

ARTICLE

Unity and Diversity among Ghana's new Prophetic Churches: A Comparative Study of Vida Bethel Prayer Ministry and Believers Worship Centre

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Abstract

Neo-prophetism has gained significant visibility in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. It is a dominant Pentecostal strand, giving birth to several composite ministries in the country. Given this multiplicity, it has become challenging to understand the underlying complexities of these prophetic churches. The article compares two prominent, neo-prophetic churches in Ghana – the Vida Bethel Prayer Ministry (VBPM) and Believers Worship Center (BWC) – to identify their unity and diversity. The paper draws on VBPM and BWC's teachings, recorded sermons and members' experiences. This shows both a consensus in the beliefs and practices of the ministries yet also variations in activities shaped by selected ministries. The paper highlights how the shared yet diverse characteristics of prophetic churches not only strengthen religion but also provide members with varied feelings and experiences regarding their neo-prophetic faith.

Keywords: Prophetism, Unity and diversity, Prophetic church, Pentecostal mission, Comparative study, Ghana

1. Introduction

The themes of unity and diversity in Christianity have received considerable scholarly attention. Thompson (1963) and Gifford (2015) have highlighted the tendency to assume that all aspects of Christianity are already known, an assumption challenged by numerous studies. For instance, a *History of Christian Sects and Denominations* observes that the Nestorian Church (or Church of the East) shares the Episcopal governance, doctrines and use of the Nicene Creed common to other Oriental churches (Evans 2023: 244). This same assumption extends to Pentecostal Christianity, prompting Gifford's 2015 examination of the Pentecostal Christianities of Olukoya and Oyedepo in Nigeria – a concern that similarly motivates the present study.

The term “unity” refers to the state of oneness, being whole or joined together, whereas “diversity” signifies discord or multiplicity. Although these concepts are contrasting, they are not necessarily oppositional. In this article, the phrase “unity and diversity” refers to the coexistence of shared elements and distinct differences within a group. It describes how different prophetic churches can maintain their uniqueness while contributing to a common whole. This duality forms the basis for examining how individual expressions contribute to a collective identity without undermining their uniqueness. Considering this, speculation about the specific nature and influence of contemporary African Prophetic movements is precarious. Studies that engage in such speculation lack a complete understanding of the complexities of play. As Gifford argues, “Many simply assume we all know what we are dealing with [when talking about Ghanaian and African Pentecostalism], and move immediately to speculate on political effects, social roles, statistical trends” (Gifford 2015: 115). Considering that such conjectures often misinterpret the beliefs of African Pentecostals, we should clarify their actual principles. To achieve this, I compare the spirituality, religious teachings and rituals of Ghana’s neo-prophets, focusing on Vida Mensah’s Vida Bethel Prayer Ministry (VBPM) and Stephen Adom Kyei-Duah’s Believers Worship Center (BWC), to identify their points of unity and diversity. This comparison is necessary for understanding that different prophetic churches can retain their unique identities while collectively contributing to a unified whole – especially in beliefs, doctrinal emphasis and spiritual practices – as a lens for understanding the global Pentecostal faith.

The prophetic church is a branch of African Pentecostal Christianity that emphasizes the prophetic aspect of neo-Pentecostal theology. It places particular emphasis on a ministry grounded in God’s voice and interpreting his message. This distinct focus sets it apart from other conventional Pentecostal groups (White & Pondani 2022; Tsekpoe 2019). In Ghana, this strand of Christianity has existed for over two decades. Prophetic churches are recognized for their prophetic healing and deliverance, problem diagnosis, spiritual warfare and guidance, religious products and consultations (Kgatle 2023: 2; Manu 2023; Aryeh 2019; Olukoya 2014; Omenyo & Atiemo 2006; Goll 2004). Believers use religious products that are accessible during church services and consultations to support spiritual warfare and guidance. What sets this strand apart, beyond its vitality and media appropriation, is the founders’ adoption of the label “prophet” as part of their self-identity.

