

## Panic, persecutions and penalties

The impact of Fr. Augustine Urayai's new theology of original sin on the Roman Catholic Church in Zimbabwe

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### Abstract

This article critically examines the impact of Fr. Augustine Urayai's alternative theory of original sin in the Roman Catholic Dioceses of Masvingo and Gweru. Persecutions and penalties have been imposed on those who sympathize with his new theology. Fr. Urayai held that the fall of Satan and the rebel angels described in the book of Revelation is the actual original sin, not the traditionally accepted biblical Adamic guilt recorded in Genesis. This article provides both the milieu and context within which Fr. Urayai's theory emerged and developed, and examines the impact on the Zimbabwe Roman Catholic Church.

**Keywords** Original sin, rebel angels, Zimbabwe Catholic Church, persecution.

### 1. Introduction

Both the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) and the *Code of Canon Law* (1983) stipulate that official Catholic doctrines embody the authoritative understanding of the faith taught by Jesus Christ and that the Holy Spirit protects the Church from falling into error when teaching these doctrines. To deny one or more of these beliefs, therefore, is to deny the faith of Christ. Accordingly, throughout history, the Catholic Church has not hesitated to deal decisively with any theological view or teaching that threatened her traditional position. Over time, the Catholic Church has thus condemned numerous beliefs which she considered heretical and contrary to official Catholic teaching: Adoptionism (second and third century), Montanism (late second century), Arianism (fourth century), Nestorianism (fifth century), Pelagianism (fifth century), Protestantism (sixteenth century) and Jansenism (seventeenth century), among many others (Morrow 1966:152-153).

Recently, the theology of Father Augustine Urayai of Zimbabwe posed a new threat to traditional Catholic theology. Fr. Urayai (1931-2003) abandoned the view

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that the state of sin in which humanity has existed since the fall of man stems from Adam and Eve's rebellion in the Garden of Eden. Instead, he clung resolutely to the belief that the sin of apostasy committed by the fallen angels and described in Revelation 12:7-17 is the true and actual representation of the original sin.

In the early 21st century, this deliberate deviation by Fr. Urayai put the entire Zimbabwe Catholic disciplinary system on edge as it feared a potential secession from the church. This article relies heavily on personal interviews to capture the impact of Fr. Urayai's new theology on the Zimbabwe Christian landscape. Rural parishes where Fr. Urayai worked as a Catholic priest and self-proclaimed exorcist, including Mutero (1967-1971, 1980-1990), Zhombe (1976-1977) and Chinyuni (1990-2003), proved essentially critical in providing information about Fr. Urayai's priestly ministry and the impact of his teachings. However, urban parishes such as St Paul's in Redcliff and St Edward's in Gweru Diocese, where followers of Fr. Urayai's new theology are more noticeable, were equally important primary sources of information.

Before describing and analyzing Fr. Urayai's theology, I will briefly summarize the history of his priestly ministry and the environment in which his theology emerged and developed.

## 2. The priestly ministry of Father Urayai<sup>2</sup>

The priestly ministry of Fr. Augustine Urayai has been well documented by Sibanda (1999), Shoko (2006) and Mudyiwa (2016). Augustine Paradza Urayai was born on 10 August 1931 in Homera village, under chief Chirumhanzu, in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe. He was among the first African boys to study for the priesthood in the Diocese of Gweru. Having displayed superior capacities during more than eight years of philosophical and theological studies, Augustine and two other seminarians, Kizito Mavima and Francis Mugadzi,<sup>3</sup> were ordained priests on 12 December 1964 at Gokomere Mission in Masvingo province (Nyatsanza 1995:17).

