. Most of these have deliberately decided to abandon any form of worldly living, including work and marriage and devote themselves to serve the prophet, pray and fast as they also wait for the return of the Lord. For them, the earth is soon

coming to an end such that there is no time for worldly pleasures since they have no place in God's Kingdom.

The irony of this simplified life is displayed while on missions even within his own country. As has been observed in his crusades, he always arrives in the meetings in company of police band that ceremoniously escorts him more than they would do to the Head of State. Apart from the police vans that are fueled by the government through the tax payers' money, the prophet is driven in a convoy of more than 20 high class cars which are very luxurious. As one of his close allies reported, all these cars belong to his ministry and must drive on new tires meant for every meeting (See Appendix 3.1).

His interaction with his family members in the rural village is very cold. He rarely visited his father up to the time of his death. Sources from his village accuse him of neglecting his own people to the extent that he does not even attend funerals of his close relatives. He believes in the words of Jesus that the dead should be left to bury themselves and the teachings of Paul that good soldier of the kingdom of God should not entangle himself with civilian affairs. His interaction with his native people is based on his schedule that he reports is too busy in missions rather than taking time with them. Furthermore, he always refers to the teachings of Jesus that his mother, brothers and sisters are those who obey him and do the will of God who called him<sup>10</sup>.

Some of his villagers also challenge him from far, based on St. Paul's teachings which states that;

*“If any one does not care for his own relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than unbeliever”<sup>11</sup>.*

However, such arguments are only used against him out of his presence as many people fear to confront him perceiving that it could be dangerous to argue with the anointing.

### **2.3 Historical Development of the Movement**

As already observed in section 2.2.4. the founder of this movement began to experience his call right from his youth while still an undergraduate student at the University in 1980s. This call persisted up to the period between the years 2003-2004. After several visions and dreams as already stated, he had to leave his professional career in order to pursue his new job of being a tele-evangelist.

His first teachings were conducted within the American churches, but the response was too poor. In 2004, he began to conduct his outreach campaigns in Mexico and North America until as he claims, the Lord commanded him to go back to his homeland and proclaim his message. As he recalls, his message was not readily received in the American society based on the fact that he is an African. His claim to be the last true prophet of God who would prepare the way for the Messiah left the European world wondering how God could confer such authority to an African. To him however, his African background was not a hindrance. He still remained the *black John the Baptist*, the fore –runner of Messiah in his second return.

Owuor landed into Kenya towards the end of the year 2004 and his first intention was not to form a movement or to start a church. His message of repentance was based on his

claim that the church had gone astray and was to be restored back to God. His targeted audience was mainly bishops and pastors and other government leaders who he believed are very crucial in shaping the society.

When he first interacted with bishops and pastors in Nairobi, he was totally rejected. As he claims, some publicly abused him, others called him a mad fellow who had run out of his mind because of too much study. Others claimed he was just but a young believer. others also disputed him arguing that he was by no means qualified for such a position. As he claimed, certain bishops even sought to kill him due to his attack on the prosperity gospel therefore he had to flee to Nyanza and Rift Valley in order to begin his attacking mission from the West. The period between 2004 and 2005 was therefore known as the *period of great opposition*.

Kisumu and its surrounding Western and Rift valley regions became the first to embrace Owuor's teachings. From this point, his approach had changed since it was no longer only pastors and bishops that he targeted, but their followers. He must have come to the real task that it is too hard to re-convert a bishop or a pastor as compared to an ordinary member.

A few members of other churches begun to gather around his meetings in hundreds and in the act of repentance, were exposing the sins that they perceived were committed by their church leaders. These included robbery through prosperity gospel, sexual sin, lukewarmness in church, syncretism and so many others. What could have really attracted these people to the prophet will be analyzed and discussed in chapter four of this work.

The first pastors to attend Owuor's meetings began to do so as a result of curiosity and also to keenly follow up their members who were joining in the same train. Some fully became his followers to the extent of abandoning their churches and congregations while others fully converted their congregations to the new movement.

At this juncture, Owuor did not still declare his intention to create a church or denomination or a movement. As he claimed, he was called to work within the existing churches. However, his actions were clear indicators that a new movement was emerging out of his teachings.

The most significant activities at this stage were the baptism services conducted in April 2005, December 2006, January 2007 in Lake Victoria and Sondu Miriu River. Though there is no clear record of the exact number and names of those who were baptized, some who went through the ritual were actually followers of other churches including pastors. Most of these cases were not real conversions marked by real baptisms, but rather re-conversions and re-baptisms.

This period between 2006 and 2007 was therefore known to be the *period of acceptance*. No one could stand against the way of a moving train. Everyone had to either join or give way to it. At this stage, the movement grew to tens of thousands gathering in a single public crusade.

The period between 2007 and 2009 though was too short, has been known as the period of great events that would soon blow the movement into the global realm.

It was during this time that people began to publicly testify of healing miracles, and signs and wonders. It all began in one of the crusades in Nakuru's Afraha stadium where the prophet had announced earlier through FM Radio Station "Jesus is Lord" that after a long drought, there would be an outpour of rain from the blue cloudless sky at the command of his voice. Who could miss the meeting where rains could be called in the middle of the drought? Many school busses from Nyanza, Western and Rift valley were booked for that weekend; several passengers' vehicles diverted their routes and the private vans were fueled for Nakuru. Those who could not afford any of these means booked themselves for the passenger train. Some congregants walked on foot for several Kilometers while others cycled in bicycles for long distances to attend the meeting.

The Nakuru 2007 rains revival commanded a congregation of not less than a million. On a true sunny afternoon, the prophet called for rain and it indeed poured. He gave a command that none should cover himself/herself even in an umbrella, including young children, nursing and expectant mothers for the rain was a blessing from God and that it was not water to pour, but the Holy spirit that would heal the sick. It was after this miraculous rain that the sick began to confess they were healed. HIV and AIDS patients, cancer, T.B and other forms of infirmities were reported to have been healed. This historic event raised the number of followers to millions of people from all over the country and the surrounding East African States.

At this point also, the government had to accept the movement on public demand. The meetings were attracting so many masses that they had to deploy their security personnel to give guard. The prophet himself was kept under tight government security. The fact

that many government offices like Members of Parliament, District Commissioners, District Offices and even the Prime Minister himself were part of the following, gave the movement a leap forward with the government.

Another historical event in this period was the formation of leadership structure. The prophet had come to the reality that besides the leadership of the Holy Spirit, he had to appoint some human authorities to manage the affairs of the ministry. In Feb 2007, he was on his transit to India that he enthroned two leaders. John Litunda, a District Commissioner for Lari District was appointed National co-coordinator and Dr. Onjoro a Lecturer in Egerton University and an overseer of Kings Outreach Ministry was appointed the Director of International Missions. The reaction of the two to their new appointments would make them very vocal in the ministry second to the Prophet as they quickly rose to higher authorities. Litunda resigned from his job and was rewarded by being consecrated a bishop of Nairobi area. Onjoro likewise converted all his churches under Kings Outreach to Repentance and Holiness, and therefore remained the general Bishop of his Kings Outreach as well as all other churches affiliated to R.H.M. His church has remained the closest affiliate and supporter of Owuor's movement up to date.

The 2007/2008 Kenyan post election skirmishes though was not a religious war, had a lot of influence in this movement. As stated in section 2.4.2, the political temperatures of the nation were genuine indicators that the land was ripe for a radical reform. The society had suffered intensely from the war. Many people were nursing wounds of losing relatives, property and displacement from their homes. Hatred between certain ethnic communities was at the highest level than any other time in the Kenyan past.



How this crisis became a good fertile ground for Owuor's movement is amazing. His message was not only repentance, but also the confession that would result to national healing and reconciliation. His healing missions did not only attract the physically ill, but also those who were spiritually, emotionally and mentally sick as a result of the war. His mission therefore targeted areas that were mostly hit by the war such as Kisumu, Eldoret, Kericho, Nakuru, Naivasha and Molo. War victims surrendered weapons of war and sought to be forgiven (See Appendix 3.7).

Opposition however did not seize. Those who followed Owuor's movement mostly from other rural churches were rejected and sometimes expelled from those churches. It was as a result of this that the movement officially began to declare the new places of worship known as altars. However some sarcastic names that were used to refer to the followers such as "*Jo-Ogunde*" people of the sack, "*Jo-Toba*" people of confession "*Jo Owuor*" people of Owuor, had begun to disappear as the society began to adapt with the movement.

The period between 2007 and 2009 was thus known as *the period of massive expansion*. All the great events and great challenges ended up in small fellowships and groupings in almost every town and market centres throughout Nyanza, Western and Rift Valley and even to some extent in Nairobi.

The last period in this sequence is the period between 2009 and 2012 and is still expected to continue. This period can be considered as the **stage of globalization**. At this stage, even the areas in Kenya that were initially considered as hard grounds have been penetrated.

The 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2009 Kasarani meeting was a great path to penetrate into Nairobi, followed by 2011 Nyeri meeting that paved way into central Kenya. Mombasa was finally visited in 2011, making the movement to be nearly represented in all areas that are considered as Christian in Kenya. The main focus therefore has been how to reach the rest of the global world and Owuor is indeed on the positive moves. His 2012 diary for instance has more than 80% of his meetings scheduled outside Kenya. He has persistently continued to visit other nations across the globe and nearly in all continents. His most frequently visited states outside Africa include Venezuela, Germany, and Mexico, France, India, China, Korea, Canada and almost all the states within the USA. In Africa, he mostly visits Nigeria, South Africa, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, D.R.C Congo, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

With his International visits, Owuor has for sure made a special achievement in the field of religion that he did not achieve throughout his 30 years as a Medical doctor and researcher. He is becoming one of the most famous personalities in nearly every state he visits. In India for instance, he is so much honored such that even the Prime Minister receives him on his arrival on the airport.

#### **2.4 The Movement and its Environment.**

The concept of environment refers to total natural and man-made, physical and non physical features within which an organism or a phenomenon is found. In this concept, the term environment is specifically used to describe all the economic, political, religious and social setups within which R.H.M was founded.

Various scholars have come up with different perceptions in their attempts to describe the significance of environment in religion and the interconnectedness between a religious movement and its environment. Even though this has been done with much focus on the physical environment, the implications remain similar in the social environment. As Heino Flacke observed, it is Religion that gives man power and authority, right and dominion over environment<sup>12</sup>. This therefore depicts that man can abuse this position by exercising negative exploitation of environment, resulting into what Heino refers to as “suffering of nature”

S.K Gitau, commenting on the matter with specific reference to physical environment, concluded that religion and environment are related based on the fact that various religious teachings seek to sustain, conserve and reconstruct all natural, manmade and social environments. For him, it is upon this reason that several churches engage in various activities and offer certain teachings that creates awareness and preservation of environment<sup>13</sup>.

For Jude Ongong’o, it is from the religious perspective that man gets the privilege to supply his needs and sustain his life through the environment. In his own words

*“Mother Nature hardly exists in its own without answering a particular human need”<sup>14</sup>.*

From his perspective, man religiously interacts with his environment in order to supply his needs and sustain his life. This therefore depicts that a healthy and ethical society will only be a reflection of some amount of responsible religiosity while a polluted society

will be a demonstration of abuse, laxity or misuse of religious ideas. A balanced ethical society can only exist in a society with a healthy religion.

J.S Mbiti, reporting from an Africa Religious perspective, comments that nature is not an empty impersonal phenomenon among Africans, but is rather filled with a lot of religious significance<sup>15</sup>. He affirms that environment is a revelation of God and that all environmental features in Traditional African Religion play an important role in evolution of the religion. It can thus be justified that religion is in a continual process of evolution and in this process, all environmental factors are crucial in shaping and communicating religion.

From this scholarly view, it can be concluded that religion and environment are inseparable. Environment influences religion since religious movements evolve as human attempts to understand, interpret and cope up with the environment around them. In this interaction, humanity is also the centre of the scene since it is only man who has the ability to interact with environment as well as religion<sup>16</sup>.

To zero in to the aspect of New Religious Movements, with specific respect to R.H.M , it is therefore observed that certain environmental factors ranging from political, social, economic and religious could have been responsible for emergence of this movement and escalated it's quick spread. Though these environmental factors were perceived as challenging to the society, they became a fertile ground within which the movement could easily take root and sprout.

### 2.4.1 Economic Environment

As the prophet himself acknowledges, the global economy was at the verge of collapse when God called him. As he points out:

*“Without any speck of doubt, the effects of current global economic crisis and famine have been immensely exacerbated by the onset of the years atrocious and most hideous DROUGHT ever. In what begun as a simple fluctuation in the weather pattern, a drought of historic magnitude ensured and gradually started spreading from one nation to another. Whereas many factors may today be directly implicated to the cause of the current global food crisis, drought stands out as the current of them all”<sup>17</sup>*

Since 2003/2004 when the prophet begun his ministry, the world has consistently experienced serious economic crisis. Drought has persistently caused serious food crisis in the nations of the world with Africa being the most vulnerable continent.

In Kenya for instance, serious droughts were experienced causing famine in regions that are associated with high food production. In Rift Valley, rivers that had never dried up in history completely stopped flowing yet people were not sensitive enough to tell the spiritual significance. Instead, they associated this to cutting down of Mau Forest.

In Nyanza province, serious drought had hit Kano Plains, Migori, Rachuonyo Districts and Suba Highlands. This caused massive death of livestock, severe famine and extensive suffering of humanity.

Furthermore, unemployment in the land was just at its peak. Many young people were going through economic troubles especially after finishing their studies yet failed to secure employment opportunities. Even when certain job opportunities appeared, corruption, nepotism and tribalism locked out many qualified young people.

This economic crisis especially in Kenya was also associated with unequal distribution of resources. During the reign of KANU government for instance, several informants in Kisumu agree that Moi's government spent the greater percentage of national resources to develop his own community hence abandon others especially the Luo and Kikuyu that were viewed as political rivals. As a result of this, the rich became richer while the poor became poorer and from the look of things, there was no word of hope for the people in Nyanza.

When Owuor began his teachings, he began to offer direct explanations and responses to these economic challenges. Through his prophetic gift, he predicted more seasons of droughts and famines, a fact that made the people to prepare psychologically and make necessary adjustments in order to phase such hard times. Many people could have begun to attend his meetings just to get informed of any impending economic danger so that they could prepare for it.

Apart from his predictions of these economic challenges, he also explained to people their spiritual significance in human history, a point that not even science could achieve. For instance, he taught that droughts and famine could be in God's will and in line with the scriptures as one of the signs of the end as recorded in the gospel of Mathew. For him,

these were only beginning of birth pains leading to the end of the world. (Mathew 24:7ff)

Through his eschatological teachings, his movement became a source of hope to such people who were going through hard economic times. He taught that their hardships are true signs that the world will soon come to an end and that this will mark a drastic shift of events where the rich and wicked will suffer in hell while the poor and the oppressed will be comforted in paradise. For sure, none could fail to identify with such a movement that perceived that it was not actually the earth coming to an end, but the problems of the earth.

#### **2.4.2. Political Environment**

A political environment is a very key determinant as to whether a religious revolution will thrive in a region or not. From the history of the Bible, several prophets that succeeded and were influential in their generation only made such achievements within certain political situations.

Moses for instance, succeeded as a prophet among the Jews simply because they were under harsh political oppression by the Egyptians. Indeed, his prophecy played a more political role than spiritual. During the reign of the Judges in Israel, the Israelites were under political oppression by the enemies like Moabites, Midianites, Philistines and many others. Again this was a political affair leading to a religious intervention.

In addition to these, most of the prophets in the Old Testament who were very influential like Ezekiel, survived in their calls because of the Babylonian exile that exposed Israel to

political oppression. Likewise, the birth of Jesus could be easily received as good news only within the Roman oppression in Israel. It was at a time that the Jews were expecting a political Messiah thus at one point attempted to enthrone Jesus as a political king who would liberate them from the hands of their oppressors.

The Reformation of the church in Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> C likewise, was not exclusive of a political scene. There were deep underlying political factors that propelled the movements of Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin. Too much powers of the Pope had seized to be entirely religious, but were used to extend political strings of oppression all over the Christian empire.<sup>19</sup>

Even in African context, the emergence of African Instituted Churches was a religious shoot propagated in political trunk with deep roots in colonialism. Religious movements like *Dini ya Msambwa*, *Nomiya Luo Church*, African Divine Church, African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa (AIPCA) and several others were not only fed up with the missionary churches, but also with the colonial government. Furthermore certain political movements like MAU MAU also had deep religious backgrounds<sup>20</sup>.

Owuor's movement just like any other was planted in a ground that was polluted by certain political factors. In Kenya, the nation had suffered so much in the hands of KANU government up to the turn of 21<sup>st</sup> C and by the time Prophet Owuor begun to experience his call, the land was thirsty for a political reform. The KANU government was associated with political dictatorship, corruption and embezzlement of government resources, insecurity and political assassinations that pushed many into a dark corner of life.



In Nyanza and Kisumu in particular, there had been long history of opposition of the Moi government and the Luo community had a strong feeling of being sidelined on the political matters of the land. In 2002 general election, people highly expected a great reform when the National Alliance of Rainbow Coalition (NARC) came to power. However people's expectation was not met. The New constitution that was to be installed within 60 days of the new government that would enthrone the Luo leader Mr. Odinga the Prime Minister was very unpromising. Again, the Luo community began to foresee a replay of the long reign of KANU and their hope was being cut off.