One such ministry is the Vida Bethel Prayer Ministry, located in Aprade in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Founded in the 1990s by Prophetess Mrs Vida Osei Mensah, this ministry offers a valuable case for exploring how individuality and collective identity coexist within the broader neo-prophetic movement. A second notable ministry is the Believers Worship Center, which traces its beginnings to the founder’s missionary work in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, in 1988. Prophet Kyei-Duah

then decided to organize a small group of believers to form the Believers Ministry (BM). The prophet relocated to Adansi Obuasi in the Ashanti Region of Ghana, where he established the BWC. In 2010, the church was inaugurated in Kumasi Anwomaso, where it had its religious services for two years. In March 2012, the church moved to its first building at Kenyase-Adwumam, which is currently its headquarters. This ministry, like VBPM, presents a distinct expression of neo-prophetism while contributing to the shared ethos of the movement.

VBPM and BWC are neo-prophetic denominations. Their categorization suggests that they should have similar practices, beliefs, roles and effects, which rule out variations between them. They have extensive following and inimitable prophetic practices that influence both their followers and the Ghanaian Christian community. Today, they attract public interest and dominate religious contexts in Ghana. With the advent of COVID-19, the influence of VBPM and BWC has expanded widely through media production, specifically television, Facebook and YouTube.

While ministries share some elements, they also display peculiar traits and influences, particularly through their teachings and prophecy. This underscores the need to explore the unity and diversity of Christian denominations. Although denominational differences can at times be divisive, they have the potential to enrich the church's mission by encouraging diversity, broadening its reach and promoting inter-denominational collaboration.

Given the controversies surrounding gender roles in traditional Christian leadership, the choice between prophetess and prophet-led ministries are important. Significant differences exist between females and males in terms of religious and social experiences, psychology and biology. Female-led ministries constitute a minority of Ghana's prophetic movements and are generally under-discussed in Global Pentecostal scholarship. These reasons make the selection of the VBPM and BWC important.

Unlike other Pentecostal groups, Mensah and Kyei-Duah do not like writing spiritual messages in books. This is typical of prophetic church leaders in Ghana. However, many of their sermons and teachings are recorded and put on social media platforms, such as Facebook and YouTube, probably for reachability. Therefore, these platforms, among other sources, serve as the basis for the subsequent discussion. Information gathered about the churches commenced in 2020 in the heat of the COVID-19 lockdown when I followed them in the media; several visits were made to the ministries afterwards.

This study employed a qualitative research approach through the use of a case study method. Data was collected from key church leaders and ordinary members of VBPM and BWC in Kumasi through face-to-face interviews and participant observation, conducted between February 2022 and August 2022. Formal verbal consent was obtained from research participants to uphold their right to make informed

decisions, a clear and practical method of consent in this situation where literacy issues made written consent impractical.

The paper outlines the distinctive characteristics, religious services, practices and teachings of the VBPM and BWC, providing a basis for exploring the unity and diversity between the two ministries.

2. Vida Bethel Prayer Ministry

According to Vida Mensah, VBPM began as a prayer camp to address “spiritual problems” such as illness, poverty, divorce and spiritual marriages believed to be caused by evil spirits. The church was named “Bethel”, meaning “House of God”, to reflect God’s miraculous presence at VBPM, drawing inspiration from the biblical city’s spiritual significance (cf. Brodsky 1990; Rainey 2006). It upholds orthodox Christian beliefs in the Trinity – God the Father as Creator, Jesus as God’s only Son, and the Holy Spirit as the source of all spiritual gifts (*charisma*) sustaining the church.

The core religious practices of the VBPM include the administration of anointing oil and holy water for healing, exorcism and prosperity. Mensah teaches that evil spiritual forces directly influence human life. Like other contemporary prophets, the prophetess also appears to present a microcosmic view of the world by focusing on the familial origin of her followers’ problems. Believers often become aware of these harmful influences through deliverance and counselling sessions. Prophecy is one of the pillars of the ministry that the founder believes has ensured its survival. Individual counselling sessions attract many people to join and participate in the ministry.

2.1 Specific characteristics

The VBPM shares several characteristics that set it within and outside the prophetic church enclave in Ghana today. VBPM has as its motto: *gyedie mu ahooden*, which literally means “strong in faith” (as described by Paul in Romans 4.20 about Abraham’s faith in God). This motto urges a believer to remain strong (faithful to God) amid life’s challenges. The church has as its symbol a globe, a cross, and a dove flying over a Bible. This logo is explained by the Prophetess as signifying God’s words, the salvation of Jesus Christ on the cross, and the power of the Spirit of God for the salvation of the world. A significant feature of the church is its focus on the will of God, which the prophetess believes is divinely revealed to her.

