

All things hold **TOGETHER**

Holistic Theologies at the African Grassroots:
Selected essays by ML Daneel

AFRICAN INITIATIVES IN CHRISTIAN MISSION

This monographic series aims at publishing scholarly works of high merit and wide interest on various aspects of Christian missions in Africa. Close attention will be paid to the missionary genius and methods of African Christians, as well as to interpretations of Christianity.

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Holistic Theologies at the African Grassroots:
Selected essays by ML Daneel



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SERIES PREFACE

Literature on Christian mission in Africa has been biased towards the activity of Western-oriented mission. White missionaries, Western mission politics and the relationship of mission to European imperialism have dominated the discussion of African missions. Little or no attention has been paid by scholars to African initiatives in Christian mission, nor have missiological studies been made from the perspective of the so-called recipients. Yet the phenomenal growth of Christianity in Africa has occurred in the twentieth century, much of it after the independence of the continent from outside control. The series 'African Initiatives in Christian Mission' represents an attempt to address the reality that the spread of Christianity in Africa, its shape and character, has been the product of African Christians, both in the Mission Churches and the African Initiated/Independent Churches (AICS).¹

Mission Churches and AICs are the two primary ecclesial contexts in which African initiative has occurred. Mission Churches are those that have evolved directly from the outreach of Western denominations, and still represent the collegial traditions concerned. African Initiated Churches are churches begun by Africans in Africa primarily for Africans. AICs have consistently asserted their own leadership autonomy and religio-cultural contextuality free from the immediate control or influence of Western-oriented church leaders. These classificatory terms are somewhat misleading in that AICs are missionary churches par excellence, and the Mission Churches, by virtue of the missionary contributions of their members from the beginnings of their history, could be characterised as AICs. Nevertheless, the distinction between the two families of churches remains important for historical and sociological reasons.

This series seeks to overcome some of the limitations in previous studies of missions in Africa. Mission Churches have been analysed primarily as denominational institutions, with a focus on educational work, or else as participants in political processes such as nation building. Less attention has been paid to Mission Churches as social movements, as products of indigenous culture and leadership, or as creators of African theologies. In short, the indigenous mission dimension has been weak in many of these studies. Works on Mission Churches today tend to be generalised rather than gleaned

¹ Nomenclature varies on the two groups of African churches. 'Mission Churches' have also been called 'Historical or Established Churches'. The acronym AICs originally stood for 'African Independent Churches', a term which is still preferred by many scholars. In recent years the World Council of Churches has tended to use the term 'African Initiated Churches'. In this series, the various authors are free to use any of the three that they choose. But in the introduction to the series the editors generally refer to African Initiated Churches because the term resonates with the title 'African Initiatives in Christian Mission'.

from empirical enquiries. Thus the uniqueness and witness of these churches remains obscure. A predominantly male image of church history, moreover, has resulted in a paucity of literature on the contribution of women to church life and church expansion. The roles of black women pioneers in African churches are of particular interest to the editors of the series.

As regards the AICs, the tendency in most of the earlier studies has been to assess them in terms of reaction to Western mission, separatism or protest against oppressive colonialism. As a result, the missionary genius, missionary methods and missiological significance of the AICs have not been studied in depth. However, the contribution of the AICs to the growth and religio-cultural rootedness of Christianity in Africa is of vital importance for the development of a relevant mission theology in Africa. It is increasingly evident that in terms of ecclesiastic contextualisation, the AICs are not peripheral but belong to the mainstream of African Christianity.

The ideas behind 'African Initiatives in Christian Mission' originated in an interdisciplinary research project conceived by Prof Marthinus L. Daneel. With thirty years of empirical research on AICs in Zimbabwe, Daneel gathered a team of researchers from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Malawi and received a grant in 1994 from The Pew Charitable Trusts. Assisted by field workers, researchers set out to gather data on different facets of African initiative within various churches in southern Africa. Meeting periodically at the Dept of Missiology at the University of South Africa (Unisa), the researchers reported back on the work in progress and received feedback from other team members. The cooperative nature of the project was essential to its success, for the original team included members of Mission Churches and AICs, academics and practitioners, blacks and whites. The Research Institute for Theology and Religion at Unisa provided administrative support; and Prof Dana Robert participated as the representative of Boston University, the official host institution for the project.