As a young priest, Fr. Augustine was passionate about exorcism (Sibanda 1999). About five years into his priestly ministry, in 1969, he had his inaugural case of healing when he cast out alien spirits (*mashavi*) from a parishioner named Ignatius Munyongani (Mudyiwa 2016:32). Beginning from this event, Fr. Urayai's healing sessions became very popular and he became the best-known exorcist in the Roman Catholic Church of Zimbabwe. In an interview conducted by this author, Fr. Urayai stated that his healing ministry took on a new dimension on 12 June 1970 when, during a routine

<sup>2</sup> This section is adapted from a report to the Vatican on the ramifications of Fr. Urayai's healing ministry (2015). It also expands on the content of my unpublished MA thesis (University of Zimbabwe, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Francis Mugadzi became the second locally born black bishop in the Diocese of Gweru after Tobias Chiginya.

healing session, he encountered an angel who spoke through his catechist Sylvester Madanhire (1940-1981). The angel who communicated through Sylvester as a deep-trance medium identified himself only as Archangel Cherubim, one of God's seven archangels, alongside six others: Lucifer, Christ, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Seraphim.<sup>4</sup> This dramatic episode left an indelible impression on the otherwise skeptical, cautious and very Roman Catholic Fr. Urayai. It and subsequent similar encounters radicalized him and altered his entire metaphysical and cosmological thought. Furthermore, the *ganz andere* (manifestation of the sacred) also awakened him from the slumber of dogmatic parochialism and caused him to embrace a new theology of creation, original sin and the entire economy of salvation. Thus, Fr. Urayai's theology of original sin was not presented as his own intellectual achievement but ostensibly as the result of his numerous encounters with celestial beings who communicated through mediums (Fr. Urayai, interview, 30 August 1994).

### 3. Fr. Urayai's theory of original sin<sup>5</sup>

The logic and link between Adam's guilt (described in Genesis 3:1-24) committed so long ago and humanity who seemingly had no part in it has preoccupied scholars for centuries. Renowned philosophers and earnest theologians have laboured to explain why humanity remains in need of divine rescue, even though the human race was originally created sinless by an all-powerful, merciful and loving God.

In what could be described as "extreme religious liberty" (Hamilton 2007: para 1) and in sharp contrast to orthodox Christian belief that original sin was contracted from humanity's progenitors (Adam and Eve), Fr. Urayai held that the "sin of the world" (John 1:29) derives from sin committed by apostate angels in a world of spirits, long before the events described in the Genesis creation accounts. According to Fr. Urayai, the disobedient angels, together with Lucifer their ringleader, were sequestered into temporary spiritual spheres of punishment and correctional services for rehabilitation. These temporary rehabilitation settings are referred to as hell or Gehenna (Matt 10:28), the lake of fire (Rev 20:14; 21:8), Sheol (Ps 89:48), the underworld (Is 14:9-14), the nether world (Ezek 32:21) or Hades (Matt 11:23), amongst many other names. Fr. Urayai stated that Lucifer was sequestered together with one-third of heaven's total population (Rev 12:3-4). Adam and Eve were part of

<sup>4</sup> Traditional Christian theology acknowledges the existence of three archangels: Michael, Raphael and Gabriel.

<sup>5</sup> Whilst Fr. Urayai's theory of creation and the Fall is ostensibly a recitation from Archangel Cherubim, to a greater extent his narration closely follows the position articulated by a German priest, Father Greber, who also claimed to have received communication from celestial beings at his parish in 1923, some forty-seven years before Fr. Urayai's dramatic encounter. Also, within Fr. Urayai's new religious movement, his theology is regarded as classified information. It has never been taught in public since the movement's birth in 1970.

this disobedient one-third; the other two-thirds remained loyal to Christ during the revolt. For him, the pre-existence of humanity as angels, humanity's full participation in original sin, the angelic revolt and humanity's subsequent eviction from heaven by Archangel Michael (Rev 12:7) constitute the most basic religious truth underlying all knowledge of the beyond. Ironically, according to Fr. Urayai, this basic knowledge has been overlooked by all Christian denominations, including the Catholic Church. Thus, he insisted, humans on planet Earth are essentially incarnations of the same fallen angels (one-third) currently participating in God's great plan of salvation to effect their gradual ascent and repatriation. Whereas hell continues to serve as a temporary warehouse where spirits awaiting a human body are kept, the material world (Earth) also functions as a temporary school or training centre where fallen angels (mortals) would be prepared through suffering for a life to come. Fr. Urayai often referred to the material world as a "testing ground" (interview, 30 August 1994).