Another specific trait of VBPM is its mission. The mission of the church is to change the lives of people worldwide. The Church has a vision to ensure that all people hear the word of God and gain an understanding of God’s love, promises and salvation. The global nature of the mission and vision of the VBPM has ensured that leaders

(apostles and pastors) of the Church function as the wheel (the vehicle or primary instrument) for God's love and salvation to the world.

Unlike some prophetic churches, the VBPM does not sell (religious) items such as holy water, anointing oil, spiritual cream, spiritual handkerchief, pen and mirror to church members. They are acquired during counselling and church services from nearby shops. Other members may also bring items from their homes. Aside from the items that church members acquire during counselling (spiritual direction), no other items are sold to members by the prophetess. This sets VBPM apart from other existing prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic churches that appear to engage in the "commercialization of religion" (Shi & Pande 2023; Andrew 2021). The figure below illustrates the common items obtained and used by church attendees.



Figure 1 Photo of religious items acquired during counselling by members of VBPM.

An additional feature of VBPM is its single-storey accommodation facility located on the church premises, 30m from the church. This facility hosts church members whom the Prophetess, after counselling, directs to pray at the church for a few days. This is to say that church members/clients who lodge in the facility do so according to the instructions of the prophetess. Some church members lodged in the facility for three days, others for one week, and a few for a month. They lodge in the facility without making any payments. While there, morning and evening prayers are organized for them apart from their private prayers.

2.2 Church services

The church organized three services per week. They hold these religious services on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. In addition to these services, other online events aim to spread God's word and salvation through Jesus to all, regardless of nationality, faith or location. The Church transmits a significant proportion of its services on Paradise TV, a channel that it owns. Thus, they evangelize church members at home and, simultaneously project the church's presence in the public sphere through electronic media. In this category were "Grace Hour" and "Word and Prayer Time". All church services encourage active participation, but in this section, special emphasis is placed on the Thursday Counselling and Prayer Service, which is the largest and most significant among all the religious gatherings at VBPM due to its prophetic nature.

The Thursday service, which is in two parts, begins with a counselling session that starts at 6:00 am and usually closes at 11:00 am. However, the session may conclude earlier or later depending on the number of church members present. Similar to other prophetic churches, counselling is an important feature of VBPM. This attracts many people to church. At the church on Thursdays, all persons – young, old, sick, healthy, mentally challenged, pregnant and unemployed graduates – are seen coming for counselling. The Prophetess sits in a designated room on the left side of the altar, listens to the problems of the counsellor, and provides a spiritual direction or guidance (*akwankyerε*). Spiritual direction is a neo-Pentecostal religious practice, which involves the interpretation and remediation of a spiritual problem by a person perceived to have stronger spiritual power.

As the counsellor enters the room, he/she drops an offering in a bowl on the right side of the seat to which he/she sits. The counsellor's seat is located directly opposite the Prophetess. The counsellor is welcomed by the Prophetess. As part of the greeting (welcome), the Prophetess discloses God's purpose for the believer's life in the coming days. This is followed by asking about the purpose for which the client has come to see the Prophetess. After the narration of the purpose (which is usually a spiritual or physical problem), the Prophetess directs the believer on what to do to receive a breakthrough using common items such as toffee, oil, water, salt, naphthalene balls, shea butter and lemons. The items were purchased from the church. The counsellor receives a chit as proof of payment. The item is given to counsellors close to the Thursday service.

The second part of the Thursday service is the healing and deliverance prayer. This service reflects the strong prophetic character of the VBPM. This is because it showcases the experience of divine power through Prophetess Mrs Vida Mensah for a vast number of attendees. As in other services of the church, the sermon is an important segment of the Thursday service. It is accompanied by prayer points that specifically touch on the spiritual needs and requests of church members. The prayer appears to take a significant portion of the entire sermon and church services

in general. Owing to intermittent prayer, the sermon lasts for approximately two hours. During this time, many prophetic directions are given, and healing and deliverance are believed to be experienced by church members.