The 2007 general election marked the peak of this struggle. In August 2005, Oduor in one of his meetings in Kisumu town prophesied war and bloodshed. In a vision that he termed as 'Blood! Blood! Blood!' he claimed to have seen women running with their luggage not knowing where their children are. He also predicted that the race to the state house will be a competition between two rivals and that one of them will not accept defeat but will cling to power. This race to state house turned out to be between two rivals i.e. Raila Odinga from Luo community and Mwai Kibaki from Kikuyu community who was defending his seat. The result of the election was a real demoralizing factor to many Kenyans. The Luo in specific had very high hopes that this time round, they would send their own to the State House but it was all in vain. The claim that the defending president Kibaki had rigged himself back to presidency reminded the people of deep political wounds that finally exploded into a violence that made thousands to lose their lives and hundreds of thousands to be internally displaced. The Kenyan streets were full of flowing blood as people were butchered and others shot to death by the police. In this war, Kisumu was one of the mostly affected towns.

How the movement sprung up from this political mess is amazing. The prophet had begun to prophecy in 2007 that the Kenyan election will end up into bloodshed since principals will not accept defeat. His ability to predict the result of the polls could have attracted many people who wanted to closely monitor the political move in the land.

He thus called for national repentance meetings and commanded people to plead for God's mercy. After the 2007 -2008 Kenyan post election wars, he plainly announced in his public crusades that the war was a form of punishment for unrepentant nation.

Furthermore, he took very practical steps to reconcile the communities that were involved in the war, led leaders to public confession and even retrieved many weapons that were used during the war as was seen in Nakuru in November 20<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> 2010 among other public crusades<sup>71</sup>(See Appendix 3.7). He also visited the internally displaced persons in their camps in Naivasha, Eldoret, Nakuru and Molo.

These political historical events and the part that was played by Dr.Owuor portrays that he was not only a religious leader, but also a political figure. Since the political leaders had failed to meet the expectations of the masses, another politician who had divine powers such as to predict election results, reconcile people after war and retrieve weapons from criminals could be the right person to follow. Since all political parties were attached to ethnic lines, a multi ethnic movement like R.H.M could be a better option for people to associate with and be free from tribal oppression.

Though Owuor himself claim not to be associated with any political movement and often shuns arguments that would involve taking political stands, his political role cannot be underrated. His claim that he had been called "Moses" from the time he was a student

and a researcher in Israel and in the United States depict that his followers would associate him with certain supernatural and political powers that would liberate the people from political oppression. Because of this political scene and the role the prophet has played as a “Moses” (political liberator), his movement has always been and will remain appealing to masses who believe that politics at times require divine intervention of a spiritual figure.

### **2.4.3 Social Environment**

The social order of the society likewise needed real reform as evils continued to penetrate into every corner of human life. To begin with, issues concerning abortion were no longer secretive but instead had become too common such that certain states like the U.S were at the process of legalizing the act in their constitution. Homosexuality and gay marriages had already been authorized in some churches and even among certain priests and bishops in the West<sup>22</sup>.

These evils that were mostly associated with westernization penetrated into the African society as carried by the vehicle of civilization and modernization and communicated through the mass media. Young people were at the centre of the play. For instance young ladies walked in towns in mini-skirts and tight trousers that exposed their nakedness in broad day light, a fact that as some reporters say was responsible for increase of sexual immorality and all other evils associated to it<sup>23</sup>.

Cases of murder, witchcraft and robbery with violence had become so severe. Many people lived a life of fear because the society was no longer safe even in a person's personal premises.

Discrimination against the poor was also a common issue. Even in churches, social discrimination where small prayer groups commonly known as "Home Cells" were only put together along social and economic status of the people. The church itself had failed to address this since the Christians were part of the social decay. As one of the R.H.M pastors report it:

*"Even the gospel could not be taken where a jet could not land"<sup>24</sup>.*

In such an environment, the society was for sure in need of a manner of spirituality that would bring the society back to order. Before Owuor's movement began to call people to repent and confess their sins, it could be true that many people were already tortured by their own human conscience due to evils they had committed against the society and against humanity

Whether the act of repentance and public confession of sin was as a result of supernatural conviction or mere act of freeing oneself from personal guilt and emotional condemnation is debatable. However, the fact that some people could have begun to attend these meetings in order to release their emotional oppression by public confession of their evils so that they could be psychologically healed and accepted back to the normal order of society can not be disputed.

#### 2.4.4 Religious Environment

As Owuor's followers believe it, the prophet of God was called at a time when the church had lost her prophetic voice and had actually gone back to the world. Owuor himself in one of his writings and in almost all of his sermons repeatedly attacked the church on account of the preaching of the "prosperity gospel" instead of the biblical message of repentance and holiness. As he puts it:

*"Modern Christianity in its finest maneuvering through its adulterated gospel of sow-a-seed to get your miracle has been proven seriously deficient of the prerequisite benchmark of holiness, to the degree that the church has today largely become business enterprise whose sole purpose is to gather wealth"<sup>25</sup>.*

The issue of prosperity gospel had dominated almost all the Christian meetings and this had made Christianity to be too expensive to be afforded by the poor majority. Miracles were sold for money, anointing oil was used for money, prayers were offered for money. This was against the Christian teaching of "*freely you received, freely shall you give*".

As preachers focused on money, sexual sin continued to dominate in the church even among the priests. As one of the R.H.M pastors reported, his former church had so many pastors that had cases of immorality, yet the best that the bishop could do was to keep on transferring them from one congregation to another as if such congregations only had male followers<sup>26</sup>.

Another aspect of religious decay was revealed through false miracles in the churches and in crusades. Most of the miracles that were highly charged as one of the informants alleged were not real miracles but imaginations and imitations. For instance, an incident was reported in Kisumu where a famous Pentecostal bishop had hired walking men to sit in wheel chairs and stretchers and carried into the crusade. At the peak of the preaching, they begun to jump out from the stretchers claiming to be healed. Later on, they differed publicly with the man of God who had failed to pay them the agreed figure hence threatened to reveal the deal<sup>27</sup>. Such incidences were used to attract crowds into the meetings so that they could be depleted of their wealth and money.

Struggle for leadership position was another common phenomenon in the church. Many churches especially the Pentecostal movements were managed as personal property whereby if a man is the bishop, he would appoint his wife as the assistant or senior pastor or the treasurer of the ministry. Many people who had potential to rise to leadership position were exposed to limitations and frustrations to the extent that they could give up or quit to start their own churches. Since high positions of leadership would translate to economic power, churches continued to split day by day.

Other people also claimed that there was a lot of defilement in the church that represents the altar of God on earth. As they believe, carrying dead bodies for funeral services to churches, singing and dancing in tunes that seemed worldly were real defilements to the temples and are against the biblical law. Furthermore, eating foods offered to idols and conducting African traditional rituals by Christians were manifestations of the defiled church. As one of the informant observed:

*“The church had gone so much into the world such that there was no difference between the two. The church and the world had become equally worldly”<sup>28</sup>*

According to his perception, Dr.Owuor believed that the situation of the church needed a radical change and transformation which was hard to achieve because both the shepherd and the sheep were lost. He therefore began to respond to these issues by condemning pastors and bishops for tolerating sin, leading the flock astray, exploiting the worshipers thereby failing to offer spiritual leadership as expected by the scriptures.

Owuor’s trend that perhaps attracted many followers and made his movement to sprout quickly was the introduction of *free worship*. In his services, congregants were encouraged not to carry any offering since they had been exploited enough. Free worship, free healing, free prayers, free miracles was more appealing to the masses who in real sense were tired of other churches that were money minded.

Despite this *free worship*, the meetings displayed that a lot of money must have been involved. The stadiums were hired at a cost, vehicles fueled, hotels paid for, public address system purchased and where the money comes from is a secret yet to be revealed. But it could be true that somebody must have given some money in private. If this be true, then the difference between public and secret sowing of seed remains controversial.

## 2.5 Conclusion

In summary, it can be observed that Dr. David Edward Owuor's movement of R.H.M started after his call in 2004 and within a period of less than ten years, it has already spread to almost every continent of the world.

It is also clearly revealed that at the time of foundation of his movement, the society was experiencing certain challenges that were political, economic social and religious in nature. Such challenges became a good ground for the breeding and quick spread of the movement.

The movement has also evolved through four major historical stages

- 2004 – 2006 - Period of opposition and rejection
- 2006 – 2007 - Period of slow acceptance
- 2007 – 2009 - Period of massive expansion and growth
- 2009 – 2012 - Period of globalization

Each of these stages had unique happenings and challenges and these only become carriers of the movement. The next chapter thus focuses on the major teachings of the movement, their main activities and the organizational structure.



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## CHAPTER 3

# TEACHINGS, PRACTICES AND THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF REPENTANCE AND HOLINESS MINISTRY

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter is very significant in this work in that it digs into the underlying truths within the movement, trying to evaluate its major teachings and practices. In this process, a critical review of the founder prophet's publications, attendance of some of his meetings as well as observing his followers was very useful. In the text, several doctrines of the movement are discussed, conduct of worship as well as leadership structure of the ministry is highlighted.

### 3.2 Doctrines of Repentance and Holiness.

#### 3.2.1 The Doctrine Sin

Sin can be defined as the act of breaking a religious law. In Christian faith, sin or sinfulness of humanity is perceived in two different ways. The first perception is that sinfulness is the natural state of mankind in which all human are born in. They thus become sinful by the fact that they trace their roots from Adam the great ancestor and the first fallen man. As Apostle Paul points it:

*“For all have sinned and fall short of glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus”<sup>1</sup> Rom 3:23-24*

This natural status of man can only be changed by God's grace through the redemptive act of salvation. The second perspective of sin is that it is a human act. It both involves the heart and the mind that after conceiving evil, translates into an action that is against the expected code of behavior.

In Dr. Owuor's teachings, very few occasions does he mention the word sin, as compared to the number of times he mentions the word *repentance*. The acts that he calls people to repent from, perhaps defines what his understanding of sin is. For instance, his direct attack on the churches that preached prosperity gospel reveal that this is what he perceived to be the most sinful act of the Church<sup>2</sup>.

His claim that his prophetic message was directed to the church also reveals other sinful deeds that he perceived were conducted by the Church. Such include sexual immorality, discrimination against the poor and defilement of the altar of God. He also frequently rebuked the penetration of secularization into religion through the use of modern musical tunes and dances as well as dressing code among women that tolerate miniskirts and tight trousers. For him, such influences were diluting the spirituality of Christian faith hence making the Church to lose her mandate of becoming the salt and the light of the world<sup>3</sup>.

His description of sin also tends to lean towards Jesus' sermon on the mountain as recoded in the gospels.<sup>4</sup> For him, the evils of the society in human history have to do with human nature of drifting away from the moral and ethical standards of living. As he suggests, such evils as corruption, theft and murder are all results of human failure to observe the ethical and moral codes set by the society and by the scriptures.

He further argues that selfishness, greed for money, food and power is the root cause of evil not only in our society, but also in the days of Noah that caused God to destroy the earth. As he observed, Noah's generation loved food and pleasure so much such that even the bible itself records that their main business was eating and drinking, marrying and getting married, a state that he reports to be so dangerous<sup>5</sup>.

Materialism as he reports is another evil that defiles the world especially those in position of leadership whether secular or religious. Greed for power and wealth is the reason for which nations war with each other, conflicts are experienced at the end of every elections in Africa and Churches split one after another. He accused leaders of the world for failing to uphold integrity and self sacrifice for the sake of their subjects, but instead sacrificed their subjects for their own gain. It was therefore in response to these drifts from the moral order that Owuor, through his movement called all people to repent because the society was indeed at disarray.

### **3.2.2 The Doctrine of Repentance**

The doctrine of repentance is the most profound teaching of Dr.Owuor's movement. The word *Repentance* docs not only appear in the headline of the name of the ministry but also the first one and this symbolically depicts the unique significance of this doctrine.

The verb *Repent* is driven from Latin verb "*Paenitere*", meaning to be sorry, to grieve or to regret. As a religious term, it depicts change of attitude, will and behavior and always accompanied by a feeling of sorrow, regret of the past transgression and sometimes the

act of restitution. Repentance is the act of repairing the breach in relationship between humanity and God. Sometimes it also involves restoring relationships between humans<sup>6</sup>.

Confession of sin is always a common feature in repentance. This involves verbalization of sins committed as well as acceptance of blame associated with personal or social consequences of such sins. This can be conducted either privately or publicly as a form of prayer.

During the initial stages of Owuor's movement, the act of repentance took nearly three quarters of the entire worship sessions. In this exercise, various individuals could come forward and before the entire congregation of thousands, speak of some of the worst sins that he/she has committed and ask to be forgiven. Even sins that are perceived to be most secretive like rape, abortion, robbery with violence were confessed by people who actually committed them.

Another level of repentance was conducted by government or church leaders on behalf of the people. The reaction of the people proved that confession of leaders was more celebrated than that of laity that could only leave people with a sense of awe and wonder. In this form, pastors could stand and confess certain sins that the church and fellow pastors have committed. In most cases, they could own up such sins after the prophet had created awareness through his teachings about such incidences. In other occasions, names of individuals involved could be invoked.

Screaming and wailing of the masses is also part and parcel of this exercise. This is always perceived as a sign of remorsefulness and a means of offering very serious

prayers. After a long session of singing, the congregation would suddenly burst into top voice screams, with women taking the lead. Some could do this as they fall with their faces down on the ground as others run around waving their garments in the air.

The act of repentance in R.H.M also involves physical symbolic action of wearing sack clothes and shading of the body with ashes. This is an analogy that was drawn from certain biblical incidence. As recorded in Jonah 3:7-10, this is perceived to be a sign of true humility and brokenness of the heart. This unique nature of prayer earned this movement a nick –name "*Jo Ogunde*" meaning the people in sacks especially when some members after being in a prayer meeting on a Sunday, reported to work on a Monday in their newly invented religious garment-sack clothes.

Restitution is considered to be the most serious level of repentance. In several occasions, people could return stolen property and even surrender weapons of war. The most newsworthy incidences were experienced in Nakuru and Naivasha where victims of Kenya 2007/2008 post election wars publicly confessed the number of people they had butchered and even surrendered guns and looted property right before the media and the police (See Appendix 3.6).

This nature of repentance has raised a lot of puzzle between the movement and the legal authorities of the land. While the police felt it was an easy moment to arrest such wanted people, take them through the legal trial process and experience the consequences of their deeds, the prophet felt they are forgiven people who have known the truth and have been set free and free indeed. The conclusion of the matter requires a balance between religion

and justice of the land. The analogy of Jesus and the repentant thief at crucifixion could be a good lesson to learn from.

*“But the other criminal rebuked him, ‘Don’t you fear God,’ he said, since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong. Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ Jesus answered him, I tell you the truth, and today you will be with me in Paradise”*. Luke 23:39-43

From this analogy of the repentant thief, the criminal was very remorseful and sorry for his deeds to the extent that Jesus forgave him and promised him paradise within the same day. However he did not lower him from the cross. He was to go to paradise but after paying the whole price of justice on the cross.

For Dr.Owuor, the spiritual act of repentance is the only remedy for the current evils of the society. As he believes, the repentance reconciles people back to God and creates peaceful existence between individuals. He also further argues that failure to embrace this provokes God’s wrath and brings judgment upon the people. For him, all problems of humanity like drought, floods, disease, earthquake, famine are all demonstrations of God’s wrath for the unrepentant, proud and stubborn generation.

### **3.2.3 The Doctrine of Holiness**

Though the word *holiness* also appears in the headline of Owuor’s movement, very little attempts are made to define what this concept means. However, from his teachings and



writings, the illustrations from Jesus sermon on the mountain that he re-names as *Jesus' inauguration lecture* defines what a holy person is<sup>8</sup>. His frequent reference to Mathew's gospel that lists the beatitudes depicts that a holy person must be one who meets these requirements. A holy person must be one who is poor in spirit, mourn, meek, hunger and thirst for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peace maker and also accept to be persecuted because of righteousness<sup>9</sup>. To be holy therefore refers to being free from materialism and selfishness. It also involves living a life that is secluded from worldliness.

Spiritual purity is also involved in this since it is the only way that people can be closer to God. This status is thus translated into human action that is viewed as godly. Morality and ethical conduct is an absolute requirement in this concept. These are expected to be spontaneously practiced by the followers as true fruits of repentance. According to his philosophical understanding of holiness in relation to ethics and morality, it is actually holiness that produces good moral values that finally wells into uncontrollable joy and happiness of the heart. He believes that the current perception that associates happiness to materialism is both a religious and philosophical error. For him, it is holiness that brings true happiness. He redefines prosperity as holiness and purity of the heart rather than mere focus on the wealth and materialism that propagates wicked and corrupted behavior<sup>10</sup>.

The followers reaction to this teaching is both remarkably positive and also to some extent erroneous. For instance, women in this movement dress with long and large garments that cover the whole body to the ground, with tight veils on the head that only

allow a little opening on the forehead. In other cases, young people ignore marriage as a means of maintaining sexual purity and imitate the prophet's singlehood. Others in the process of attaining poverty of the spirit have closed down their business in order to live a simple life.

### **3.2.4. The Eschatological Teachings**

The concept of *eschatology* comes from two Greek roots words *Eskatos* meaning end and *logia* meaning study or discourse. Eschatology therefore is one of the most fundamental Christian doctrines that mainly consider the end of events. Majority of Christians do not even know such a term, neither do they understand its meaning, but the concept and the component ideas remain so dear to them. This includes Owuor's movement. In Christian theology, eschatological teachings tend to cover a wide range of events associated with the end. Such include death and after life, hell and heaven (paradise), rapture and Christ's second return, tribulation, end of the world, resurrection of the dead, last judgment, new heaven and new earth. Though almost all these eschatological sub-disciplines are at one point or the other mentioned in the Owuor's movement, only a few are profoundly taught thus are the most influential and fundamental teachings in R.H.M. These include the great tribulations, and the four apocalyptic horses, the rapture and 2<sup>nd</sup> return, signs of the end and preparation for the end.