For Fr. Urayai, the coming of Christ two thousand years ago constituted a critical turning point in the history of humankind (fallen angels). As both he (in 1994) and Greber (1970:215) stated, when the testing ground was finally created, none of the fallen angels (including Adam and Eve) being lawfully Lucifer's subjects, could escape from his rule, since he was unwilling to waive his right of sovereignty even in the case of those spirits who had repented of their misdeeds while in hell and longed to return to God's kingdom. Rather, the surrender of this right was forced upon Lucifer by a Redeemer, namely Christ (Eph 1:7; 1 John 2:2). Christ's redemptive act brought with it numerous advantages, chief among them being the nullification of original sin. Hence, Jesus told the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7) in reference to the fallen angels. In fact, the coming of Christ signaled God's eternal love, mercy and willingness to reconcile and re-engage his lost sheep (Fr. Urayai, interview, 30 August 1994).

By dying on the cross, Jesus bridged the gap that had separated heaven and earth for ages. However, Fr. Urayai believed that since human nature is still inclined to choose evil and sin, each individual shall one day face judgement for his or her sins upon exiting the testing ground. For humans living on Earth, the greatest commandment taught by Christ (Matt 22:36-40) remains the only guiding principle. Thus, those who love God and neighbour will pass the judgement test when they die. Subsequently, such victorious spirits will be reunited with the two-thirds of the angels who remained loyal to Christ during the revolt and the Great Fall. On the contrary, those who fail to love God and neighbour on the testing ground will also fail the judgement test when they die and will be sent back to hell or Hades, where they will continue to writhe in excruciating pain until another life is planned for them by God's angels.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Although Fr. Urayai taught that spirits that fail to make it to heaven go back to hell, he did not believe in perennial or everlasting punishment in hell. Instead, like most adherents of Eastern religions, he believed strongly in reincarnation.

#### 4. The reception of Fr. Urayai's theory

Fr. Urayai's theory of original sin was received with mixed feelings in the Zimbabwe Christian landscape. Based on the evidence gathered through interviews, his alternative interpretation of original sin has enjoyed rapid and appreciable growth and acceptability, particularly amongst his acolytes and secret admirers in both the Masvingo and Gweru Dioceses. To date, his new religious movement has attracted more than two thousand followers in Zimbabwe (Patrick Chagwiza, interview, 10 October 2018). The combination of his role as an ordained minister, the availability of other catholic priests who secretly backed his ideas and the divine revelation on which his theology was purportedly anchored all favoured the spread of his theology.

A few weeks after Fr. Urayai's initial mystical experience and the manifestation of the "hierophany" (Eliade 1957:12), a small group of interested Roman Catholics who previously followed traditional Catholic theology regarding original sin gathered at Fr. Urayai's Chinyika Parish in Gutu to deepen their prayer life and knowledge of the Scriptures. A small circle or community formed around Sylvester the deep trance medium, under the guidance and leadership of Archangel Cherubim who always spoke through the catechist. The prayer group met every weekend to receive instruction on good moral behavior and Bible lessons. They later changed to meeting once a month, mostly in believers' homes, since they had no temple of their own. Initially, those who subscribed to the new theology brought with them a highly skeptical mind, a desire for new teachings and an inner readiness and willingness to transform their lives as new spiritual insights flowed out to them. This culture of curiosity did not lead to a cry for the rewriting of the Bible or a rearrangement of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but it did create a passion and thirst for more answers to fundamental questions about the beyond. Because of this thirst for new information, many of the participants were open to exploring or revisiting issues related to the development of the biblical canon and the translation of the Scriptures, for the sake of becoming more informed spiritually.