Immediately following the sermon is “harvest time”. During this time, church members are directed to “sow a seed” for a breakthrough, a practice prevalent in many contemporary Ghanaian churches, particularly neo-pentecostal ones. This practice, which can trigger spiritual and physical benefits, is encouraged due to its connection to believers’ prosperity. Seed sowing amounts range from GH¢50 (\$3.13) to GH¢300 (\$18.75) as of October 2024. The harvest is then followed by a testimony, an important segment of the healing and deliverance prayer service. The testimony represents thanksgiving and appreciation for God’s work, allowing the power to perform more of his grace and giving hope to others awaiting breakthroughs. This segment takes a considerable amount of time due to the number of church members involved. Thursday service ends with blessings of items brought by church members, as instructed by the Prophetess, including food, non-food items, paraphernalia and money.

The foregoing highlights VBPM’s prophetic identity, shaped by its spiritual focus which is evident in the activities, teachings and practices of the church. These elements together underscore how the church significantly embodies the mission of God within Ghanaian Pentecostal Christianity.

3. Believers Worship Centre

Now that we have explored VBPM, we turn our attention to Kyei-Duah’s Believers Worship Centre. Kyei-Duah describes the BWC as the “Philadelphia movement” (Rev. 3.7–13), representing holy nationals of the biblical city of Philadelphia in present-day Turkey.

The BWC professes belief in the Trinity and, as a prophetic church, highlights healing and deliverance through Holy Spirit-inspired miracles. Kyei-Duah’s sermons focus on God, Satan, bewitchment, humanity’s link to evil and liberation. His teachings trace God’s origin to three spiritual powerful beings who came together to form the Trinity: God the Father, God the Word, and God the Holy Spirit – three divine persons in one God. The first being’s power was in wind, the second’s in water, and the third’s in fire. Their union caused these elements to merge, producing a great explosion known as a thunderstorm. This doctrine diverges markedly from the conventional biblical conception of God, giving rise to contentious debates within Ghana’s Christian community.

Kyei-Duah teaches that Satan is the source of evil, a thief who steals human “glory” to corrupt lives. Those who make pacts with evil for wealth lose their souls to him, which are then used for demonic purposes. He adds that witches and other

non-Christian spirits continually attack believers' prosperity. The indicators of being bewitched include any hindrance to fulfilling your divine destiny, such as always being "almost there" but never arriving (Gifford 2015: 116). In Ghana, witchcraft is a deeply rooted belief system due to the community's ability to provide a public space where witchcraft is essentially recognized and, at the same time, effectively dealt with using ritual techniques (Gifford 2001: 324). This has both cultural and spiritual significance. Kyei-Duah teaches that bewitchment is real and believers must engage in prayer, deliverance, and the use of religious items for protection. He emphasizes staying "under his care" by displaying his image, which symbolizes spiritual covering—a practice now common among both BWC members and non-members. Below is a commonly used image of the Prophet by his followers:



Figure 2 Image of Prophet Kyei-Duah used by a local food vendor in Kumasi.

3.1 Specific characteristics

This section examines six specific characteristics of BWC – its motto, mission, vision, dress style, offertory practice and religious products – highlighted for their significance among many other features.

The Believers Worship Center has as its motto "justice, mercy, honesty". According to the tenets of the Believers Worship Center, the church is the final manifestation of God's church/kingdom through his Prophet, Stephen Adom Kyei-Duah. The church has as its emblem a globe, Bible and dove with green leaves in the beak. The mission of the church is to empower believers to take complete control of their lives through direct worship and communication with the Lord Jesus Christ. This

mission has ensured that the church supervises both the spiritual and physical lives of its members aiming to make them worthy of being children of God and promoting self-dependence. According to Kyei-Duah, the church has a priority to eliminate its members' over-dependence on religious leaders for solutions to problems that have impoverished many Christians through extortion as they seek deliverance. Related to the mission is the vision of attaining "true worship of God, which is in truth and in spirit with a mind absolutely free of association of life occurrences to witches and supernatural beings, and losing focus of God is eliminated from people's mind". This purpose significantly sets BWC apart from other churches.