#### **3.2.4.1 Great Tribulation and the Four Apocalyptic Horses**

The word tribulation refers to a spiritual trouble that is beyond ordinary human suffering. This concept as used in the scripture refers to a very destructive affliction beyond that

which is common to man. Such a magnitude of suffering is expected to affect the entire humanity just before the end of the world and it is believed to be more painful and with far reaching effects that had never been seen in the entire human history. This was prophesied by Daniel in Daniel chapters 7:25, 12:1 and by Jesus in Mathew 24:21. As Daniel records for instance:

*“There will be a time of distress such as has not happened before from the beginning of nations until then.....”*

As Jesus prophesied in one of his sermon famously describe as the “Olivet Prophecy.” in the gospel of Mathew, he stated,

*“For then, there will be distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be equaled again”*

Dr. Owuor’s teachings about the tabulation in relation to the end of the world is discussed in his eschatological theological discourse that he names “*The Four Apocalyptic Horsemen*”. These are illustrated from the book of Revelation chapter 6 and represent the events within the tribulation period which to him are like birth pain signs of the end. Each of these horses is symbolically used to refer to the various forms of suffering and their significance in predicting the expected end. From his view, the tribulation has already begun and is experienced through various calamities on various nations of the earth. His teachings thus express the significance of these four horses and how each of them is seen affecting the status of the world today.

## **(I) The White Horse**

*“I looked and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest”*

According to the prophet, this white horse and its rider has already been released from heaven into the world. It is only for its deceptive nature, camouflage white color and blindness of current Christians that they have not noticed this. Being that the white color is always associated with religious purity, holiness and godliness, this horse takes this color in order to deceive faithful Christians that he is the Christ yet he is not, but just a counterfeit.

As he reports, this horse is very responsible for the current deception of the Church. The deception finally leads to overwhelming conquest of this horse over the world based on the fact that the rider dresses white, which is normally mistaken for Christ. It is thus responsible for a lot of worldliness that in the name of modernism, post modernism and globalization, has totally slipped into the church yet people perceive them to be Christian but in real sense they are not<sup>13</sup>.

Based on its determination to conquer, this horse has already succeeded in making the Church very lukewarm, casual and shallow on spiritual matters. This as he explains, is very responsible for the current increase of sin and wickedness not only among the heathen, but also among Christians<sup>14</sup>.

This state as he observes, blocks away even the non-Christians who would wish to become Christians since believers who could show them the way are already deceived,

misplaced and have totally lost their role as models to the world. The most dangerous effect of this horse as Owuor observes is the deception of the priesthood. For him, priests, pastors, bishops and the entire clergy have fallen prey of this deceptive horse than any other. It is this scene that has suddenly caused the pastors to divert all their sermons from holiness and righteousness into the gospel of prosperity. While the gospel of holiness and righteousness focuses on the kingdom of God hence can save souls, the gospel of prosperity is earthly, world centered, tolerates sin hence cannot save at all but only yield to much more spiritual decay<sup>15</sup>.

He finally observes that the last evidence of the influence of this horse is the split of the Church. He records that the determination of this horse to win even against the Church has clearly brought division and split among churches, weakening the strength of the institution and making it at the very brink of the rapture to be a split body.

## (ii) The Red Horse

“.....Then another horse came out , a fiery red one . Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other, To him was given a large sword.”<sup>17</sup> Rev 6:3.

Prophet Owuor claims that this horseman had also been released. To him on April 2, 2004, he saw this very horse in a vision released with the sword on his hand and the sword was smeared by human blood and coated by human fat. The speed at which this horse moved was too fast such that it could be mistaken as if they were many horses, yet it was one touching various sports of the world almost at the same time.

Whether this horse was released on the very day he saw the vision (April 2, 2004) or prior to this is not very clear in his analogy, but from the examples he gives suggest that the release could have happened several years prior to his call. His teachings further reveals that the release of this horse is responsible for bloodshed and wars that are experienced in various parts of the world. This is perceived to be another sign of the end that reveals that the rapture is closer than ever before. As he explains, whenever the red horse passes, peace is taken away and replaced by war and before it is noticed at one point, it is already in another place.

According to his observation and belief, all the wars that are currently witnessed across the globe are the foot prints of the red horse. The Darfur war in Sudan, Terrorism in Mumbai India, Northern Uganda war, Somalia war, war in D.R.C. post election war in Kenya, Iraqis war, Afghanistan war, Israel-Lebanon war are all caused by the red horse. He always sensitizes his followers that whenever they hear of such wars, they should know that it is the red horse in action hence should repent more for the end is very near.

### **(iii) The Black Horse**

*“.....I looked and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scale in his hand. Then I had what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, a quarter of wheat for a day's wages and three quarters of barley for a day's wages.....”<sup>20</sup> Rev 6:6*

The prophet claims that even this horse that marks the second last event into the rapture had also been released according to the vision he saw on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2008. As he

illustrates, the coming of this horse would be marked by serious global economic distress, a fact that is currently experienced all over the world. This prophecy was publicly spoken by the prophet on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Aug 2008 Nakuru's crusade at Afraha Stadium in which two million people had gathered. He publicly proclaimed that the last bit of human suffering that will soon lead to the rapture will as it had already begun cause a serious hit on the world's economy<sup>21</sup>.

For him, this is the root cause for current drought and famines that leads to increased cost of living that is currently affecting the globe. This decline of global economy as he records has seriously hit Kenya, making the nation to be categorized as one of the top 30 global states who cannot afford food for their population.

#### **(iv) The Pale Horse**

*..... I looked and there before me was a pale horse!  
Its rider was named death, and Hades was following closely behind him. They were  
given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by the sword.....”<sup>22</sup> Rev  
6:8*

According to the chronology of apocalyptic events as recorded by prophet Owuor, it is only the first three horsemen that send warning signals of the end of earth, otherwise the fourth one will only appear after the Church is ruptured. The pale horse as he reveals, will cause the most destructive trouble such that the Holy Spirit shall not allow it to be released until the Church is raptured<sup>23</sup>.

The agency within which this is likely to happen is ideally stressed on. From his analogy, the release of the first horse is not accurately dated. However, the second and the third horses were released on April 2004 and August 2008, a time span of four years. He also revealed that the time between the vision of the 3<sup>rd</sup> horse (black horse) and the date of its actual release was only 23 days. He further argues that in the spiritual prophetic realm, there is a higher accelerating speed that would make the last horse (pale) to be released at a shorter period than any of the former ones<sup>24</sup>.

Being fully aware of the controversy that is involved in mentioning of the date of the end of the earth, Prophet Owuor is so careful to avoid giving his followers a particular day. He always sticks to the words of Jesus that states that nobody knows the day or the hour. However, an analysis from his prophetic enumerations and dating, and the speed predicted for the last horse suggests that R.H.M could have expected the rapture to occur less than four years from 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2008.

#### **3.2.4.2. The Resurrection, Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ**

The teachings on resurrection though is a very key and fundamental belief in Christian faith, the old testament only mentions it a few times especially in Job 9:25, Daniel 12:2, Isaiah 20:19. Furthermore, this aspect was not believed by Sadducees who only focused on the Torah as the scripture, a fact that brought a sharp difference between them and the Pharisees. However, both the old and new testaments record two accounts of resurrection. For instance, Daniel records: *“Multitude who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life and others to shame and everlasting contempt”*<sup>25</sup> Daniel 12: 2



*“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, voice of an archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.....”*<sup>26</sup> 1 Thess 4: 16

In both analogies, two accounts of resurrection is revealed, but it is only the New Testament that is specific about the order that the righteous will rise first and that this resurrection(s) will take place after Christ is revealed.

Rapture on the other hand means to be caught up or taken up quickly. It refers to the expected sudden appearance of Christ on earth that at once will gather all faithful Christians in a time that is too short to be measured even in terms of fractions of a second.

Christian eschatological theologians present five schools of thought with reference to resurrection, rapture and second return. These references are positioned in relation to the great tribulation that is marked for the end of times.

The first school of thought believes in a ***Pre-tribulation Rapture***. This school of thought argues that rapture will occur before the tribulation. This theory therefore suggests that the rapture and second coming are two different events<sup>27</sup>.

The second school of thought believes in a ***Mid-Tribulation Rapture***. The mid tribulation scholars believe that with reference to the seven years of tribulation as recorded in Daniel 7:25<sub>ff</sub>, rapture will occur exactly at the middle of seven years of the tribulation. Such scholars include Harold Hockenya, James Busurel and Norman Harrison<sup>28</sup>.

The third school of thought believes in a *Pre-Wrath Rapture*. This theory suggest that rapture will occur somewhere during the tribulation but not necessarily at the middle .They believe that the duration of the tribulation is not accurate, but the last part of it will be too ruthless such that the church will have to be taken away before this last phase of suffering. It is this last phase of tribulation that they refer to as *God's wrath*.<sup>29</sup>

The fourth theory believes in a *Partial Rapture*. According to this school of thought. rapture will occur at different stages of tribulation depending on an individual's status of faith. This theory believes that the most faithful will be ruptured at the beginning of the tribulation while the rest may be ruptured at various points as they get converted into faithful saints of Christ. This theory is taught by Ira David<sup>30</sup>.

The last theory believes in *Post -Tribulation rapture*. This theory teaches that the Church will undergo the entire tribulation though will be spared by the wrath of God that marks the very last phase of human suffering. This theory therefore suggests that the rapture will occur simultaneously with the second coming of Christ.<sup>31</sup>

Prophet Owuor's teaching about the rapture, the resurrection and the second return are often based on his predictions of the release of the four apocalyptic horses. As he explains, all the three horses that precede the rapture have already been released and the only last horse remaining is the pale horse that according to him will be released only after the Church is raptured. This therefore depicts that the faithfuls will have to partially go through the tribulation or is currently undergoing the tribulation, but will soon be raptured and saved from the last bit of this suffering that represents the final wrath of

God. With this perception and approach, Owuor's teachings could place him in the Pre-Wrath Rapture school of thought.

However, the only slight difference between his teaching and that of other pre-wrath rapture theorists is that to him, the church will go through the first phase of tribulation but those who repent and remain pure will not suffer, but will be saved, and sustained by the Lord. He believes that this suffering has already begun and is in its very last stage therefore the only important event that is soon expected to occur is the rapture and the end of the world.

### 3.2.4.3 Signs of the End

*“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree. as soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth. this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened .....”<sup>32</sup> Mathew 24:32ff.*

Olivet's prophecy is the major text in which Owuor's teachings on the signs of the end is based. It is on these teachings of Jesus that he places his call, vision, dreams, and happenings of the world as the most significant and the very last signs of the end. As for him, rapture is not just at the door, it is here with us. The timing of his prophetic call and ministry is one of significant signs of the end. Being that on initial stage of his call, he claims to have personally seen John the Baptist in a vision portrays that his role would be like that of John the Baptist. While John was the last Prophet who prepared the way for the first coming of Messiah, Owuor's followers believe that he is the last prophet to

prepare the way for the second coming. This depicts that no other prophet is expected to appear after Owuor, except Jesus himself. The most amazing fact about this belief is that Africa has been finally honored in the Messianic history to forerun the Messiah in his perceived most glorious appearance.

His vision and dreams are also believed to be clear indications of the end of the earth. For instance, during his call. Owuor reports that God presented to him heavenly clock designed to time the end of the world and according to the clock, it was just about to knock midnight, the hour for the end of events. As he reports, the most significant vision occurred to him on May 11<sup>th</sup> 2009 while in France and in this vision, God dropped to him a hand written letter from heaven in which it was written<sup>33</sup>:

***“I am coming”***

***“I am coming “***

***“I am coming”***

This vision was unveiled in Kenya for the first time only a few days after its reception at the graduation square of the University of Nairobi where thousands of students, lecturers, University staff and the public had gathered to receive a public lecture from Dr. Owuor. Since then, this has been the mostly referred sign of the end. Other important signs of the end that he does not only prophecy of their coming, but also elaborate on their significance include earthquakes, wars, tsunamis, famines and other calamities of the earth.

Though he does not have any history of geological training, Dr.Owuor has a charismatic and God given ability to predict earthquakes, including exact place it would hit, its magnitude and even the nature of destruction it would cause. His view about all these signs is that the Church all over the world may repent, turn away from sin, and prepare the way for the Messiah. Though most of the Christians as he believes. have soiled their wedding garments with sin, the Lord so loves them that he warns them again and again through these signs that they may prepare for his coming. The only way to prepare for rapture as the prophet puts it is by true and genuine repentance.

### **3.3 Prophecies, Visions, Dreams and their Fulfillments**

Prophecies, visions and dreams also form very fundamental aspects of R.H.M. Though there is no much analogy of visions, dreams or prophecies made by any other leaders or followers of the movement, the prophet's visions have a very upper hand in the teachings of this movement. It can be deduced that the prophet's visions, dreams and prophecies hold such an authority almost ranking second to the scriptures.

From the prophet's teachings, writings and comments, he often makes references to either a vision or a dream that he claims to have received from God. His followers believe that these are important teachings that are necessary as addition to or explanation of the scripture. However he claims that all these visions and revelations are scriptural since they all point towards fulfillment of certain biblical predictions about the end of events. Even in all the churches and fellowships that are affiliated to him, no sermon in a church

service, and no fellowship in public or private can end successfully without making reference to the prophet's visions and dreams.

As they believe, validity of these visions is that they are scripture proven, they are fulfilled and that they all point out to the coming of the Messiah. Some of these visions and prophecies that frequently appear in the prophet's teachings include: <sup>34</sup>:

Vision /Prophecy	Date Revealed	Date Fulfilled
Haiti Earthquake	24/Nov,2009	12,Jan 2010
Chile Earthquake	20/Jan,2009	Feb ,2010
China Earthquake	5/Oct, 2009	14,April,2010
Mexico & California Earthquake	20, March,2010	5, April 2010
Kenya Post Election Violence	2005	2007/2008

The validity of these dreams and visions are based on the claims by the followers that their fulfillment have been witnessed and even reported by various Media houses. However, the most sensitive and controversial concern is that most of these prophecies have only been negative, destructive and inhuman. Most of the critics to Owuor's

movement argue that these destructive prophecies are not in full image of God's mercifulness, peace, protection and provision. They only reveal God's wrath and does not portray God's love that always has good intention for the people. It is thus perceived that Owuor's concept about God is not balanced, but only leans towards one side that reveals God as the source of anger, famine, war, drought earthquake and other similar destructive events. This has been one of the reasons as to why the movement has been opposed by other churches who believe that God's love surpasses all manner of wrath.

### **3.4 Healings and Miracles**

Aylward Shorter, a Catholic priest who is European by birth but African by scholarship gave an elaborate definition of sickness especially in African concept as illness of society. After his two months experience in an African hospital as a patient, he observe that when one individual is sick, then the whole society around him is sick, and that the one may only be a sample of the entire sick society<sup>35</sup>. Shorter also argues that the scope and dimensions of sickness extends to incorporate several aspects, ranging from physical, environmental, social, moral, and economic spheres. For him, physical illness may only be one, but not the only way through which human sickness is revealed<sup>36</sup>.

For Owuor, sin of the heart is the greatest sickness of humanity. Basing on Shorter's argument about the illness of society, the socio-political and economic challenges of humanity at the foundation of Owuor's movement as discussed in section 2.4 of this work; therefore indicates that the society has been so sick therefore the message of healing would indeed be a great miracle to people.

As will be seen later in chapter 5, the healing miracles that answer to the sick society could be considered to be the greatest mode of attraction of members in R.H.M. Majority of the people who follow the movement either were sick physically, emotionally or socially hence went for a healing or accompanied a sick relative or friend who went for the same. During the initial stage of his ministry, repentance prayers and confession of sins formed the most elaborate portions of his service. Today healing and testimonies of healings, followed by music take the longest sessions of their worship services. The fact that only the Prophet has these extra-ordinary powers to perform these miracles in the movement makes his office to remain distinguished and feared to the highest level. Healing has thus been used to maintain the status quo of the prophet and to lock out any other opposition from within the movement.

Dr. Owuor being a medical doctor, health researcher and lecturer, must have succeeded more in his healing call through religion more than he did as a medical doctor. In each and every meeting, many people claim to have been healed, some of whom give public testimonies while others go unrecognized. As he believes, only through the power of the Holy Spirit can he do such miracles. This for him is enough evidence that his call is God proven.

Examples of some of these reported healings and miracles include the crippled walking, blind eyes open, paralytic healed, cancer healed, tumors and growths dissolved and even HIV and AIDs cured. During his healing services, he arrives in the congregation amidst soft singing, stands on the podium and calls the meeting into order. He then asks the people to close their eyes as he calls on the power of the Holy Spirit to fall upon people.



As he stretches his hand towards the sky, people begin to fall in response to his prayers beginning from the front line towards the back. He repeats the exercise several times before he calls for testimonies of those who have received the healing miracle (See Appendix 3.4).

In some cases, Owuor refers his patients to a team of medical doctors to confirm the healings, especially for HIV patients. These mark his healing mission not only spiritual, but also professional. Furthermore, he does not condemn clinical medicine, but only uses his power to prove his famous statement that “what no man can do, God can do”.

Among the amazing miracles that have been reported in Kisumu include:

- Healing of a crippled lady (Melsa Ambutso) who walked publicly for the first time in Aug .2010<sup>37</sup>(See Appendix 3.9).
- Opening of blind eyes of Teresa Jebiwot who after 20 years of blindness had her sight restored. This miracle was confirmed by Chepsigot Special School for the Blind where Teresia had been living<sup>38</sup> (See Appendix 3.10).
- In August 2010, it was reported that over 60 deaf ears were opened.
- Senior medical service officers in Kisumu Dr.Toromo Kochei, Dr.Catherine Wangui and Rehab Randall confirm many healings of HIV/AIDS in August 2010 (See Appendix 3.8).