Over time, the new religious movement grew like the biblical mustard seed (Luke 13:18-19) and later assumed the name of the Light of Life Christian Group (LLCG). Within the Catholic Church circles, the LLCG is nicknamed "Super Roma" (Kugwa 2004; Shoko 2006), perhaps implying that Fr. Urayai's teachings were above and beyond what the traditional Catholic Church believed in. In the early 1980s, the LLCG grew steadily to include people coming from other Christian denominations, including the Methodists, Anglicans, Salvation Army and Baptists, amongst many others. Those who affiliated with the LLCG were urged by Fr. Urayai not to give up membership in their various denominations but simply to regard the lessons they received from the LLCG as extra spiritual training. By the time Fr. Urayai died in 2003, the LLCG had attained such a magnitude that it could no longer be ignored by

the world around it. By then, Fr. Urayai had recruited a handful of nuns and priests to join him, mainly from dioceses such as Gweru, Masvingo, Harare and Mutare (Charles Marumisa, interview, 15 October 2019). However, to date the LLCG has indicated no plans to secede from the church and become an independent movement. Rather, it has settled on a unique ‘stay and reform from within’ strategy as opposed to the general trend of reform through separation (Mudyiwa 2016).

As an ordained Catholic priest, Fr. Urayai was well positioned to cross denominational boundaries and spread his new theology of original sin. Most of the Christians who came into contact with him did not doubt his credentials or his ability to replicate the qualities of Jesus Christ whom he represented. As a result, scores of Christians from different denominations – academics, medical practitioners, teachers, nurses and farmers – secretly affiliated with the LLCG. Initially, the responsible authorities employed a policy of watchful waiting. They were cautious and disengaged to the operations of the new religious movement. They simply observed the movement without approving or disapproving it. However, over time, the influx triggered a response from the Roman Catholic disciplinary system (Emmanuel Mupure, interview, 27 July 2017).

## **5. The Catholic response: panic, persecutions and penalties**

Throughout the eight Roman Catholic dioceses in Zimbabwe, the Catholic response to Fr. Urayai’s new theology and the subsequent formation and development of his prayer movement has been generally sporadic and spasmodic, ranging from sanctions, interdictions and suspensions of real and imaginary followers of Fr. Urayai to a collective response by the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’ Conference. In an interview I conducted at a parish in Gweru Diocese, one interviewee stated:

At my parish in Redcliff ... from 2005, being a member of the LLCG then became punishable by an ecclesiastical sanction or interdict. However, throughout Zimbabwe, most Catholic bishops and priests did not generally hunt out LLCG members. The majority simply ignored them unless someone formally accused a member of being LLCG. Consequently, punishment was intermittent in most parishes, especially Redcliff and St Edward’s. Like during the time of the persecutions of Christians, LLCG members at one parish would suffer untold suffering while their counterparts in a nearby parish or centre would be untouched. By and large, the imposition of sanctions was completely unpredictable ... yet most LLCG particularly within the towns of Kwekwe and Redcliff lived daily with an ecclesiastical sanction hanging over their heads but they were undeterred by such threats. (P. Christina, interview, 12 October 2019)

Whilst a handful of urban parishes within Gweru Diocese panicked and denied sacraments such as baptism, the eucharist and matrimony to suspected LLCG mem-