Another trait that sets members of the BWC from their prophetic counterparts is their dress codes. The Church's foundation on piety and love of God has ensured that members put on dresses that befit a child of God. The church prohibits wearing indecent clothes (short and transparent) that instigate lust and sexual immorality among attendees. Women within BWC are not exposed to hair. They cover their heads as prescribed by Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11.2–16. Again, they do not wear makeup or artificial and polished nails. As a model for church members, the prophet is often depicted wearing a long robe and a tallit (prayer shawl), which he typically covers his head with. Men were not expected to wear female clothing. They adopt a dress code that goes far beyond worldly pleasure. The purpose is to portray Jesus Christ, their leader and mentor. In addition, brothers (pastors) wear white robes, similar to a cassock. They remain pure and dedicated to the church's course. This has become paradigmatic for some young prophets and prophetic churches, contributing to BWC's success in Ghana.

Beyond the believers' mode of dressing, a notable aspect of the Church is that the offertory is discretionary. Members give to God based on what he has done. Offering boxes are placed at different places on the church premises, where members willingly deposit their offerings. This happens after church service. Unlike the VBPM and several others, the BWC does not designate a specific day for counselling sessions for its members; instead, this is conducted privately.

The final distinguishing feature is the church's range of religious products. Whereas religious items in Mensah's ministry are typically self-sourced and organic, a distinguishing characteristic of BWC is its widely recognized, distinctive, processed, well-packaged and church-branded religious items. The church sells these religious items, including "Grace Water", "Grace Soap", "Grace Oil", "Grace Powder", "Grace Cream", "Second Chance (*yesu mogya* – Blood of Jesus)," and "Grace Sobolo". The *yesu mogya* (Blood of Jesus) is a mixture of natural herbs in a transparent plastic sachet that is to be applied to the body or taken after mixing it with water or food. This indicates that the content of the *yesu mogya* is not the actual blood of Jesus but a representation of it. The Prophet explained that all items work based on faith and righteousness. The prices of these items range from GH¢10 to GH¢30 (\$0.63 –\$1.88).



Figure 3 Photo of religious items purchased by members of BWC.

The above items were purchased by the church members of the BWC. These religious items are used for spiritual and physical purposes. For instance, “Grace Sobolo”, which is typically sold during and after a church service, is used for healing purposes. Many people purchase it due to testimonies of healing from diseases such as diabetes, stroke, hepatitis and cancer. The “Grace Soap”, “Grace Powder” and “Grace Cream” are used during and after bathing for cleansing and spiritual protection. Moreover, the “Grace water” is used for blessing.

These religious items have an enormous impact on the people who purchase them. These effects are often seen during testimonies given by persons who have used any of these religious items. All the items in Figure 3 are recommended by the leaders of the church for whatever needs are brought by church members. However, a church member can decide whether to buy any of them.

3.2 Church services

The Believers Worship Center offers a range of church services and activities. On Sundays, the most crowded Anointing and Breakthrough Service is at 10:00 am; the Healing, Deliverance and Prayer Service is held on Wednesdays; and the Second Chance and Prayer Service is on Fridays. There is also a special healing and deliverance service on the last Wednesday to Friday of each month. Most of the church's religious activities are transmitted through Second Chance Television (SCTV) and radio which the BWC owns. On BWC's media platforms are two important services, the Sunday Live Service and the Prayer Hour. These services are broadcast (sometimes live) on Second Chance TV, YouTube, and Facebook. The Wednesday service is emphasized in this section of the paper due to its significance among BWC's religious services and its notable standing within the Ghanaian prophetic community.

The Wednesday service is a prayer, healing, and deliverance service in a church that begins with prayers and worship led by a brother. Believers bring religious items, which are not intended to cure diseases or spiritual problems alone but to assist in praying for success and protection. The service lasts approximately 30 minutes, followed by a period of songs of praise that lasts 15–25 minutes.

The most extended session of the Wednesday service is the sermons, where the Prophet raises prayer points to remind believers of regular prophecies. The sermon then transitions into a healing and deliverance service, where the Prophet remains on his altar to cast out demons and illnesses. Kyei-Duah, an eighth-generation prophet with a close relationship with God, often refers to heaven as his home of origin and uses extra-biblical accounts to explain known passages.

The prophecy in the BWC mandates that church members purchase specific religious products for daily life protection and spiritual accomplishments. At times, the Prophet instructs believers to smear or spray themselves with a purchased religious item for renewal and deliverance from spiritual bondages. Ushers pass through the congregation with these items. The session concludes with a prayer led by the Prophet, followed by congregants reciting the Lord's Prayer, and the service comes to a close. Moreover, members are taught to give offerings based on what God has done for them, much as in Sunday services.