### **3.5 The Holy Spirit and Christian Living**

In the Trinitarian Christian doctrine, the person of the Holy Spirit has been perceived to be the greatest focus especially by the Pentecostal movements.

For R.H.M, the person and the work of the Holy Spirit are highly venerated, but with certain uniqueness in comparison to other Pentecostal movements. Before every meeting, the prophet always alerts the people that there shall be a mighty Holy Spirit visitation. This is always experienced in the process of singing and worship, as the Prophet offers prayers with the congregating lifting up their hands. He then repeatedly shouts:

“Touch! Touch! Touch!”

As people respond to the spiritual touch by falling down, the nature of confinement of the millions of people within his meetings would logically follow that the fall of one person would knock down others, causing series of falling in the entire stadium. Being that the majority of these worshippers fast for a number of days before the meeting, commanding them to stand straight with hands lifted up could make them fall automatically as a result of physical tiredness. However it is believed that when people fall, it is the spirit at work.

In other contexts, the Spirit is symbolically taken to be rain water that falls during the meetings. As was witnessed in Nakuru 2008 and Kakamega 2009, the rains that fall during the meetings are taken as sacred and spiritual. As a result of this, members of

R.H.M do not take shelter from any rain no matter the intensity so long as it falls in the process of a meeting. Many cases were also reported of certain believers bottling such rain waters, carrying it to their homes with the faith that it would heal the sick.

Unlike the Pentecostals who focus more in the spiritual act of speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*), Owuor's movement does not put much focus on this. Though a good number of his followers do speak in tongues during public worship and prayers, the prophet himself hardly talks in tongues in the course of his public prayers and preaching.

The most important aspect of the Holy Spirit is expected to be witness in the Christian living. As the prophet teaches, the spirit should help people to live a sin free life. For him, Christian holy virtues living are only possible with the help of the Spirit.

### **3.6 The Act of Worship**

The term worship as commonly used in world religions refer to the act of paying heed to deity, always known as God, or gods or spirits . It is a spiritual exercise that involves acknowledgement of the deity with certain physical acts, gestures, postures, words and songs that show special respect and honor for the spirit being worshiped.

In R.H.M, singing is a very common act of worship in all the local churches visited and the public meetings attended. Singing takes longer hours as compared to teachings and sermons. They sing common songs as led by the *Jesus is Lord Worship Team*, a singing group that always performs in Dr. Owuor's meetings. It was also observed that the imitations of these songs are not only in the words and the soft tune, but even in the voices of the choristers. All singers in the movement tend to imitate the *Jesus is Lord*

*Worship Team.* Whether this is as a result of spiritual impartation and mentorship or a deliberate imitation is debatable. It was also observed that they ignore faster tunes that involve vigorous dances that are associated with Pentecostal movements, claiming that such are secular and worldly.

In the use of vocal worship, they sometimes involve screaming, weeping and groaning especially after long singing.

Though the garment of worship is not officially described, it was observed that the followers tend to dress in a particular manner which is unusual whenever they go to worship places. In the initial stages of the movement, both men and women were expected to wear sack-clothes as they go for worship. Today as it stands, wearing of sack clothes is not very usual in worship, but women dress in long dresses covering their head to the toes, with tight veils on their head that leaves only a little opening on the face. No preference however is noticed on color. Men on the other hand have no restriction on worship garment. They do not put on the turbans neither do they wear “*kanzus*” as most of the African Instituted Churches do. To women however, they are restricted from wearing any form of trousers, or skirts that would leave their feet open or exposing any part of their body including the head.

The posture for worship varies from lifting up of hands with the face and the forehead straight up to the sky, bending down with the head to the ground or sometimes lying prostrate. Each faithful could choose any of the postures as per his or her own conviction, however for public worship, the prophet always instructs them to lift up their hands, an

exercise they can do for as long as 10-20 minutes, especially if the prophet is just about to call on the downpour of the Holy Spirit (See Appendix 3.2 and 3.3).

Enduring hardship is also perceived as part and parcel of worship in R.H.M. For instance, they are expected to stand for long hours in crusade, spend several nights on open stadium, endure all days' sunshine and rainfall in the cause of the meetings and also lift their hands for long time. Fasting during the meetings is encouraged as a matter of spiritual discipline and as an act of worship. During the initial stages of this movement, even the vulnerable groups like children, nursing and expectant mothers were not exempted from such spiritual acts. However with the current developments, it is evident that certain reforms are underway to consider the fate of vulnerable groups. For instance fasting is no longer compulsory in repentance meetings, children can at times be covered in umbrellas from a rainy or a sunny weather and drinks are often served to nursing mothers in their long three days meetings. However, sleeping in open fields and *enjoying* rains still persist.

The role of wealth and money in worship is the most unique aspect in this movement as compared to the current existing churches. Whereas the Pentecostal and charismatic churches focus on the centrality of money as propagated through the prosperity gospel, Dr. Owuor's perception is quite different. For him, wealth and money is the greatest hindrance of worship in today's church. He thus offers free services in all his meetings where there is no special time allocated for giving of offerings, tithes, *seeds* or any other form of giving. He believes that it is God who should supply the financial needs of the ministry. However, the research findings concerning financial administration of the

ministry as discussed in section 3.9 reveals that much of the financial support in this movement is done behind the scene by certain prominent followers.

Though prophet Owuor claims that his call and assignment was not to start a denomination or establish fellowships and congregations, his teachings about the place of worship finally made him the most popular church planter. From his perception, the existing churches had been dominated by sin, the gospel of money and prosperity among worshipers as well as other defilement acts such as carrying of dead corpses into sanctuaries. According to him, all these acts had defiled all the churches hence the worship offered from these churches were invalid, unacceptable, and corruptible and hence had been totally rejected by God.

He came up with a new teaching that made reference on the restoration of worship back to the Old Testament altars. Those who attended his meetings began to reject and rebel against their local church leaders and begun small gatherings in houses, schools, community halls and even under trees. Their new places of worship are not called churches nor sanctuaries nor temples, but *altars*.

Basing on this teaching, the majority of the followers of this movement believe that no other form of worship from other churches is acceptable by God. Though it may not be verbally pronounced, the followers' behavior and relation with other churches tend to suggest that they are the only true worshippers and Christians, otherwise all the rest are either lost or misled or both.

### **3.7 Major Activities and Events of the Movement**

The major activities of R.H.M include national repentance meetings, annual end year celebrations, international missions, youths and leaders conferences. More emphasis is always made to the national repentance meetings and the New Year celebrations since they mark the most significant events that bring all the congregants together and that the prophet has the longest and the most direct contact with his followers.

These meetings last for two to three days and are always conducted in one of the Kenyan major towns, with Kisumu hosting most of them. followed by Nakuru. At the formative stage of the ministry as already discussed in section 3.7, food was not allowed into the meetings as worshipers were expected to fast during the season, wear sack clothes and endure sunshine, rainfall and the night cold, a situation that to some extent has been reformed.

It was on 30<sup>th</sup> Dec 2011 that the researcher found himself part of Owuor's congregation during one of the repentance meetings and the end year celebration. An arrival at 10 am in Moi Stadium Kisumu seemed too late for the population in the Stadium by that hour was a clear indication that some must have spent the previous night right there.

Many institutions, colleges and high schools had their busses hired by congregations from all over the country headed for Kisumu. Bus fares from the surrounding towns and villages into the city had increased almost by 100% as the number of passengers increased unanimously. Traffic jam is not a very common phenomenon in Kisumu city, but for that weekend, the buisy human and motor vehicle traffic had caused a jam that outweighs the Nairobi's rainy Friday evening traffic. Several means of transport heading to Kisumu, including passengers' train, local aircrafts, private and public cars, "*boda*

*boda*” motorcycles were engaged in carrying worshipers. Light bluish posters welcoming people into the mighty Kisumu revival was posted in all corridors of the town and even all over the nation. As you cross every town, a big banner has to hang across the road bringing to the public, attention about the Lord’s visit to the land.

The whole day of 30<sup>th</sup> Dec 2011 was marked by continual arrival into the city. By 2 p.m. the stadium was already full to the capacity of required measure, but the congregation flocking in could reveal that more thousands of people could still be squeezed in. By night, there was no space left at all within the stadium and thousands of late arrivals had to stay outside the wall. As if this was either expected or prophesied, huge flat screens were mounted all over the edges of the stadium wall, a technology that made the outsiders to clearly view the proceedings within the stadium.

Worship, soft and smooth music marked by lifting of hands was the activity of the day and the night. This was lead by Jesus is Lord Worship team, who engaged the congregation into endless singing in turns. This must have been the most enjoyable moment to the members.

The night began with no sign that the congregation will be released back to their homes. Even in the cold grass, the singing and lifting of hands could not let people sleep or slumber. Furthermore, even those who wanted to sleep could not afford because the biggest space available was only enough for the two feet to stand

After several hours past the midnight, it was clear that the weak human bodies could not bear with the sleep any longer. A few of congregants could have left the stadium to lodge



in the houses of relatives within the town, but majority still remained. The stadium was still full of people laying on the ground, covering themselves with nothing but their own clothes. It was at this point that the available bishops stood on the podium to encourage people to keep singing and worshipping. Furthermore, they continually announced that the following day could be the most historic since the Lord God Almighty would visit the city through his only true prophet Dr. Edward David Owuor. At the break of the dawn of 31<sup>st</sup> Dec, more people joined the congregation as the bishops made it clearer that the man of God may join the stadium at any time. The people's faces demonstrated that they truly waited for his appearance in all patience and diligence.

In a clear morning at exactly 9:30 am, the arrival of the prophet at the stadium stuck the attention of everyone. Pastors had made two long queues, beginning from the gate straight to the podium. Their standing opposite each other and holding hands together would create a pathway in between for the prophet to pass through.

His arrival was more luxurious and ceremonial than that of the head of state. A convoy of more than 20 luxurious cars and all on new tyres specifically meant for that occasion, police officers playing the police band together with National Youth Service officers in uniform matched in style as they escorted him to the podium.

On his arrival on the podium, he commanded silence, asked people to lift up their hands in readiness for the coming of the Holy Spirit. He then offered a short prayer before the *Touch! Touch! Touch!* exercise (a shout that he uses to call on the Holy Spirit to touch people) begun. To this, people respond by falling down (See Appendix 3.4).

After repeating the shout several times, he offered prayer for the sick, mentioning every form of sickness by name. He then called people who believed had been healed to come forward and give testimonies, an activity that went on up to around 3 pm before he suddenly disappeared from the meeting without notice.

His next appearance was in the night, in preparation for the cross-over night. After repeating the same business, he lead people into a session of worship that marked the end of the old and beginning of new year. In the past mid-night session, he gave sessions of teachings and prophecies, all referring to his visions and focusing on the expected rapture.

In his teachings, he made it clear to his followers that the end of the world was nearer than any other time in history such that it was not possible to promise holding another meeting. He also warned them not to follow the lost shepherds who only exploit them for their personal gains, but instead, continue to confess their sins, submit to the control of the Holy Spirit and live a virtuous Christian life. He also predicted that there shall be more drought, famines, wars and earthquakes for the year to come, but gave them hope that God will protect his followers from the pestilence.

By the end of the occasion, it was estimated that close to two million people had gathered in the stadium, despite the fact that many more millions were listening to the program which was aired through Jesus is Lord Radio and also through the ministry website. A total of more than 600 police officers armed with guns and police dogs were on 24 hours guard.

Other meetings that Dr.Owuor conducts include leaders' conferences at Nairobi's Charter Hall, in Nakuru or Kisumu. Baptism services were also conducted especially between 2007 and 2008 by the prophet himself but later on, this was delegated to his pastors and bishops. Other ordinances like marriage and weddings, Holy Communion are entirely in the hands of bishops and pastors. As they claim, these are not within his prophetic office.

### **3.8 Organizational Structure of the Movement**

#### **3.8.1 Leadership Structure**

Defining an organizational structure for such a movement as this can be phased by three main challenges:

- i) The movement consists of constituent affiliate ministries as members and leaders are mostly fished from other churches. There is thus a tendency to inherit the leadership traditions from their former churches.
- ii) The ministry is still in its early stage of formation therefore not so much of leadership structure has been put in place .The movement thus may change from the existing format before finally settling on a more permanent structure.
- iii) The founder prophet himself takes little time to work on leadership structure and mentorship programs. This creates a big gap between him and the rest of the leaders hence he generates most of the ideas that run the movement.

From existing structure, a clear observation revealed that the office of the founder prophet is the most important. His claim to have had direct face to face talks with God, with Angles, Moses and John the Baptist makes him the most revered authority in the movement. The prophet also exercises sole appointing powers especially of bishops and other senior officials in the movement. The spiritual authority is almost entirely vested on the prophet, the rest in the hierarchy only exercise delegated powers to do administrative functions and other ordinances of the church.

The next office below the prophet is that of presiding bishop. As already noted in section 2.4, the office of bishop was created in 2007 when the prophet himself appointed the first bishop while he was on his way to an international mission. Originally, there was only one bishop but later on as will be seen later, the offices were devolved into regions as the first bishop became the chair of the council of Bishops.

The functions of this office are to co-ordinate the international missions, communicate the prophetic directives to other bishops for execution, implementation, management and administration of the affairs of the movement at national and international level. The presiding bishop also answers all correspondences directed to the prophet and vets before approval, every appointment to communicate, see or interview the prophet.

Below the rank of the presiding bishop are the bishops who are in charge of regions. By the beginning of 2011, the movement had been divided into several regions, each headed by a bishop who is directly appointed by the prophet in little consultation with presiding bishop. Rift valley records the highest number of regions headed by 5 bishops, Nyanza

has 1 bishop -Bishop Gero who was a former high school principal while Nairobi has Bishop Litunda , a former District Commissioner.

The bishop plays an over-sight role of the altars within their jurisdictions. They also conduct significant ordinances in the ministry such as marriages and baptisms and are assisted by the pastors who serve under them. They also help to appoint or approve the appointment of other authorities below them.

Just below the bishops are the sub-regional overseers. This office is not yet established in all regions, but only in a few where there are too many churches to be directly managed by the bishops. The office of an overseer is majorly informatory rather than administrative.

Below the overseers are the pastors who are in charge of local congregations (altars). The altar pastors are either appointed by the bishops or appoint themselves especially after being the first to pioneer the fellowship in that particular locality.

Even up to the local altar, the direct authority of the prophet is felt. All directives and notices given to the flock only execute what the prophet directed. Autonomy of these altars on matters of decision making is very minimal.

It was also observed that many members at the grass root are not even aware of how decisions are made. In many cases, the pastor mans the church alone and in case of a need for assistance, he/she appoints people to fill specific positions such as secretary or treasurer, but under full loyalty to the pastor.

Qualifications for pastoral appointment are not uniform in the movement, but depend entirely on what they call the *leading of the Spirit*. The prophet himself does not have any theological pastoral training and does not even embrace or recommend that to his pastors and bishops. As they believe, the rapture is too near for one to take time in theological school to train for service. Instead they should rely on the Holy Spirit who to them is the greatest teacher.

Most of the pastors and bishops however, are professionals working with the government or with NGOs as full time employees. Others also ended up in the pastoral work after they had resigned or retired from their jobs to fully serve in the movement.

The sermons preached in each of these altars are to a greater percentage imitations of the prophet's sermons. These are mainly in reference to his visions, prophecies or teachings he gave in certain meetings. This is to ensure that the flock remains loyal and spiritually connected to the founder without any drift. In the course of the sermons, pastors are keen even to state the date and place where such a vision or dream was received by the Prophet.

If it so happens that the prophet is giving a speech or sermon or conducting a meeting anywhere across the globe, the programs are always aired live through Jesus is Lord Radio based in Nakuru and all the followers are expected to gather together in the altars to attend the teachings through the Radio. In other cases, some congregations only listen to Owuor's recorded tapes and that makes a whole Sunday worship service.

### **3.8.2 Financial Administration**

Financial administration is another important aspect of this discussion. According to the prophet, materialism is not a very significant part of Christianity but is associated to worldliness. The irony of this is that the movement continues to run and resources must have been involved.

At the onset of the ministry, no form of giving was allowed. However, it was evident that many individuals were behind the scene to support the movement from their own pockets. As the movement continued to grow and needs continued to increase, secret giving was introduced in many altars. In this case, giving envelopes and baskets are availed at specific corner of the church and members would challenge themselves to pay their offerings and tithes to support the movement. Though the issue of money was not mentioned at all during the time of worship, the town churches have been accused of bringing back the issue of money back to the pulpit, claiming that this is useful for support of pastors.

On event of major activities like annual end year celebrations, millions of Kenya shillings are spent in a time span of 2-3 days. In such a case, the burden is freely floated to the congregations and requested to give according to their ability. As one of the pastors mentioned, "Christians who are Spirit filled do not need to be taught about giving, for the Holy Spirit teaches them". It was also reported from reliable sources that such events are highly financed by prominent politicians and senior public servants.

Financial support of pastors is the most critical challenge to this movement. Though the founder prophet insists that pastors should stop depending on giving from the flock, arguing that it overburdens God's people, and that they should instead depend on God,

the reality on the ground is that pastors are human with material needs that must be met. The local churches therefore developed a system where by a percentage of their giving is set aside for pastors, another portion is further divided partly for local churches' administrative affairs while another portion sent to the bishop's office. This process flows from the local churches upwards up to the office of the presiding bishop and this creates a drift between what is taught in public and what is practiced on the grass root.

### **3.8.3 Affiliation with Other Movements**

The relationship between R.H.M and other churches and ministries have been cold based on the prophet's claim that the Church at the time of his calling was lost. This has made some of his members to develop a perception that only their movement is truly Christian and that the rest are backslidden.