bers, perhaps the action with the greatest impact was the suspension of seven clergymen from the Diocese of Masvingo in 2005 due to their alleged connection to Fr. Urayai's new theology and their involvement in LLCG operations (Mudyiwa 2016). An unpublished report to the Vatican (2015) on the ramifications of Fr. Urayai's healing ministry in Zimbabwe, compiled by the accused and disgruntled Catholic priests themselves, also contains a detailed and unabridged account of the historic suspensions. Whereas 'persecution' of followers of Fr. Urayai's ideology has hit the headlines of some national and diocesan Catholic periodicals (Kugwa 2004; Mashonganyika 2005), the increasing incidence of clergy persecution has received little attention both nationally and internationally. Following media attention to Fr. Urayai's LLCG movement in 2004, the response from the Catholic Diocese of Masvingo was immediate and decisive. With a view to stamping out and mitigating the spread of Fr. Urayai's theology, the diocese dismissed from active priestly ministry those believed to be its disseminators. Among them were the Vicar General, the Bishop's secretary, the Bishop's advisor and the priest in charge of the lay apostolate (Report to the Vatican 2015:3). According to interviews conducted with some of the suspended priests, the suspension was carried out on 12 October 2005 and targeted five active priests and two deacons. The period of the suspension, however, varied according to the guilt of each individual priest. Whereas those suspected of being the chief culprits and LLCG protagonists were given a ten-year ban, others believed to have simply jumped on the bandwagon were suspended for eight years (Report to the Vatican 2015:3).

What shocked the Christian populace in Zimbabwe regarding the reaction by the Diocese of Masvingo was not just the number of priests and the length of the suspensions, but rather the canonical procedures undertaken before and after the suspensions. According to the detailed Vatican Suspension Report, the first canonical step taken by the Local Ordinary of the Diocese of Masvingo was to demote and transfer all the accused priests to some rural peripheral parishes and to withdraw their vehicles for "safe keeping". The accused were to stay at their new mission stations with no parish of their own and no vehicle to use. For the demoted priests, this was more like a house arrest or 'spiritual detention' than a routine transfer (Report to the Vatican 2015:13). Following their demotion and abrupt transfers, the accused clergy were asked to provide written statements confirming or retracting their involvement with Fr. Urayai's prayer movement and theology. Thereafter, comprehensive late-night interviews took place at a remote parish (St Luke's Catholic Church) in Chivi District to determine the accused's involvement and participation in the LLCG. The nocturnal interviews began at 23:30 hours (11:30 p.m.) and continued for four hours. What worried the interviewees most was not the physical or psychological trauma that they faced on the night of the interviews, but rather

the composition of the incompetent panel that had been hand-picked to handle a case of such great magnitude. After the nocturnal interviews, all the accused were banned from attending any public church gathering in the diocese or receiving Holy Communion (Report to the Vatican 2015:13-15).

Having tried in vain several times to gain an audience with the Bishop, the accused priests were later summoned to the bishop's house on 11 October 2005, where they were issued their suspension letters and asked to surrender their prayer books or any remaining church property. Soon after their suspension, contrary to what the Bishop's inner circle expected, the suspended men of God collectively made arrangements to rent a house in Midlands province, where they came together for purposes of prayer and spiritual edification while awaiting the church's final decision on their fate (anonymous priest, interview, 20 October 2019). They hoped to make an appeal to the bishops of other dioceses, but their situation was further worsened by the collective response of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC), which declared categorically that since Fr. Urayai's LLCG was not a Catholic association, no baptized Catholic should associate with the new religious movement or uphold its theology. In their collective wisdom, the Catholic shepherds accused the LLCG of being out of conformity with the Catholic Church, practically and doctrinally (ZCBC Pastoral Statement 2005). However, undeterred by the bishops' statement, in 2015 the seven clergymen finally appealed for upkeep to both their Bishop and the Apostolic Nunciature in Zimbabwe. To their great disappointment, the appeal was rejected (Report to the Vatican 2015).

Meanwhile, the suspended clergy lived in abject poverty and survived on hand-outs. They faced ridicule and shame not befitting ecclesiastical officers ordained by the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. They even appealed directly to the Vatican, citing serious violations of fundamental human rights and freedoms in the handling of their case. In its response, the Holy See, whilst sympathizing with the situation and the condition of the suspended priests, requested that they first denounce any wrong theology that they upheld in order to return to true priestly and ecclesial communion (anonymous priest, interview, 15 October 2017).