This discussion of the BWC highlights its engagement in diverse religious teachings and practices that embody the contextual expression of God's mission within the Ghanaian prophetic movement. Its prophetic character, among other aspects as observed above, reflects the contextual adaptation of God's mission within the Ghanaian prophetic landscape.

4. Unity and Variation in Ghana's Prophetic Churches

In the foregoing discussions, we have seen how events in both Mensah and Kyei-Duah's ministries reveal several traits characteristic of neo-prophetism. This section attempts to compare the principles of these ministries, drawing attention to their unity and diversity. The comparison here centres on the ministries' beliefs in the doctrine of the Trinity, the existence of Satan and demonic entities, and their practices of prophecy, healing, deliverance and the use of media.

In the previous discussions, we observed how both ministries hold that God is the unity of three persons. They believe and teach that God the Father is the creator of the universe and all humanity possesses power over all things, and that he saves the world through his son, whom the Virgin Mary conceived, died, rose on the third day and offered salvation through him alone. The doctrine of the Trinity not only serves as a central Christian affirmation of God in the VBPM and BWC. Instead, its position echoes Udnes' (2023: 65) argument that there may be a meaningful connection

between the doctrine of the Trinity and present-day Pentecostal ecclesial practices. A critical engagement with the doctrine of the Trinity presents current Pentecostals with an opportunity to shift their attention momentarily from traditional spokespersons, suggesting that an understanding of the Trinity as both ontologically and functionally relational in VBPM and BWC supports the promotion of cohesion among congregants.

Furthermore, teachings on the presence of Satan or evil/demonic entities reflect both the VBPM and BWC's awareness of cosmic battles in which believers are continually involved. The sermons of the founders of both ministries not only highlight how demonic entities such as witches/wizards, marine agents, and other non-Christian spirits such as family deities can seize believers' destinies and livelihoods, but also offer their followers strategies to break free from these forces. Methods such as the use of religious items, deliverances, prayers, and spiritual guidance were employed within the ministries. From the teachings, we see the way neo-prophetics interpret victory and freedom in God in terms of the subversion of evil and suffering in the hope of transforming believers' destinies (Quayesi-Amakye 2015: 64). The concept of evil and liberation in neo-prophetism is not new to followers and founders of Ghanaian new prophetic churches, since it originates from (Akan) primal cosmology, which stresses the spiritual roots of problems.

Related to the awareness of cosmic battles, the themes of prophecy, healing, and deliverance feature regularly in both Mensah and Kyei-Duah's ministries. They cover a sizeable portion of the ministries' religious services. The churches share teachings on combating evil entities by employing rituals, such as deliverance and prayer, to guide followers toward spiritual liberation. To reiterate, in VBPM and BWC, prophecy plays a crucial role in the liberation, sustenance and overall physical and spiritual protection of attendees. That the prophetess and prophet are regarded as the ones who foretell the future, acting as a bridge between attendees and the divine realm is widely recognized. Prophecies in both ministries mandate that church members purchase specific religious products.

Further, the purchase of religious items is a common practice in Ghana's prophetism often tied to seeking miraculous solutions (cf. Omenyo & Atiemo 2006; Baëta 1962: 3). However, there is a distinction in the religious products purchased by members of the ministries. While the products in BWC are church-branded and sold exclusively by the church, VBPM often instructs its members to obtain the items from external sources, and they are not branded. The main aim of the items in the ministries was protection and well-being. Breaking free from the shackles of satanic entities and familial spirits, therefore, necessitated the acquisition of different religious products. Despite this distinction, the religious products illustrate the pentecostal message and facilitate the mission of the church which centres on evangelism, fellowship, discipleship and community service as expressions of God's mission that

extends beyond the church to all areas of life (Manu 2025, 107; Aarde 2016: 285; Niemandt 2015; Bassham 1980: 57). According to Niemandt (2015: 2–3), the missional nature of the church provides an important clue to the relationship between a missional church and society.