From this view, churches that embraced and welcomed the prophet's message abandoned their ministries and totally joined Owuor's movement. Others literally maintained the flock and the buildings, but changed the sign post into R.H.M.

The most vocal of these affiliated ministries is Kings Outreach Church that was headed by Bishop Onjoro. After his re-conversion to R.H.M, all his churches were re-named as "Kings Outreach Church, a Ministry of Repentance and Holiness".

Apart from this mutual relationship, R.H.M so far does not embrace other inter – denominational fellowships except those that are affiliated to them. For instance, most of their pastors are not members of inter-denominational fellowships in towns they belong



to. The movement has not joined the National Council of Churches of Kenya, despite the fact that it has millions of followers.

The movement also has some affiliations with the government authority. This could have been spontaneous following the big number of people that gather in their meetings. The government simply begun by deploying security offers to protect their citizens. but later on, this relationship developed to include other nature of support and privileges especially to the prophet himself.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the research found out that among other teachings, doctrines and activities of this new religious movement, the teachings of Repentance and Holiness is the most dominant. Furthermore, the eschatological beliefs of this movement that indicates that the world is just about to come to an end is the most influential, affecting people's perception of the future as if the future does not exist at all on the earth.

On the leadership structure and source of authority in the movement, it was also revealed that the prophet himself exercises absolute authority making him answerable to none but God. His claim that he doesn't have any spiritual father / mentor makes him the final human authority, a situation that's so dangerous for the future of any human based institution.

It was also noticed that in the order or source of spiritual authority that manage the movement, scripture is claimed to be the highest, especially the books of Revelation, Daniel and the Prophets that are apocalyptic in nature. The prophet is also a source of

reference authority, almost to the measure of the Catholic Pope. His visions, dreams and prophecies are also used as sources of authority to the extent that they are used hand in hand with the scripture. The prophet's claim that his dreams are scripture based makes his followers to equalize them to the scripture.

It was also observed that this movement only associates with other movements on condition that they accept to join them, otherwise the perception of some of the followers is that they are the only true Christians and that the rest of the church is lost. This fact has been used by other churches to treat this movement with a lot of caution, arguing that perhaps it could be a developing cult.

The issue of money and materialism was observed to be the trickiest challenge to the movement. As much as the prophet himself teaches on a *free worship*, the reality is that a lot of money is involved. Perhaps the only difference between his movement and that of the prosperity movements is that the prosperity preachers preach and asks for money in public, while Owuor does it in private otherwise in all cases, money is involved. In practical sense, it was realized that the Owuor's crusades have spent a lot of money in one particular meeting, even more than the tele -evangelists from America and the West.

### 3.10. End Notes

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3. Ibid p.18
4. *Holy Bible (New International Version)*, Mathew 5; 1ff
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7. *Holy Bible*, op.cit Luke 23:39-43
8. “The Coming Messiah” op.cit.p 4
9. Ibid p.3
10. Ibid p.3
11. *Holy Bible* op.cit Daniel 12:1
12. *Holy Bible*, op.cit Mathew 24:21
13. “The four Apocalyptic Horses”, op.cit.p.3
14. Ibid p.3
15. Ibid p.4

16. Ibid p.5
17. Ibid p.5
18. Ibid p.6
19. Ibid p.6
20. *Holy Bible* op.cit. Revelation 6:5
21. "The four Apocalyptic Horses", op. cit p.8
22. *Holy Bible* op.cit Revelation 6:8
23. "The Four Apocalyptic Horses",op. cit p.25
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## CHAPTER 4

# MEMBERSHIP AND THEIR ATTRACTION TO REPENTANCE AND HOLINESS MINISTRY

### 4.1 Introduction

The main discussion in this chapter is based on membership with specific view of various categories of members that exist in the movement. It also tends to analyze the conversion method and major forms of attraction into this movement. The last section of this chapter evaluates the position of women who form the majority of the converts in R.H.M.

### 4.2. Membership into the Movement

Eileen Baker in her observation commented rightfully that the world since late 20<sup>th</sup> century up to date has continued to witness an explosion of new religious ideas. As she puts it, *“The world has become a supermarket of religious ideas”*<sup>1</sup>.

She also observed that these new religious ideas are quickly propagated and communicated through the mass media, migration processes, travel and all other channels of interaction of humanity<sup>2</sup>. For her, majority of people who are perceived to be religious are not perfectly involved into the faiths that they were born and socialized in, but on one which is more appealing to them<sup>3</sup>.

The observation made from R.H.M reveals and confirms Eileen Bakers findings since out of all the churches visited and the samples selected, 100% of the adult followers were

confirmed to have been members of other religious movements from the same Christian faith. However a critical evaluation of the membership grouped the followers into various categories, depending on the degree of commitment and involvement into the movement.

The first group of followers is those that can be considered as *permanent or full time members*. These are not only the most committed members but are also the least in number as compared to other categories of membership. They are followers who claim to have completely withdrawn their membership from their previous churches in order to pay full allegiance to R.H.M. Most of them did so in order to be rewarded leadership positions in the movement either as pastors, women leaders or Choristers. Few members of this cluster who are from the laity are also members who could have received healing miracles in any of the prophet's meetings. Their strong commitment to the movement also reveals some level of internal fear that withdrawing their membership could reverse the miracles, although not many of them would be free to confess this.

However, grouping followers into this cluster may not be very accurate based on the fact that the movement has hardly survived for a decade and there are high possibilities that these members may withdraw their commitment into the movement hence challenge the permanency.

The second group of followers comprises of those who exercise **dual membership**. These are people who follow the movement but do not necessarily renounce their membership from their previous churches. Though it was evident that their commitment to their movements of origin is greatly challenged, they continue to acknowledge them and associate with them. Their divided loyalty between R.H.M and their original

churches indicate that they are more liberal in their religious understanding as opposed to the permanent members who have a strong perception that only R.H.M is the true church and that all the rest are either lost or confused or both.

It was also observed that majority of those who exercise dual memberships do not fully identify with local churches of R.H.M. They are keener to attend the meetings by the prophet himself than those organized by local pastors and leaders. For them, the most important spiritual authority is the founder prophet and after that, they go back to their original churches. The level of acceptance of these members is also a critical issue to both traditional churches and to R.H.M. For the traditional churches, these are a people who have associated themselves with a cultic movement hence considered as apostates. For the R.H.M, these are members who have known the truth of repentance, but because of their strong attachment to their mother churches, have not fully detached themselves from the past in order to fully embrace the message of repentance. For them, they are in the process of transformation and will soon renounce their membership to other movements and show serious and full commitment to R.H.M. They are potential permanent members who are undergoing reform and full conversion process.

The third cluster of followers comprises of those who exercise *Part-time membership*. Their nature of membership is almost similar to dual members, except that unlike dual members, they do not register membership to their former churches.

Part time members do not exercise full commitment to local churches in R.H.M. Instead they only attend major meetings that are attended by the prophet. A deeper investigation of these members also reveals that they only attend these meetings for specific reasons



that can only be met in the presence of the founder prophet. These include seeking for healing miracles, to listen to prophecies, to see the prophet or to witness healing of others. The rest in this category do not even have a clear reason for membership, except to associate with the big crowd.

The last group of followers in R.H.M comprises of those that are consider as **affiliate members**. These are perceived to be very prominent dignitaries and members of the upper class. Majority of them are political leaders who associate with the movement for the sake of public relations. At the initial stages of this movement, this category of membership was not witnessed. However, as the movement continued to develop and attract millions of people, they begun to develop interest in it. This is based on the fact that politicians have a very unique interest in big crowds, viewing them as potential voters and supporters. These members also associated with the movement with the hope that the founder prophet would use his spiritual powers to pray for them and bless them in their political ambitions.

Examples of these members include Cabinet Ministries, Members of Parliament, Mayors of town and city councils, Provincial and District Commissioners among other dignitaries. The leading in this list is the Kenyan Prime Minister who was re-baptized into the movement on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2009 in a private pool in Nairobi (See Appendix 3.11). After which it was alleged that the Prime Minister enthroned prophet Owuor as his spiritual advisor in political matters. Frequent meetings hosted at the Nairobi's city hall also indicate that the prophet has several followers and supporters from the top leadership of Nairobi City Council.

Despite the fact that these are the least percentage of members and also rank lowest in terms of commitment, they are perceived to be the financial pillars and donors. Being that the prophet does not preach or teach about money yet organizes very luxurious crusades that utilize up to Millions of Kenya shillings per three days meeting, these affiliate members cannot be underrated.

#### **4.3 The Methods and Process of Conversion**

Michael Langone, the Director of International Cult Studies Association gives the different modes of conversion into N.R.Ms. First of all, he argues that people join N.R.Ms primarily because of how they view a particular group in society. Secondly, others join N.R.Ms because of psychological needs. Others also join the movements simply because of the group influence<sup>4</sup>.

According to Marc Galanter, people join N.R.Ms in search of community and spiritual quest<sup>5</sup>. For Stark and Bainbridge in their discussion about membership into N.R.Ms, the utility of the concept of conversion is highly questioned. Instead, they suggest for the adaption of the concept of affiliation in place of conversion. For them, those who join N.R.Ms are not new converts into the faith, but rather old converts who only wish to associate themselves with the newness of the movement<sup>6</sup>.

John Lafland on the other hand, in his study on the concept of conversion in the Unification Church concluded that it is very hard to make a successful conversion and that not many people who follow various religious faiths had successfully experienced it.

For him, majority join N.R.Ms simply because of personal relationship with members of the family and friends<sup>7</sup>.

Conversion in R.H.M is not unique in its sense but tends to adopt an integration of all the above discussed trends. The most useful method of conversion involves informal interaction between members and their family members and friends. Once one member of a family has registered membership into the movement by attending one or two of the meetings, he/she takes an initiative not only to explain what was witnessed, but also invites friends and family members to witness the same. In most cases, such members may not be accurately acquainted with the teachings of the movement, but would invite people to witness miracles. The chain continues and in a short while members from a local village would be many enough to hire a common bus to attend a meeting organized by the prophet. After an interaction with the meetings, they would automatically assume membership into R.H.M even without any other formal structural process of religious socialization or discipleship.

Public crusades are the second most useful means of membership recruitment. After members have mobilized friends and relatives at grass-roots level, attendance of a public crusade becomes the second important process in the conversion process. Such public meetings especially those that are attended by the founder become the forum in which new members are integrated into the whole system of the movement and get socialized into the teachings, beliefs and practice of the movement.

Even though other public crusades are organized by various regions or local churches, their impact has not been really felt. This could be so since not any other leader or

follower apart from the prophet has been reported to be in possession of such unique gifts of prophecy and working of miracles. Other public crusades have therefore remained cold, marked by low attendance and less effective.

**Electronic Evangelism** along with print media is also reported to be very useful means of conversion in R.H.M. From 2006 when the movement begun to gain roots in Kenya, Jesus is Lord Radio, an F.M station based in Nakuru became the mouth piece of the prophet and the entire movement. Currently, the radio station is in 24 hours broadcast of the teachings and activities of the movement. The frequency covers most parts of Rift Valley Province, Nyanza and West Provinces hence could partly explain why the movement is more dominant in those regions than any other places in Kenya.

Even in regions that cannot have access to this frequency, access to this local F.M radio station is made available via the internet. This therefore translates that whenever the prophet has a program, whether local or international, technology avails it across the globe hence winning converts beyond the areas of local coverage. The most frequent programs in this station involve teachings by the prophet, prophetic predictions, advertisement of the meetings, long sessions of singing as well as testimonies. At some points of time the general public is allowed to call directly to the studio and share their testimonies of healing, a point that motivates the public to participate more actively in the movement.

Besides these, the movement runs a website that displays almost all their important activities and programs. Teaching sessions and written publications have been uploaded into the website, making them available to anybody who has access to the internet across

the globe .This indicates that the ministry has become a global movement which is no longer limited by geographical boundaries hence expansion of membership. Furthermore, the use of C.Ds and D.V.D records of sermons, songs and programs also make the teachings portable and easily transmitted far and abroad.

The print media is also very useful especially through the periodical magazines that the movement produces, always known as the *Divine Oracles*. These contain the publications of the prophet, summary of his prophetic call, photographs of major events and miracles, prophecies and their recorded fulfillments. These magazines are always sold at a cost in their public meetings and many of them are also supplied on the streets. These are also used to reach out to the literate class of the society who are keen about teachings and doctrine of the movement. The most attractive aspect of the divine oracles is perceived to be records of miracles and also prophetic predictions and their fulfillments. Most of the people who read these magazines are often unaware of the teachings and the doctrine of the movement.

The most recent useful method of conversion is through the use of *intellectual evangelism*. This has been successfully used by other sectarian movements like Jehovah's Witness and Seventh Day Adventists. It actively involves the youth especially in colleges and universities and their main target groups are fellow students, but can also occasionally reach out beyond studentship. This process involves the use of small tracts containing the teachings of the movement, and also backed up with intellectual arguments especially based on the questions of the end of the world that is perceived to be just about to occur.

Through the **intellectual evangelism**, many young people in Kenyan colleges and universities have joined the movement through persuasion by fellow students. In some occasions, the students chapter invite the prophet in what is assumed to be a public lecture, but in real sense, ends up into a public religious crusade. Such have been organized in the Graduation Squares of University of Nairobi in May 2009, Lower Kabete Campus in June 2010, Kenyatta University in September 2012, Moi University and other colleges.

The impact of this has been realized immediately. For instance, Christian students have broken away from the main-stream Christian Unions and started their own movements that are affiliated to R.H.M, as seen in the case of Student Fellowship of Repentance and Holiness in the University of Nairobi.

#### **4.4 Modes of Attraction into the Movement**

A critical survey and evaluation on modes of attraction reveals that there are two kinds of attractions i.e. **intentional and non-intentional**. Intentional attractions include the structural events and sub-institutions that are strategically put in place by the founder or by the leaders in order to attract a particular group of people. Non-intentional attractions are neither structural nor intentional, but rather spontaneous. These include activities that are conducted by the movement not necessarily with the direct objective of attracting followers, but because of the uniqueness involved, ends up attracting people. The findings also established that those attractive measures can easily graduate from non-intentional to intentional. If the movement recognizes that the public is developing special interest in certain actions, they tend to echo them in order to pull crowds.

One of the most pronounced intentional/structural attraction measure is the aspect of free worship. Owuor's claim that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church has commercialized spiritual services and that preachers had drifted away from the true gospel in order to preach the gospel of money (prosperity gospel), made him to invent his own model of religiosity where by followers do not pay anything. This made his movement to attract many people especially from the middle and lower economic class to whom Christian faith had become a burden too heavy to bear.

With the full view of the economic challenges that most Kenyans go through, especially in the rural villages, a religion that encourages people not to pay anything would automatically be very attractive. Furthermore, during the advertisement via radio or person to person invitations to the meetings, much emphasis is laid on the point that all services shall be offered for free. In addition to these, public rebuke is directed to churches that receive money from the members, especially media preachers who propagate the concept of *seed planting* through M. Pesa mobile phone banking service.

Being that in almost all the churches, no service can actually run without any form of giving of money, Owuor's approach of free gospel has attracted many people to his movement than any other activity. His followers therefore do not only view him as a religious figure, but also as an economic liberator and reformer who opposes what is perceived as spiritualized economic exploitation.

The second structured attraction measure leans more on the nature of teachings that the movement offers, especially from the eschatological doctrinal approach to the world. As already discussed in section 2.4 of this work, the Kenyan society at the time of the

foundation of this movement, was experiencing serious socio-economic political and religious challenges making people to live in a hopeless and frustrated life. Furthermore, the prosperity gospel preachers had failed to offer solution to people's needs as it was reported that much of the seeds that had been sowed neither germinated nor bore any fruits.

For the movement, the world view was totally different and unique. Their teachings are more world denying than world affirming. The eschatological belief that the world is soon coming to an end, and that this end shall be better as it will mark the shift from the current mess in the world and usher in a new dawn of peace, joy and abundance was truly timely and attractive to people. The masses had to believe and follow Owuor's ideology as a matter of consoling themselves temporarily in their current troubles and as they prepare for a perfect future. Nobody who listened to this world denying teachings could really afford to excuse himself/herself from the perfect paradise that they awaited for.

Healing miracles and testimonies are also very significant attractions to this movement. This first of all is very appealing to the people who suffer various forms of sicknesses and inabilities, HIV and Aids patients being the top in the list. Others also join this movement in order to accompany their sick relatives or to witness the healings of others. Critical evaluation of the membership reveals that majority of the followers are more interested in the healing miracles than in the teachings.

As already discussed in section 3.5 of this work, the healings are conducted in a very structured and intentional manner such that the general public would be informed and attracted to the scene. The prophet's claim to have been endowed with power to cure HIV



and Aids definitely is the most attractive moment when the alleged cured patients present their reports from doctors. Other miracles that are frequently reported include cure of cancer, healing of blind eyes, crippled and the paralytic. In such reported occasions, the patients could be brought in public scene to offer testimony that is also aired live on their radio broadcast. The testimonies also make the people to be integrated more into the movement by playing an active role rather than being mere observers and passive audience.

The nature of worship through songs and music also offers a good entertainment for the faithfuls hence a strong attracting device. R.H.M has a strong feeling that one of the most corrupted area of Christian faith today is in Christian music. They hold a strong conviction that the music in Pentecostal churches is polluted by secularization while that conducted in African Instituted Churches is very traditional, uncivilized and associated with Africa ancestral worship. They thus structured their music in a manner that strikes a balance between the two models. They sing simple Kiswahili songs with soft and slow tunes of key- board as the congregants respond after the chorister. The music is designed in a manner that they can keep the big crowd singing for as long as a whole night without tiring. This is very enjoyable mostly to the elderly, who associate the Pentecostal music marked by dancing and clapping of hands with the secularized youths. This nature of music therefore is very attractive to the elderly.