In their most recent communication with their local ordinary, dated 4 April 2018, the accused priests emphasized that every person has the right to be tried within a reasonable time frame and by a tribunal capable of dispensing objective justice. They felt their case was long overdue for a proper hearing. For that reason, they requested that if the matter could not be handled and resolved by the Vatican, it should instead be placed before the relevant civil or ecclesiastical tribunal for adjudication. To date, they continue clinging resolutely to the principle of innocence until proven guilty, hoping that one day the rule of God would prevail over the rule of canon law (anonymous priest, interview, 10 August 2014).



Fr. Urayai's new and alternative theology is slowly but steadily infiltrating Zimbabwe's mainline churches and continuing to create heated controversy. The stigma associated with his theology has caused Christians in Zimbabwe either to follow it with heightened enthusiasm or to resent it deeply. For that reason, since the doctrine of the original sin has been such a bone of contention in Christian history and thought, perhaps it is critical to examine the same theology of the original sin in order to situate Fr. Urayai's new theology.

## 6. A critical appraisal of Fr. Urayai's theology

Unlike the concept of immortality of the soul, which is shared among different religions and cultures, the doctrine of original sin is essentially peculiar to the Christian faith. A quick scan of the history of Christian theology reveals that this doctrine is derived from Scripture, particularly Romans 5 (Porter 2001:22). Paul wrote, "Therefore as sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death, thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned" (Rom 5:12). The doctrine gained further support from two of the greatest theologians of Western Christianity, Augustine (ca. 354-430, perhaps the most influential Christian thinker after the apostle Paul) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1275), whom Catholics regard as 'Doctor of the Church'.

Both Catholics and Protestants have traced original sin to the guilt of Adam, which was subsequently passed by inheritance to Adam's descendants (Murphy 2013).<sup>7</sup> Accepted traditional mainstream Christian theology holds that evil resulted from Adam's transgression in Eden<sup>8</sup> (Gen 3:1-24). The sin that Adam and Eve committed did not just become the root of all evil (*radix mali*) but also made humanity a mass of perdition and a condemned crowd (*massa damnata*) who owes a debt of punishment to the most divine and supreme justice (*Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* 2005). Thus, for traditional theologians, there is no affinity between humanity and the fallen angels as Fr. Urayai has suggested, and his position would be considered heretical and a direct attack on traditional Catholic core teachings.

From the early Christian centuries through the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation, theologians such as Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 125-202), Origen (ca. 185-215), Augustine, Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), Thomas Aquinas, and Martin Luther (1483-1546), among others, have agreed on the core traditional teachings about original sin and the need for Christ's atonement (Murphy 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Murphy (2013) states that the doctrine of the original sin was developed in the second century.

<sup>8</sup> Accepted traditional theology also holds that the tempter must have already somehow been possessed by evil.

However, they have proposed somewhat different theories<sup>9</sup> about how human nature was damaged by the Adamic guilt and how sin is passed from generation to generation. Similarly, there are competing theories of atonement which seek to delineate how and why Christ (the new Adam) solved the problem of evil and original sin. Not every proposed theory was accepted; many were subjected to analysis, seriously debated and ultimately rejected. Nevertheless, a number of such theories, even though rejected as antithetical to accepted traditional Christian theology, left indelible marks on the face of Christian theology (Murphy 2013).

Augustine's formulation of the Adamic guilt was popular among Protestant reformers, such as Luther and John Calvin. Algermissen (1945:898) observed that all Christian creeds agree that humanity's first parents fell into sin through their own fault, based on their own free will, as a result of the devil's seductions. They believe that the first sin of Adam was passed on to the whole human race in the form of the consequence of original sin. The most fundamental differences exist with regard to the nature of the original sin.