It also emerged that the media is a powerful tool utilized by prophetic churches for their religious services and activities. Different religious services and activities are broadcast on modern and traditional media platforms owned by the ministries: Second-chance television and Paradise television stations. A significant feature of neo-Prophetism in Ghana is the use of media, often described in addition to other factors as a reason behind the popularity of many churches today (Manu, Sarfo & Antwi 2023; Ibrahim 2023; Asamoah-Gyadu 2015). Both traditional and social media platforms feature numerous advertisements by these prophets, inviting people to attend their programs and church services (Quayesi-Amakye 2013). The challenge, however, is that in seeking public recognition, some prophets actively pursue strategies to maintain a constant personal presence in the public eye. Meanwhile, this pursuit of self-visibility often comes at the expense of God's mission, which is intended to challenge society with the truth. This may underscore the need to reorient the prophetic church leader toward the *missio Dei* through a renewed missional imagination.

Despite the above, one of the interesting aspects of the use of contemporary media by BWC and VBPM is that its impact extends far beyond the confines of Pentecostal Christianity. A key observation is that the missions of VBPM and BWC align in their efforts to transform followers through the media. Both ministries actively utilise media to expand their influence, employing television and social platforms to popularize prophetic Christianity. Thus, the use of the platforms to broadcast religious activities has become a major tool in the rise and popularity of VBPM and BWC. Today, Ghana's prophetic mission has become a familiar aspect of Christian culture that permeates non-Christian homes, mainly due to the influence of the media (de Witte 2018; de Witte 2012; Asamoah-Gyadu 2005). The increasing mediation that has occurred in Ghana's prophetic arena has played a significant missional role by serving as a vital tool in expanding God's kingdom and fulfilling the church's mission. In the wake of this growth, it is also inappropriate to overlook contentions that ensue during mass mediation forms in the Ghanaian neo-prophetic religious scene. These paradoxical dynamics have shaped Ghana's neo-Pentecostal Christianity and the practice of mass mediation, which play a central role in designing the religious public sphere (Benyah 2018; Meyer 2005: 294; Hackett 1998). A crucial insight is that prophetic church-media relations support the church's primary mission as outlined in the Great Commission. Through media engagement, these churches similarly extend their reach and reinforce their spiritual influence.

5. Conclusion

This article has examined the unity and diversity among one of Africa's strands of Pentecostal Christianity: prophetic churches. It has discussed the beliefs, teachings, practices, and organizational structures of the Vida Bethel Prayer Ministry and the Believers Worship Centre, highlighting the unity and diversity between them.

The paper's exploration of unity and diversity holds significance not only for Ghana but also for global Pentecostal Christianity. Within Ghanaian Pentecostalism, such comparisons help illuminate the unique characteristics of each prophetic church by highlighting both their oneness and differences. This leads to a deeper understanding of the faith, reveals emerging trends, encourages engagement with diverse Pentecostal perspectives, and fosters coexistence. Similarly, comparing the prophetic churches in the global Pentecostal context helps appreciate the diversity of tradition, worship style, doctrines and governance. Given that the Christian Church, unified by the core belief in Jesus Christ and deeply divided along denominational lines (cf. Youvan 2024: 1), comparing VBPM and BWC is essential for global theological insight, encouraging growth, and understanding how the gospel is lived out across contexts.

Notably, the study demonstrates that grouping VBPM and BWC under the category of prophetic highlights a sense of oneness. At the same time, a key contribution of the research lies in its exploration of gender leadership within Ghana's prophetic Christianity, where female-led ministries remain relatively few. While traditionally male-dominated, contemporary prophetic churches are witnessing women's emergence as pastors and prophetesses, often pioneering new ministries and engaging in community service. Nevertheless, challenges remain in attaining full gender equality within church structures. This gender disparity highlights an important yet often overlooked dimension of prophetic Christianity that this paper has examined.

Beyond gender disparity, their internal organizational structures also reveal important oneness. Both churches operate within hierarchical frameworks led by their founders, with BWC additionally incorporating roles such as secretaries and treasurers. While prophetic churches share core elements, they also exhibit notable diversity in practice and organizational structure, challenging the assumption of uniformity within the movement. Diversity also exists in members varied experiences and expressions of a shared core belief. This supports the view that distinct Ghanaian prophetic churches preserve their unique identities while simultaneously contributing to the broader Pentecostal movement. This reflects the view that, within major religions, different denominations function in a complementary relationship (Kalin 2011: 473).

Note

“Sobolo” is the name of a local juice made from dried hibiscus plant.

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