Non-structural modes of attraction include the personality of the prophet himself. In a critical view on membership to this movement, the research discovered that a great number of people attended R.H.M meetings just to see the prophet. This is based on the

uniqueness of the prophet. For instance, his dialect, dressing code, hair and beard attracts many people. He keeps long dreads on the beard, has a bald head, dresses in white long coats and speaks fluent American English which are all unique and attractive.

In addition, the prophecies made in these meetings are more appealing to masses. The prophet gives predictions of events that have regional, national and international influences. These include earthquakes, wars, election polls result, famines and other disasters. People thus are attracted to this movement in order to get responses to their anxieties, get enlightened about the future and be informed on the current state of affairs at international levels. What the masses do with those predictions is debatable. Some take no action at all, others respond by fear while others remain loyal to the movement hoping to escape from such disastrous incidences.

#### **4.5 The Role of Women in R.H.M**

The position of women in the church has been a critical debate throughout the historical ages in Christianity. During the age of the Early Church, feminist theologians report scriptural evidences that the church was rich in women participation. Prominent women such as Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9), Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38), Mary mother of John (Acts 12:12), and other women who anointed the body of Jesus are always taken as female models in Christianity. However, feminist theologians have observed that these contributions were overlooked by early Christian fathers and writers who were essentially male figures<sup>8</sup>.

Even during the patristic age, this oversight persisted. For instance, Tertullian, a famous second century Father believed that:

*“It is not permitted to a woman to speak in church, neither may she teach, baptize, offer nor claim for herself any function proper to a man, in sacred office”<sup>9</sup>*

Origen (AD 185-245) echoed this point by propagating St. Paul’s statement that,

*“I do not permit a woman to teach and even to tell a man what to do”<sup>10</sup>*.

The highest spiritual position recommended for women during this age was deaconry hence they remained members of the laity and passive to the clergy matters.

It is also observed that even during the radical reformation period in Europe, the position of women remained silent except for a few women like Martin Luther’s wife who renounced celibacy in order to be married to a reformer<sup>11</sup>. The reform did not give a clear provision for women service in the ordained priesthood ministry. It was until 20<sup>th</sup> Century that some churches like Quakers and Pentecostal Holiness Movements raised the position of women in Church, but still not as equal to men<sup>12</sup>.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Church, various attempts have been made to acknowledge the special role of women in the Church and even empower them to take up leadership positions in the priesthood<sup>13</sup>. However, even this has remained applicable to some few churches like the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches while others like the Catholic have not yet trusted women for priesthood.

In R.H.M, the research affirmed that women have remained majority of the followers. However, in all the churches visited in Kisumu, none of them had a female pastor or bishop. Despite the evidence that they have been the main supporters of the movement in terms of attendance, donations and carrying out the day today non-priesthood activities, their participation in higher positions of leadership is limited.

Despite the fact that the prophet believes in equality of all believers, women have only remained faithful servants as singers and translators in the church. Even though the movement nationwide is reported to have a few female pastors, their number has remained low as compared to male counterparts. The research also established a few cases in Kisumu where certain women were forced into the movement by male figures who are either husbands or fathers.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

In summary, membership in R.H.M was viewed to exist in four different clusters i.e. permanent/ full time membership, part time membership, dual membership and affiliate membership. Furthermore, interpersonal relationships based on family and informal friendships have been revealed to be the most effective modes of conversion, but with electronic and intellectual conversions taking roots especially among the young elites in colleges and universities. The research also found out that on the mode of attraction, certain structures are intentionally put in place to attract specific groups of followers. However, even non-structured sub-institutions that ought to be treated as normal are spiritualized and end up attracting the masses. The position of women in the movement

was also witnessed to be marginalized, despite the fact that they are the majority and the most significant contributors in the movement's daily affairs.

## 4.7 End Notes

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## CHAPTER 5

### IMPACT OF REPENTANCE AND HOLINESS MINISTRY

#### 5.1 Introduction

This section of the study draws much analogy from the second and the third chapters. While chapter 2 focuses on the historical challenges along which this movement was founded, chapter 3 describes the teachings, beliefs and practices of R.H.M and how they address these challenges. This chapter therefore draws from these two previous sections by specifically highlighting some of the practical and realized impact of these teachings and beliefs in Kisumu city. The impact ranges from religious, political, social and economic and are either positive or negative. It also reveals how the teachings and practices of this movement tend to address the issues of the society that in their view, the existing churches had failed to address.

#### 5.2 Religious Impact

Examining the religious frame work of Kisumu city is as a challenge as it is in any other city in the developing world. This is based on the understanding that the city continues to experience emergence of other churches both locally and from abroad. This makes it a center of all forms of religiosity, be it Catholic, Mainstream Protestant, Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal as well as the African Instituted Churches.



Given that the Church Missionary Society was the first to penetrate into the region in 1903 when they established their mission at Maseno, it did not take long before the Catholics followed them, leading to establishment of a Catholic mission at Ojola in 1906. This therefore would mean that for several decades, the early Christians in Kisumu and its surrounding were predominantly Anglicans and Catholics. With time, this was greatly challenged by the penetration of the Pentecostal movements as well as African Instituted Churches. It is therefore important to evaluate the impact of R.H.M with the full view of these various sub-sections of Christian faith as experienced in the society of study.

### **5.2.1 Impact on the Catholic Church**

From Ojola Mission established a few miles north of Kisumu, Catholicism spread widely not only to Kisumu's surrounding rurals but also to the township. This made Kisumu City a host of several parishes and also the headquarters of the Arch Diocese of Kisumu currently headed by Arch Bishop Zachius Okoth. In the study, two parishes based at Kibuye and Nyalenda estates were considered and a number of findings were realized. Membership was found to be slightly affected with some remarkable decline from both the parishes. It was realized that membership growth for the last ten years had recorded 16% increase. With the view of the report by the Catholic Directory of Kenya that approximates the growth of Catholic Church to 19 -25% increase per decade<sup>2</sup>, the membership growth could have declined by 2%. Assuming that all other factors affecting church growth remained constant, and that no Catholic left the church to any other movement except R.H.M, then not more than 2% could have left Catholic to R.H.M. This

is also justified by the fact that out of the members of R.H.M that were interviewed, only a few were former Catholics.

Furthermore, the establishment of R.H.M did not inspire the Catholic Church in Kisumu to intensify on their evangelism to win more converts or to maintain their converts. This is based on the fact that unlike the Pentecostal churches that are evangelistic in nature, the growth in Catholic Church in recent decades has been more realized through natural births and infant baptisms as opposed to conversion of adults from other faiths.

However, the mostly affected area in the Catholic Church in Kisumu was the attendance of mass especially on specific Sundays that Prophet Owuor held his meetings in Kisumu's Moi Stadium or in other surrounding towns. The sanctuaries of worship were less than half full as most of the congregants attended the prophet's crusade. If the Catholics would be considered for membership in R.H.M for the times they attend their meetings, they would be counted as part time members who have gone to see the crowd or seek for a miracle and would then resume their Catholicism. However, the fact that there are high chances for part time members to graduate into permanent membership is a clear indication that even the catholic congregation in Kisumu is at risks.

From the findings, it was concluded that the Catholic Church suffers less in terms of membership loss in favor of R.H.M compared to the Pentecostal Charismatic Churches. This raises a number of questions that the study must attempt to answer. This is based on the fact that with the advent of Pentecostalism, it was actually the Catholic Church that lost most of her members to Pentecostals. Quin Richard, in his attempt to answer the

Catholic questions of “*Who is stealing our sheep?*” comments that the answer is no longer the devil, but the Pentecostals.<sup>4</sup>

From his observation, Pentecostals are very good Christian brothers and sisters. They are saved from all sins, except *stealing*. They are stealing sheep and fish from the Catholics. Quin also portrayed Pentecostals as lazy fellows who do not fish from the lake, but from the boat and since it is the Catholic boat that has much fish, they have suffered most.

In Kisumu, the story is totally different. A decade ago, it was the Pentecostals who had the majority of the followers. Since the business of stealing the sheep has persisted, they have to suffer the same consequence as the Catholics did. Repentance and Holiness has taken the place of the new *sheep stealer* that successfully steals from the former thief (Pentecostals). As will be seen in the next section, it is amazing to realize that even a thief would feel the pinch and complain if the sheep he stole is lost to another thief.

Since the Catholic Church is the main point of focus here, it is important at this point to examine the underlying factors that have made the Catholic Church to maintain their flock with the advent of R.H.M. as compared to much loss to the Pentecostals in 1980s - 1990s.

The Pentecostals' main focus on salvation, and its integration with prosperity experienced through materialism and faith healing was more appealing to many Catholics than the catholic teachings about the same. As P.N Wachege, a catholic priest and scholar observed, salvation according to the Pentecostals is exclusively to those who acknowledge Christ as personal savior. Those who therefore die without accepting Christ

at personal level are destined to perish together with those who are invisibly ignorant of salvation in the same literal hell of fire.<sup>5</sup>

In contrary to this, the Catholic doctrine of salvation is meant for the theologians themselves to interpret. Most members do not know what it means to be saved as a catholic. For some, it is equated to baptism, or attained at death and for others, all are saved through the death of Jesus. Shorter, another catholic scholar and missionary also owns up the fact that Catholic concept of salvation is very subtle and too complicated to be understood by ordinary Catholics.<sup>6</sup>

In response to prosperity gospel, Boff Clodoris comments that this is not the kind of success that Catholics aspire and they should not be reckoned a failure if they fail to preach it.<sup>7</sup> It can be therefore deduced that what was initially perceived as a weakness of the Catholic Church has today turned out to be their strength working out for their good. Their little focus on the gospel of money has made the congregations stable irrespective of R.H.M attack on the prosperity gospel. Owuor's attack to the Church as being exploitative spared the Catholic Church whose modes of giving are relaxed and out of the free will hence non-exploitative.

### **5.2.2 Impact on the Mainstream Protestant Churches**

The most prominent mainstream protestant churches in Kisumu include Anglican Church and Africa Inland Church. Seventh Day Adventists may also fall in this category, although they are so different from the former because of their focus on the Sabbath worship.

The study on these churches found that their members who joined the movement were more as compared to the Catholics. Majority of these were women and youths who in one way or the other had a perception that the mainstream churches had not effectively ministered to them with respect to healings and miracles. Since such phenomena are not very common in mainstream Protestantism, the healing miracles have become the most attractive into R.H.M. Temporary reduction in church attendance was also realized when the new movement held a meeting in the city, signifying that many people from mainstream churches were also part time members in R.H.M.

In comparison to the Catholic Church, more Protestants were reported to exercise dual membership in R.H.M. It was also reported that certain pastors from these churches had given public statements to their congregations against attending the meetings by R.H.M. In such cases, the new movement is perceived as being cultic whose founder lacks proper theological training and upbringing in pastoral leadership. Since the mainstream churches highly uphold theological training, a good number of congregants have refrained from the new movement.

### **5.2.3 Impact on Pentecostal Churches**

Kisumu has been in touch with Pentecostal movements right from 1907 when missionary Cycle Miller who was sent by Nilotic Independent Mission headed by Evangelist Robert Weldon, came to Kisumu in order to evangelize the Luo. His realization of a large track of crown land at Nyang'ori made him relocate and start Pentecostal Assemblies of God (P.A.G) at Nyang'ori that eventually spread among the Luo and the Luhya of Western

Kenya.<sup>8</sup> This therefore made P.A.G the first Pentecostal movement in Kisumu and her surroundings.

From 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the mushrooming of Pentecostal churches in Kisumu attained its peak as home grown movements such as Voice of Salvation and Healing Church (VOSH) by Bishop Silas Owiti and Power of Jesus Around the World by Washington Ongonyo Ngede became the most popular churches in Kisumu.<sup>9</sup> The Pentecostal influence was also expanded through other movements that begun from Nairobi or Uganda and extended branches to Kisumu. Such included Redeemed Gospel Church, Kisumu Pentecostal Church and Deliverance Church.

Other movements from outside East African also ventured into the city. An example here includes Winners Chapel that was founded by Bishop David Oyedepo from Nigeria but introduced in Kenya by Dayo Olutayo. After planting their first church in Nairobi in 1995, they proceeded to Kisumu and Mombasa in the same year, making the fellowship to grow up to 3,500 membership by 1998.<sup>10</sup> It is in this background that by the advent of Owuor's movement, Kisumu was a Pentecostal dominated city with at least a Pentecostal church in every streets and corridors in both the city centre as well as the residential estates.

The nature of Pentecostalism in Kisumu has been just like any other in the region. Much focus is based on personal encounter with Jesus through re-birth (salvation) that is followed by spirit filling. *Glossolalia* (speaking in tongues) is almost an expectation from every believer. Miracles of healing are part of the worship as well as exorcism. The music is very lively with modern instruments like key-board, guitars and drums. As if

these are not enough accompaniments. clapping of hands and vigorous dancing are common additives.

The prosperity gospel has been a dominating factor in pulpits. Whether on Sunday services, open air crusades, radio or television programmers, people are asked to plant a seed of some monetary value in exchange of their blessings. Some gave their homes, houses, cars and large sums of money ranging from thousands to tens of thousands Kenya shillings. In some cases, those who gave less were anointed by a drop of oil on the forehead while those who gave much could be given the oil in a bottle to appreciate them and bless them more.

All these were what Owuor defined as apostasy and defilement of the church. For him, the Church was lost and needed a prophetic figure of the typology of John the Baptist to preach repentance and return the church back to the way.

The impact of his prophetic mission in Kisumu has been felt in every Pentecostal church. What Quin Richard defined as sheep stealing had finally caught up with the pentecostals.<sup>11</sup> The Pentecostals had been all along known to be hard workers, who labor in all night prayer vigil and after enough experience of the Holy Spirit, would hold a crusade the following evening just to spread their net to catch the fish from other boats, mainly the Catholic and other mainstream churches. This time round, the *sheep stealing* business placed them on the losing side. It is humorous that even a 'thief' who loses a stolen property to another thief would pursue and even go to court. It is no doubt that Owuor's message mainly targeted the Pentecostals.

On a Sunday morning, it has become a unique event to find some churches closed down and pad-lock hanging at the door. Another visit to the same Pentecost Church in Nyalenda slum on a Monday morning would reveal that the church is busier on Weekdays than on a Sunday. Did they change the day of worship to a Monday? Definitely no. An inquiry from the neighborhood revealed that all the flock and the shepherd had shifted their membership to Owuor's movement, leaving the church building to host a nursery school. Such incidences were common in Kisumu's slum of Nyalenda and Bandani among other estates of the low class.

In other incidences, the churches maintained their structure, but changed the sign -post to read, "*Repentance and Holiness Ministry: A Ministry of Kings Outreach Church.*" This indicates that the pastors had totally transferred their flock to Owuor's movement. Whether this was done with the consent of the flock or not is a matter worth further investigation.

Even the most stable churches that have survived in Kisumu longer than any other at least had a story to tell. In some cases, membership had drastically reduced even by half. Others had maintained their flock as long as Dr. Owuor was not in the city. On a day or a weekend that he holds a crusade in Kisumu, it is clear that the millions of people gathered at Moi Stadium would translate to empty seats in most churches. Some pastors had to hold services with only their wives and children being the flock.

Even those churches that managed to sustain their flock also reported some consequences, especially on reduction in financial support. Members had begun to view giving more as a burden and exploitation rather than spiritual responsibility and an act of



worship. The reaction of the Pentecostal churches towards this movement varies from one particular church to the other. From Dr. Owuor's comment, many bishops in Kisumu did not accept him from the on-set of his ministry. His movement has been called all sorts of names which portray that the movement is cultic and does not portray the full doctrines of Christianity. Sarcastic names such as "Jo- Ogunde" (people of sacks), "Jo- Owuor" (people of Owuor) or "Jo- Toba" (people of confession) have been used to refer to the movement. For those who do not want to engage in arguments about this movement, they simply say that whether it is of God or not is a matter that requires God himself to judge. They would in some occasions warn the members against this movement but would also let them decide for themselves.

Other churches on the other hand have gone ahead to implement some internal minor reforms to counter this movement. For instance, some pastors have attempted to set standards of dressing codes for their singers who often appear publicly on pulpit. In other cases, the gospel of money has been curtailed, with focus only on tithes and offerings rather than "seed planting" in exchange for prayers.

A critical analysis on underlying reasons behind transfer of membership from Pentecostal churches into this new movement is very necessary in this argument. First of all, the gospel of prosperity had dominated in the Pentecostal church than in any other Christian denominations. The masses who were fed up with this, especially from the lower class that could not pay for the services felt ashamed, frustrated, neglected and exploited hence sought for a refuge in Owuor's movement where worship is free. The testimonies given

in R.H.M also revealed that many had unsuccessfully planted the seed that had failed to germinate into a miracle.

Secondly, the Pentecostal focused on power to perform miracles could also be behind the fact. Many churches (Pentecostal) had remained lukewarm in prayer and righteousness hence the miracles were more spoken than experienced. Owuor's supernatural powers to work miracles such as healing HIV and AIDs, cancer, blindness and other physical infirmities reminded the Pentecostals of their original beliefs. For them, it was a time to go back to the right Pentecostalism which focused on the gospel marked by signs and wonders.

Thirdly, membership into Pentecostal movement is less structured as compared to the Catholic Church. In Pentecostal churches, a person simply becomes a member by simple declaration of Jesus as personal Lord and savior. No much structured discipleship and socialization is witnessed since membership classes are non-existent. Even membership records are not taken seriously. They focus more on the capacity of the sanctuary hence would realize a reduction of membership when they notice that many more seats are remaining vacant. This translates that many Pentecostals are not properly grounded into their churches hence can easily transfer membership. This is not so with the Catholics who go through a long process before attaining membership hence would not easily give it up.