As noted above, the concept of original sin is not found in non-Christian faith traditions, including African traditional religions and cultures. Other religions (particularly Islam) teach that a person is born in a state of purity, but that upbringing and the allure of worldly pleasures may corrupt him or her. Thus, for them, sin is not inherited. The doctrine is also rejected by some Restoration Movement Churches such as the Churches of Christ, Christian Churches and Disciples of Christ, among others. These, like Muslims and Latter-Day Saints, believe only in the sin for which men and women are personally and directly responsible. As noted by Williams (1927), considering the fact that other religions and Christian communities do not subscribe to the theory of original sin, the fact that Genesis 1-2 contains two versions of the creation story confirms the confusion and conclusion that neither is the real basis of the doctrine of original sin. Williams further argues that the two Genesis creation stories upon which traditional Christianity finds its anchorage are, therefore, portrayed simply as symbolic facades, clothing a conceptual structure which rests upon spiritual experience and introspection. Following the same argument, the unending discussion about original sin then leaves room for other alternative or perhaps more credible and laudable theories about the biblical sin of apostasy. Whilst Williams (1927) on the one hand suggests that no complete solution to the problem of the first sin or evil is possible, on the other hand, he is optimistic that at least religion ought to contain some indication of the direction in which the solution to the age-old paradox lies.

<sup>9</sup> Among the many theories put forward to explain the sacrificial act of Jesus were the ransom, satisfaction and moral influence theories. However, none of them attempted to make any logical link between humanity and the biblical fallen angels.

Alongside Fr. Urayai's theology of original sin, which seems to contradict traditional Christian theology, several other LLCG concepts also appear to deviate from orthodox Catholic teachings. These include the concept of the creation and pre-existence of souls, spiritism, re-incarnation and the doctrine of angels and archangels, among many others. Thus, in view of the fact that Fr. Urayai's new theology has not been celebrated in Christian history and thought, the same theology may, therefore, struggle to find a niche in Catholic theology today. However, there remains a lingering possibility that the Mother Church may have had an inadequate grasp of the most central Christian teaching on the topic of the original sin.

Kierkegaard (1813-1855) warned about two ways in which devotees are often fooled: they believe what isn't true and they refuse to believe what is true. Whilst Fr. Urayai's new theology of original sin may be viewed as confrontational and heretical, I maintain that Urayai has departed considerably from traditional theological views.

## 7. Conclusion

This article has examined the impact and implications of Fr. Urayai's theory of the original sin and unmasked the dangers posed to the church by deviant teaching and vice versa. Among other things, the article has established that Fr. Urayai's new theory of the original sin has resulted in persecutions and penalties imposed upon the upholders of his theology. In spite of the impact of his new theology, Fr. Urayai was, however, among the first African theologians to link humanity with the fallen angels recorded in the Scriptures. Caught between conscience and obedience, or "God versus Gavel" (Hamilton 2007), he was also among the first to induce African Christian theologians (in Zimbabwe in particular) to rethink and rationalize the theology of original sin, in a bid to shake off what might be considered irrelevant theology on the African Christian landscape. Whilst his theory may be useful in the unending debates and discussions on the character and ramifications of original sin, it is, however, more akin to non-canonical works that have for a long time remained in the periphery and boundaries of Christian theology. For that reason, his complementary theory of original sin has been labelled as antithetical to accepted traditional Christian theology. As a Catholic minister of religion, by articulating a liberal theory that is seemingly unbiblical and essentially incompatible with Christian doctrine, Fr. Urayai has minimized not just the *Code of Canon Law* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* but also the doctrine of papal infallibility. By fearlessly shaking off a Christian theological view that he considered obsolete for the 21st century, he has created a unique and perfect opportunity for Christians in Zimbabwe to observe how African Christianity handles Christian theology and the gospel, "outside the immediate spheres of the Western-oriented historical church-

es, particularly the Vatican” (Shorter 1998). Fr. Urayai’s theology also resulted in severe repercussions for his followers, particularly those who were clergymen. Mother Church does not tolerate deviations.

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