Finally, Leadership in some Pentecostal churches could also be responsible for this. In some Pentecostal movements, leadership is dominated by charismatic figures that run the churches as personal or family enterprise. In such cases, the name of the leader becomes

part and parcel of the name of the ministry e.g. *"A ministry of so and so"*. This would mean that if one is a bishop, then his wife is appointed as his immediate assistant. Decisions are made at family level and the few leaders who exist are only used to stamp them. The church boardrooms therefore have only remained ceremonial as critical managerial matters about such churches are discussed and decided on in the bedrooms of the bishops and their spouses and close allies.

This made others who aspire to rise up in leadership feel limited and sidelined. They saw the new movement as alternative relief from the family dictated churches. An evaluation of the leadership of local church in R.H.M confirms that those who serve as pastors or leaders in this new movement were either singers, secretaries, or assistant pastors in other Pentecostal churches who because of the structures in place, could not rise up to higher levels of leadership in their former churches.

#### **5.2.4 Impact on African Instituted Churches**

African Instituted Churches have been a very common phenomenon in Kisumu as well as other parts of Nyanza and Western provinces. In Kisumu for instance, movements that fall into this category include Legio Maria, Nomiya Luo Churches, Roho Churches, Dini ya Msambwa, African Divine Church and Africa Israeli Nineveh.

These movements, apart from their focus on incorporation of the African culture in Christian worship, are also keen on African founders especially from their ethnic communities. The impact of R.H.M to these churches is seen not to be uniform, but varies from one church to the other. In some cases, members were reported to abandon

their churches in order to associate with R.H.M based on the assumption that the founder is their own son who has been sent by God to liberate them. In other churches like Legio Maria and Nomiya Luo Churches that believe in a Luo Messiah, members easily joined the new movement, perceiving that Dr. Owuor could be the new Luo Messiah, a position that the prophet himself has not claimed.

Dual membership between the African Instituted Churches and RHM is also a common incident. This is based on the perception that the concept of church hopping is very familiar to this nature of churches than in any other category within the Christian faith. However, commitment to full membership transfer into R.H.M is not very high as was realized among the Pentecostals. This is based on the fact that the African Instituted Churches are so interested about their African traditional culture, a fact that is opposed to Owuor' teachings. Furthermore, the gospel of money that was a burden to most Pentecostal Christians was not very dominant in African Instituted Churches.

### **5.3 Social Impact**

Religion is a very significant pillar of society therefore any religious movement must in one way or the other have practical impact on the lives of the people involved. In Kisumu, Owuor's message of repentance has influenced people's social lives in many ways.

Rehabilitation of individuals is the most observed positive impact. In Dr. Owuor's meetings, self convicted criminals have been witnessed confessing their evils such as theft, murder, corruption and sexual offences. After a public confession, some of those

individuals have gone ahead to live a positively transformed life in fear that a repeat of the offence would shame the movement or expose them to legal execution. One of the significant incidences occurred in Nov 2010 when many people returned looted property right before the police in Nakuru (See Appendix 3.6).

Reconciliations especially of broken families have also been realized. Couples that had abandoned their families have been witnessed reconciling back to each other as they repent and confess the evil they did against the family.

In other social spheres, dressing code especially in women practically reveals a new form of religiosity in Kisumu. Owuor's condemnation of women wearing tight trousers or mini-skirts has improved modesty. Women who follow his movement have adopted a new dressing style that is more Islamic than Christian such that an encounter with a woman in a "*bui bui*" kind of dress would mean she is either a Muslim or a Christian of R.H.M.

Music in Kisumu is richer than it was before. The melodious production by R.H.M singing team dominates the stalls in the bus –stop to the shops on the estates as well as residential houses. The rate at which such C.D productions are sold by hawkers reveal that it was not only a new form of worship, but also entertainment to non –members of the movement.

The study also identified some critical negative consequences especially on family units. Women and children who commit their membership to the movement against the will of their husbands and fathers have not found it easy. Conflicts have been reported that

sometimes lead to family breakages. Children have been dislodged from their homes to stay with relatives or church mates in order to protect their faith. In such cases, the sufferers treat such an experience as a short lived suffering that is meant to try their faith and they would soon overcome.

It was also discovered that some youths at the age of marriage have attempted to avoid marriage and others even abscond and break courtship relationships. Since the founder of the movement broke with his wife and stay without a family, a number of young people imitate him as a mentor and a role model. Celibacy and singlehood is thus perceived as a higher status of spirituality, purity and Christian devotion. Others also argue that the rapture is expected to occur very soon such that there is no time for marriage and that it has no place in the next world. No criticism is however given to those who pursue marriage and family life.

#### **5.4. Economic Impact**

Two main doctrinal teachings were seen to be very influential to economic life of the followers of Owuor's movement. Owuor's approach to the gospel of prosperity and money has direct impact on the lives of the followers. Initially those who strongly believed in the idea of *sowing seed* had been carried away by the teaching to the extent that some ignored hard work, competence and entrepreneurship in business with the understanding that their financial stability would rely on their ability to give to the Church. With Owuor's rebuke to this doctrine, such people who believed him had to shed off such perceptions and begin to embrace hard work and competence as the just means to economic promotion and success.

His teachings on rapture and eschatology also have some negative influence on a section of followers. Similar cases as reported by St. Paul in his letter to Thessalonians, (2Thess 3:6-14) where certain Christians tend to disregard work with a perception that the world is almost coming to an end seem to reoccur in Kisumu. Certain members resigned from their jobs to pursue full time preaching hence affecting the economic stability of their families. Others closed down their businesses, resigned from their professions, dropped out from colleges, schools and universities with the expectation that the world would soon come to an end hence no more pleasure in this world. For instance, a case was reported of a student who after pursuing a degree in education from Kenyatta University, dropped out in 2008 at the final year of his study. After several years of rapture delay, he resorted to work as a hawker of cassettes and C.Ds of Owuor's teachings at Kisumu bus stop. Whether he does this as a call or for his upkeep is hard to explain. However, it is hard to comply with the "God" or "god" who can call a graduate teacher just to make him a street hawker. As a matter of fact, it would be nobler to evangelize as a professional teacher than as a street hawker.

### **5.5 Political Impact**

Religion has been very instrumental in shaping politics and leadership in almost every society. In the history of the Jews for instance, leaders like judges and kings were not only political leaders, but also religious figures who were selected by God himself.

Owuor's prophetic ministry has not been exceptional. From the initial stages of his preachings, he sharply rebuked political leaders who propagated evils such as corruption, oppression of the poor as well as consulting witch doctors and diviners in order to win

political positions. His preaching was therefore not only calling on church leaders, but also politicians to repent of their evils. The report of his followers reveals that this has not been fully achieved. Owuor's expectation and goal is to realize a serious repentance where the entire leadership of Kenya including the senior most leaders in the executive to gather in a public meeting and loudly confess some of the sins they have committed in the darkest corners.

Though this can be taken as too ambitious, some level of positive response has been realized. For instance, a number of members of parliament as well as leaders of provincial Administration have attended his meetings to repent on behalf of the government. The most historic event occurred on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2009 when the Kenyan Prime Minister attended a crusade at Nakuru, in which the prophet led him to repent on behalf of the nation before re-baptizing him a few days later.

Such an event as Owuor desired was very necessary for the healing of Kenyan society after the 2007/2008 post election wars. The most positive remarkable impact was realized through the series of healing and reconciliation campaigns led by Owuor in which he made several attempts to reconcile the communities that were deeply affected by the war. He was thus awarded a peace award in 2010 to recognize his National healing and reconciliation initiatives (See Appendix 3.5).

## **5.6 Conclusion**

In summary, this movement has created both positive and negative impacts in almost all spheres of life in Kisumu. In the religious circles, all sections of Christian churches have



lost membership in favor of this movement. The magnitude of these effects varies from one church to another, with the Pentecostal churches being the most affected. This has resulted into a strained relation between the movement and Pentecostal churches in the region. The least affected churches are the Catholic Church and the African Instituted Churches.

The research also established that this movement has made an attempt to bring sanctity and reform in political, social and economical spheres of life. In this attempt, the implementation of the teachings by the people has ended up causing both positive and negative impacts on the society. This creates a sensitive concern as to whether the Christianity taught and the Christianity lived is the same thing. It could be possible to conclude that the faith taught and the faith lived depends on the ability of the followers to interpret and implement the faith as relevant to their context otherwise certain teachings might endanger the faithfuls who blindly implement them without proper reasoning of their intended meanings.

## 5.7 End Notes

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2. "The Catholic Directory of Kenya", Nairobi, 2000
3. Ibid,
4. Quin Richard J. *Who is stealing our Sheep?* (Nairobi, Kolbe Press. 1997) p.10
5. P.N Wachege, *Salvation and Being Saved. an African socio-religio philosophical touch*  
(Nairobi: Phoenix Pub, 2000) p. 74
6. Aylward Shorter, *New Religious Movement in Africa* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications, 2001) p.48
7. Boff Clodoris, "The Catholic Church and New Church in Latin America" (SEDos Bulletin, 1999), p.198
8. Ogbu Kalu, *Africa Pentecoastalism: An introduction*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2008) p.108
9. Barret D.and Mambo G.k (Eds) *The Kenya Churches Handbook* (Kisumu: Evangel pub.1973) p. 36
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11. Quin Richard, Op.cit.p.11

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Discussions from the Findings

At this juncture, it is crucial to draw attention back to the problem on which the research was based and how it has been addressed. The research has affirmed that though R.H.M is one of the youngest movements in Christianity, it has continued to recruit millions of followers across the world. It has thus attempted to highlight the background of the founder of the movement and how this has continued to influence the movement. His teachings, visions and dreams and their relevance to the people are also studied from a scholarly point of view. The research has therefore successfully revealed underlying issues in the movement that are responsible for its quick spread and popularity.

This research was guided by four main objectives that have been successfully achieved. The challenges in the society at the time of the formation of R.H.M have been identified and how the movement emerged to bridge the gap has been highlighted. The main teachings of R.H.M are also discussed and the effectiveness of the organizational structure in communicating these teachings is addressed. The research has also managed to identify various categories of membership and their forms of attraction into the new movement. The impact of R.H.M in several spheres of society has also been evaluated and their positive and negative outcomes are highlighted.

The research was also based on four different hypotheses that have been tested at various levels within the findings. One of these was the assumption that R.H.M emerged due to failure of existing churches to address certain spiritual issues of the society. It was however found out that such challenges were not only spiritual, but also economic and political in nature yet manifested through the new religious movement.

Even though women were perceived to be the majority of the followers in R.H.M, the research has not only confirmed this proposition, but has also realized that the current trend of the movement is targeting the youths especially through intellectual evangelism in institutions of higher learning. This has made the youths to be the second majority after women.

The third hypothesis of this research that has been largely confirmed was based on the assumption that there is no much newness in R.H.M as compared to the mainstream and Pentecostal churches. With specific reference to membership, the research strongly affirmed that membership in R.H.M is drawn from existing churches and therefore challenges the concept of conversion of non-Christians as a way of recruiting members.

Lastly, the research has also confirmed the proposition that the future of R.H.M relies mainly on the ability of the followers to receive, reflect, implement and communicate the new religious ideas.

## **6.2 Conclusions from the Findings**

This research strongly affirms the observation by Aylward Shorter that in the current trend of Christianity in Africa, New Religious Movements are increasingly becoming

more popular hence taking the place of the African Instituted Churches<sup>1</sup>. New religious movements in this context refers to religious off-shoots from the main stream churches that tend to oppose them based on the claim that such churches have become lukewarm, cold, unspiritual and rigid. Unlike the African Instituted Churches whose main focus was to incorporate African traditions into Christian faith. New Religious Movements often oppose the African tradition in Christianity.

The research also established that the cultural and religious socialization of the founders of such movements remain very influential. Dr. David Owuor for instance, was born and brought up in a middle class society where his father served as a prison's warden and his mother was a housewife who was of strong Anglican tradition. Owuor himself was academically brought up as a young scientist in Uganda during the Ugandan political crisis of 1970s and 1980s before climbing the ladder of academia to finally being a medical doctor, researcher and university lecturer. Such an upbringing and socialization must have shaped his ideology, philosophy and theology as reflected through the movement.

For instance, it can be concluded that Owuor's interaction with the Prisons environment where his late father worked must have exposed him to a lot of human sufferings. His call to free the suffering from the bondage of sin and economic exploitation could have been inspired from this early age.

Furthermore, his frequent prophesies about wars and blood-sheds could be influenced heavily by the wars he witnessed in Uganda that forced him to transfer his studies to the University of Nairobi. This therefore reveals that war could be one of the most feared

incidences to him which is perceived not only as a result of political crisis, but also as a punishment from God towards human spiritual mistakes. He therefore believes that if humanity does sin and refuses to repent, God is likely to replace peace with war as a disciplinary measure to restore them back to order. His passion for healing must have been refined more as a medical doctor and researcher than as a religious founder. His commitment to research in the most threatening sicknesses like cancer must have exposed him to a lot of human sufferings. Furthermore, he could have experienced certain critical conditions of illness that medicine and science could not address. His research process therefore could have unveiled to him more of human limitations and inability. He thus resorted to religion to continue with his healing ministry, but through a different mode that included divine intervention. Since in his healing crusades, he accompanies himself with several medical doctors to confirm the healings reveal that Owuor has not stopped his medical profession, but has promoted himself to another level of medicine that only the spirit of God or religion can attain. Though he has not built any hospital alongside the churches as most of the mainstream missionary churches do, it is evident that alongside his crusades he has mobile medical clinics and doctors.

This is not a unique concept in Christianity. Apart from the mission hospitals that are built alongside the churches, Aylward Shorter in his book, *Jesus and the witchdoctor: an approach to healing and wholeness*, had strongly recommended the incorporation of African medicine in Christian faith<sup>2</sup>. The only difference between Owuor's movement and the mission churches or between him and Shorter is that the former cases focus more on medicine and the faith to shadow the medicine. For Owuor, faith healing is superior to the scientific medicine which in turn shadows it.

The findings of this study also establish strongly that the formation of new religious movements have more underlying factors that may not be purely religious as one would assume. This is in agreement with the findings of other scholars of African Instituted Churches. For instance, Nahashon Ndung'u who conducted a study in 1980's among the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa (AIPCA) found that the reasons behind formation of this movement were more political, economical and cultural than religious<sup>3</sup>. He highlighted such issues as female circumcision, forced labor, colonial land policies, *kipande* system and other injustices associated with colonialism as real factors that compelled the Kikuyu in Central Kenya to form this movement.

Among the Luo of Nyanza, Mildred Opwapo observed that the formation of Nomiya Luo Church was mainly a protest against white colonial domination in political, economic and cultural matters<sup>4</sup>. Though the two case studies mentioned above are purely on African Instituted Churches, the new religious movements in Christianity tend to emerge along similar roots. As already discussed in section 2 of this work, the society at the time of the foundation of this movement was experiencing a lot of challenges that were political, social, cultural and economic in nature.

From John S. Mbiti's comment that Africa is notoriously religious, such problems are likely to escalate into religious revolutions<sup>5</sup>. Repentance and Holiness Ministry thus emerged as a forum for the society to express their frustrations associated with political failures, protest against moral decay, and demonstrations against economic exploitation that had penetrated into the Church through the gospel of prosperity. Such grievances could be more vocal only if communicated through a religious forum.

The research has also found that a society that has failed to address and overcome her own historical challenges and injustices, is likely to form a religious movement that is apocalyptic in nature as the only way of escape from troubles of the community. This is more common among the people of the low and middle class than among the economic elite because such impunities have greater effects among the former than the latter.

Among other things that are taught in Repentance and Holiness Ministry, the research realized that eschatological beliefs and teachings are the most influential. Such an eschatology is world denying than world affirming hence tends to withdraw peoples attention from the present. Because of failures of the society and the dangers that people are exposed to, such a teaching easily convinces them that nothing good can come out of the world. They quickly believe that the world will soon come to an end and usher them to a new world order of joy that can only be achieved in the next world where the rich exploiters and sinful shall not be allowed in.

Since the Pentecostal view of prosperity only favored the rich and locked out the poor, Oduor succeeded in inventing another form of prosperity gospel that is too ideal to fit into the present hence postponed into the future. Perhaps this is the most recent invention of the gospel of prosperity by a preacher who was against the same.

The effect of this as has already been mentioned in chapter four is both negative and positive. On the positive side, it has put some checks and balance among certain members of the upper class. Some have learnt to behave more human to the extent of helping the poor with their accumulated wealth. However, some negative impacts were also realized as some followers abandoned their daily businesses, families, schooling, professions and



jobs with the claim that such things have no place in the new world that they were just about to enter into.

On membership and membership attraction into R.H.M, the research confirms Aylward Shorter's observation that women and youths are the majority in N.R.M <sup>6</sup>. This is based on the fact that women in Africa are socially and economically disadvantaged in many ways. They usually have no steady income. despite the fact that the burden of feeding, clothing and educating their children falls on their shoulders. Furthermore, health conditions such as cancer and HIV and AIDs infections are more common among women than men. This compels them to be the first to seek for spiritual intervention in their circumstances.

Based on these facts, women are the most regular customers in prosperity gospel. They thus form the majority even in the Pentecostal prosperity churches, along with the youths. A critical evaluation on the membership in R.H.M discovered that majority of these members were actually the same who were converted into prosperity churches. Membership has therefore progressively evolved from mainstream churches, to Pentecostal prosperity churches and to the new religious movements. This therefore has discovered a new trend that the current emergence of N.R.M s is a more threat to Pentecostal churches than to mainstream churches. As already stated, the eschatological approach to prosperity is more appealing to women and youth than prosperity on the earth that has exploited them without evident gain.

Finally, to respond to the question of *what is really new in new religious movement?* the study discovered that there is no much newness in N.R.Ms. A comparative view of

R.H.M with respect to other churches in Kisumu confirmed that the newness of N.R.M is not in the founder, nor in the membership, nor in doctrine. For instance the founder himself belonged to the old Anglican tradition. membership is fished from other Christian boats, and teachings are from the same Christian document – the bible. The only newness in R.H.M is in the creative and charismatic ability of the founder to offer a teaching that responds to people’s current challenges.sss

### 6.3 Recommendations

*“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus the author and the perfect or of our faith.....”* Heb 12:2ff

What the author of Hebrews refers to as fixing the eyes or putting focus on Jesus perhaps is the place where Christians have failed most, leading to historical emergence of other movements within the same faith. The world has historically struggled to host Christianity as one faith, but with various movements whose points of focus is not Christ as a whole, but some aspects about Christ.

The founders and teachers of Religious movements should learn to teach a faith that is Christ centered i.e. teach a Christology that views Jesus as a whole. Failure to achieve this has ended up producing a divided faith. For instance, Adventists focus on the Sabbath. Pentecostals focus on the Holy Spirit, and Eschatological churches focus on the end of events, Resurrection movements focus on the resurrection and several others. The church that will survive long must learn to teach Christology in wholeness. Though it is

hard to balance all doctrines of Christianity, the movement that is most balanced has higher chances to stand.

Since new religious movements have always been and shall always remain to be in existence, the mainstream churches should learn to co-exist with them in society. The research established that sharp differences experienced between the new religious movements and the mainstream churches are not in the interest and defense of the faith but personal interests. These should be minimized and a positive perspective be adopted towards new religious movements especially considering the positive values that they add to the society. For instance, despite the fact that R.H.M was strongly opposed by mainstream and Pentecostal churches, her role in preaching healing and reconciliation after the 2007/2008 election violence in Kenya cannot be undermined.

Likewise, the state should maintain a close watch on new religious movements, and if possible, implement thorough vetting procedures conducted by religious expertise before a religious movement is legalized in the society. Evidence prove it that some new religious movements can be very dangerous to humanity and once they begin to operate, they spread quickly like a fire consuming dry grass hence can easily run out of control.

Fanatical attention should be given to movements that are eschatological in nature than any other. This is based on the fact that most of the religious movements that spring up in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century are apocalyptic and might end up utilizing people's problems to lure them into destruction. A practical example can be drawn from the Kanungu Massacre in Western Uganda that on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2000 had six hundred people gathered in a church expecting their world to come to an end. When Christ seemed to be delaying

and the dawn was approaching, they set themselves on fire. hence ending their own world

11

With this respect, Christian faith should present a balanced eschatology that does not only focus on the future, but also influences the present. Hope for the future can only become useful if they make people live a better life today. Even if the world shall come to an end, it is nobler to end a better world than a world that's distorted and destroyed by human activities and character. Eschatology should not be used to scare people and build up fear, but should be a point to encourage the society and build hope in the present and for the future.

The research also exposed several other problems that because of limited scope and time could not be exhaustively researched hence recommended for further research by scholars.

These include:

i. The role of women in New Religious Movements.

Such a study should help answer the questions such as: Why are women the majority of followers in NRMs? Why has their role remained marginalized despite the fact that they are the main contributors and supporters in N.R.M?

ii. The position and applicability of legal justice in the case of repentance, restitution and transformation as a process of rehabilitation.

Such a research should find out why certain suspects and criminals would find it easier to confess their crimes before the church and not before the court of law.

The study should also investigate what the church is doing to rehabilitate such criminals and whether repentance and restitution should be a substitute for the course of legal justice.

iii. Healing and reconciliation in new religious movements.

Such a study should find out why R.H.M became very popular after the Kenya's post election violence and also investigate the role that has been played by the movement in promoting national healing and reconciliation.

#### **6.4 The Future of New Religious Movements with Specific Reference to R.H.M**

It is a non disputable fact that one of the concepts that will remain not only in Christianity, but also in other world religions is the concept of New Religious Movements.

The forms they take may differ from time to time and vary from place to place. To repentance and Holiness, it is clear that some of the issues that the movement was strongly opposed to have already slipped into the movement. These include giving of money, wearing trousers and plaiting hair by women. There is thus a high probability that the movement will soon come back to issues that they strongly opposed and remain just like any other movement around them.

Leadership is one at the most critical challenge to New Religious Movements. Leadership training has not been seriously handled by R.H.M. For instance, the Prophet has remained most revered figure who is almost treated like a "god" and no other leader seem to possess the unique gifts that the founder possesses. Furthermore, theological training has been

sidelined based on assumption that reliance on the gifts of the Holy Spirit alone is enough for religious leadership. This would follow that in the event of the departure of the founder, there might not be found a single personality with enough capacity to lead the movement and this might result to split of the movement.

Besides splits on the basis of leadership lines, doctrinal, regional (geographical), ideological, theological and cultural splits are also likely to be experienced in the near future. As already observed, such differences are already seen among several congregations, causing internal splits to the extent that it is not unique to find part of the group split from one fellowship and start their own just within a distance of less than 100 meters yet they claim to belong to the same movement.

## 6.5 End Notes

1. Aylward Shorter, *Joseph N.Njiru, New Religions Movements in Africa*. (Nairobi: Pauline Pub. 2001) p.14.
2. Aylward Shorter, *Jesus and the Witch Doctor, an Approach to Healing and Wholeness* (London: Orbis Books 1985) p.8.
3. Nahashon W. Ndungu "African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa Eschatology" (University of Nairobi M.A Thesis 1979) p. 36.
4. Mildred A. "Opwapo, Nomiya Luo Church: The Dynamics of an African Independent Church Among the Luo of Siaya District" (Nairobi: University of Nairobi, M.A Thesis 1981) p.76.
5. John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) (Nairobi: East African Educational Pub. 1991) p.44.
6. Aylward Shorter. and Joseph N. op.cit,p. 68.
7. Ibid p.11.

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**Appendix 1. A sample of questionnaire administered in the field.**

**SECTION A**

**Name:**

**Gender:**

**Age:**

1. When and how did you come to hear of Repentance & Holiness Ministry?

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2. When and why did you join the Ministry?

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3. Have you been a member of any church / spiritual movement before?

 Yes No

a) Specify-----

b) Why did you leave it?

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4. What challenges did you experience as an individual or as a society at the time you joined the movement?

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5. How did your former church succeed or fail to address these challenges?

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6. How did R.H.M respond to those challenges?

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**SECTION B**

7. What are the core teachings you highly value in this Ministry?

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8. How do such teachings compare to your former church?

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9. State briefly how the teachings have influenced

a) Your life?

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b) Lives of your neighbors?

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c) The community around you?

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10. Through what mode do you access these teachings?

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11. In your opinion, how effective are these modes?

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**SECTION C**

12. What role do you play in this ministry as:

a) An individual

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b) A local church / congregation

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13. What roles does the founder prophet play in the Ministry?

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14. Are you aware of how decisions are made in this Ministry?

 Yes No

a) Explain

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b) How do the decisions reach you as a person and as a congregation?

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15. a. Does your church engage in any community development work?

(Yes)      (No)

b. Specify

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## APPENDIX 2: LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

NAME	POSITON	DATE OF INTERVIEW
Aggrey Otieno.	Member R.H.M. Kisumu,	27 <sup>TH</sup> FEB 2012
Agneta Cheptoo,	Member R.H.M, Kisumu,	28 <sup>TH</sup> FEB, 2012
Bishop Gero.	Bishop, R.H.M, Kisumu,	2 <sup>ND</sup> MARCH, 2012
Bishop Onjoro	Presiding Bishop. R.H.M, Nakuru.	3 <sup>RD</sup> MARCH 2012
Bob Otieno,	Provincial Administrator, Homabay,	28 <sup>TH</sup> . FEB, 2012
Caleb Otieno .	Pastor, Pentecostal Church, Kisumu,	13 <sup>TH</sup> DEC. 2011
Catherine Mukaya,	Member, R.H.M, Kisumu.	13 <sup>TH</sup> DEC. 2011
Charles Owuor,	Member, R.H.M, Kisumu,	21 <sup>ST</sup> , FEB, 2012
Clementine Nyador	Member, R.H.M Kisumu,	2 <sup>ND</sup> MARCH, 2012
Conslata Juma,	Member, R.H.M, Kisumu,	22, DEC, 2011
David Owuor,	Founder Prophet, R.H.M,	14 <sup>TH</sup> , DEC, 2011
Dominick Otieno,	Pastor, Pentecostal Church, Kisumu,	14 <sup>TH</sup> MARCH. 2012
Erick Philips,	Pastor, R.H.M, Kisumu,	27 <sup>TH</sup> FEB, 2012
Fredric Mukhayo	African Inland Church, Kisumu,	22 <sup>ND</sup> , DEC, 2012
Francesca Muga	Member, R.H.M, Kisumu,	2 <sup>ND</sup> JAN, 2012
Franck Muga	Catholic Church, Kisumu,	2 <sup>ND</sup> JAN, 2012
George Amuor	Pastor, R.H.M. Kisumu,	26 <sup>TH</sup> , FEB, 2012
George Ochieng'	Pastor Repentance and Holiness,Migori,	27 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 2012
Jacob Ojwang',	Member, Anglican Church, Kisumu,	3 <sup>RD</sup> APRIL, 2012
James Otieno,	Bishop, Roho Chuich, Kisumu,	14 <sup>TH</sup> FEB, 2012

Jacinta Aoko	Member, R.H.M, Kisumu,	3 <sup>RD</sup> APRIL. 2012
John Ochieng’.	Leader, R.H.M, Kisumu,	14 <sup>TH</sup> APRIL. 2012
Joseph Midam,	Member, Legio Maria . Kisumu,	2 <sup>ND</sup> JAN, 2012
Josephine Mukisa,	Member, R.H.M, Kisumu,	2 <sup>ND</sup> JAN 2012
Leonora Kakimba,	Member, R.H.M, Kisumu,	13 <sup>TH</sup> FEB. 2012
Lucas Mukusi,	Leader, R.H.M, Kisumu,	2 <sup>ND</sup> FEB, 2012
Makaris Odwar.	Member, Catholic Church, Kisumu,	4 <sup>TH</sup> DEC. 2011
Mary Ojwang’.	Member, R.H.M. Kisumu,	13 <sup>TH</sup> DEC, 2011
Mayer Joseph,	Member. RHM, Kisumu	4 <sup>TH</sup> . DEC. 2011
Millicent Jagoro,	Leader, R.H.M, Kisumu,	23 <sup>RD</sup> . DEC, 2011
Mikono Noah,	Member, R.H.M, Kisumu,	24 <sup>TH</sup> , DEC, 2011
Pamela otieno,	Member, RHM, Kisumu,	3 <sup>RD</sup> FEB, 2012
Paul Otieno,	Member, RHM, Kisumu,	15 <sup>TH</sup> , APRIL, 2011
Phillip Lukayo,	Member, R.H.M, Kisumu,	13 <sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2012
Priscah Jakoyo,	Leader, Pentecostal Church, Kisumu,	3 <sup>RD</sup> DEC, 2011
Robert Owaga,	Leader, R.H.M, Kisumu,	14 <sup>TH</sup> DEC, 2011
Silas Ochieng’	Senior Pastor, Pentecostal Church Kisumu,	14 <sup>TH</sup> APRIL. 2012
Steve Juma,	Leader, R.H.M, Kisumu,	11 <sup>TH</sup> JAN, 2012
Steve Kamar,	Pastor, Pentecostal Church in Kisumu,	6 <sup>TH</sup> , JAN, 2012
Veronica Okal,	Leader, R.H.M, Kisumu,	13 <sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2012
Vicky Jamoko,	Member, RHM, Kisumu,	26 <sup>TH</sup> , DEC, 2011
Victor Ochieng’,	Member, RHM, Kisumu,	31 <sup>ST</sup> , DEC, 2011

**APPENDICES 3: SAMPE OF PHOTOGRAPHS FOR R.H.M MAIN EVENTS**



**POLICE BAND ESCORTS DR. OWUOR INTO RURINGU STADIUM IN NYERI ON APRIL 16<sup>TH</sup> 2011**

**APPENDIX 3.1**



**A MAMMOTH GATHERING ASSEMBLED AT RURINGU STADIUM-NYERI ON 16<sup>TH</sup>-17<sup>TH</sup> 2011**

**APPENDIX 3.2**



MOI STADIUM IN KISUMU FILLED TO THE CAPACITY DURING THE NEW YEAR CELEBRATION 1<sup>ST</sup>  
JANUARY 2012

APPENDIX 3.3



SEVERAL PEOPLE SLAIN AT THE TOUCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ON 1<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY 2012 IN KISUMU

APPENDIX 3.4





A DISTRICT COMMISSIONER MR. THUKU PRESENTS GOVERNMENT PEACE AWARD  
TO DR. OWUOR

APPENDIX 3.5



**LOOTED PROPERTY DURING 2007/2008 POST ELECTION VIOLENCE RETURNED AT NAKURU  
CRUSADE ON 20TH-21<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 2010**

**APPENDIX 3.6**



WEAPONS OF WAR INCLUDING GUNS AND EXPLOSIVE CHEMICALS HANDED OVER TO DR. OWUOR IN NAKURU CRUSADE ON NOV. 20<sup>TH</sup>-21<sup>ST</sup> 2011

APPENDIX 3.7

*Appendix at the top*

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Catherine & Baby Elvis Chepkemboi HIV/AIDS NEGATIVE DNA PCR Results



A laboratory result form for HIV/AIDS DNA PCR. The form includes fields for patient name, date, and results. The results section shows 'HIV-1 RNA' as 'Not Detected' and 'HIV-1 DNA' as 'Not Detected'. The form is signed by a clinical officer.

A second laboratory result form for HIV/AIDS DNA PCR, similar to the first one, showing 'Not Detected' results for HIV-1 RNA and HIV-1 DNA. It is also signed by a clinical officer.

Bisia Makungu HIV/AIDS NEGATIVE DNA PCR Results



A laboratory result form for HIV/AIDS DNA PCR. The form includes fields for patient name, date, and results. The results section shows 'HIV-1 RNA' as 'Not Detected' and 'HIV-1 DNA' as 'Not Detected'. The form is signed by a clinical officer.

A CLINICAL OFFICER CONFIRMS HEALING OF HIV/AIDS PATIENTS IN KISUMU 28<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2010

APPENDIX 3.8



Melsa Ambutso got up and gloriously walked for the LORD.

DR. OWUOR MONITORS HEALING OF A CRIPPLED LADY IN KISUMU ON 28<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2010

APPENDIX 3.9



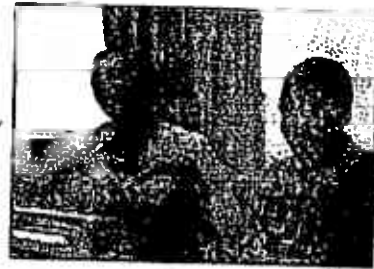
# And Chepsigot Special School For The Blind Marked A Day Of Celebrations For The Healing



**Bishop Ben Kosgey interviewing Jebiwot's head teacher, Mr. John Rono**



**Jebiwot's Pastor, Mr. Benson Kibet testifying of this Mighty healing miracle**



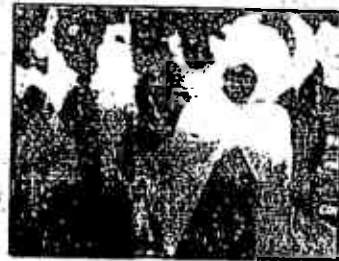
**DR. Agnes Maiyo Eye Specialist**



**The Chairman of Chepsigot Special School for the Blind, Christopher Cherutich also came to celebrate Jebiwot's Healing**



**Pastor Salina Sumbeiywo joyfully testifying of Jebiwot's Mighty Healing Miracle**



**Jebiwot's sponsor, Mr. Leonard Sawe was shocked to hear Jebiwot's healing and he came to witness her historic healing**



**Madam Passidy Chepkemboi who taught Jebiwot how to read Braille is also celebrates Jebiwot's healing.**



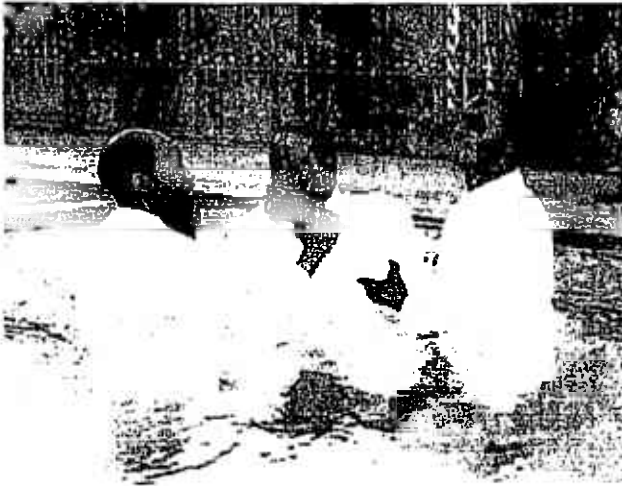
**CELEBRATION! FELICITATION! JOY UNSPEAKABLE!**



That is when joy unspeakable and wild celebrations broke realized that indeed she had been healed and she could

**JEBIWOT HEALED FROM BLINDNESS AND THE HEALING IS CONFIRMED AT HER CHEPSIGOT SPECIAL SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND IN AUGUST 2010**

APPENDIX 3.10



**DR. OWUOR REBAPTIZES THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA ON 4<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2009 IN A PRIVATE POOL IN NAIROBI**

**APPENDIX 3.11**