Out of the project meetings emerged a decision to hold an international conference in 1997 on 'African Initiatives in Christian Mission in Southern Africa'. As well as the conference, the group decided to launch a publication series that would make the results of the project available to scholars and church people in Africa. Given the lack of research and its limitations as outlined above, the project participants decided to broaden the focus of the series beyond southern Africa and, by implication, beyond the core group of scholars. The participant scholars agreed to deal essentially with Christian mission: the outreach of Christian faith and life in the extension of Christ's good news beyond the boundaries of ignorance, cultures, poverty, suffering or whatever obstacles obscure a clear Christian witness in the world. Nevertheless, not all contributors are missiologists and their research methodologies include phenomenological, socio-anthropological, historical and distinctly non-theological approaches, or a combination of these. Yet the team feels that even if the joint venture,

against the background of diverse disciplines, runs the risk of controversy and overdiversity within the series, the overall outcome will be both challenging and enriching. The qualification 'African Initiative', too, is not subject to narrow definition. Black and white theologians, for instance, are contributors to this series. And despite the predominant concern with black Africa initiatives, a number of studies on white missionary endeavour will be included, particularly the attempts of black African scholars to interpret the legacy of white-controlled missions, their impact on African society and the attitudes and responses of African communities to such endeavour. In many respects, white and black participation in mission in Africa are two sides of the same coin, the implication being that study of one enhances understanding of the other.

On behalf of all participants in this joint research and publishing venture, we express our appreciation to our sponsors, the staff of Unisa's Research Institute for Theology and Religion, and Unisa Press; their support remains crucial in the realisation of the envisaged goals.

About this publication

This collection of thirteen essays, dealing mainly with the holistic, enacted theologies of the African Initiated Churches (AICs) in Zimbabwe and southern Africa, fits well into our series on African Initiatives. The essays complement African Christian Outreach (volume 7 of this series), even if the missiological implications for AIC outreach and church expansion in Africa are not consistently discussed in detail. Although individual essays focus on leadership, worship, sacraments, healing, interaction and dialogue with practitioners of African Traditional Religion (ATR), or earthcare, the narration as a whole portrays the richness of AIC life and faith. The composite picture contributes to an understanding of the attraction this form of inculturated Christianity holds for African people – an attraction that stimulates recruitment and rapid church expansion.

I am thankful that these essays are to appear together in book form at a time that a number of my major publications, including the series *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, *Fambidzano*, *Quest for Belonging*, *Guerilla Snuff*, *God of the Matopo Hills* and others, have gone out of print. This book may therefore be useful as a reader for students of African Christianity, as an introduction to a study of AICs and to scholars who are specifically interested in the interface between Christianity and ATR.

Over a 40-year period of studying, serving, and living among the AICs, there was always an undercurrent in my research of attempting to probe more deeply into the inscape of African religion – both Christian and traditional. This led to a narrative style of theologising, story-telling in fact, in which the emphasis increasingly shifted from a rationalised, theory-driven approach to a more

deliberately participatory, and therefore subjective attempt to speak and let the main characters speak and act for themselves. Such 'folk theologising' of necessity requires an open-ended approach insofar as one becomes aware of the transitional nature of the religious lives of the people one is writing about and as a result one feels less inclined to categorically label and judge them in terms of preconceived theological criteria.

Ultimately I felt privileged to write 'from inside' for and with the AICs and Traditionalists rather than attempting to address in the first place a Western academic audience. That such writing can be a precarious undertaking is borne out in the preface of *Guerilla Snuff*, a novel in which I attempt to portray the roles of religious leaders during the Zimbabwean liberation struggle:

In Mabwazhe's dream [in the dream of my adopted Shona forefather], high on the cliffs of Mt Rasa, on the rock face of Matonjeni [where the oracular voice of the African High-God can be heard], the story of liberation was writing me. At times it cast me out to suffer despair on the margin of both black and white worlds. Nomadic wandering without relief was part of the story, my story, until the book was complete.

Nevertheless, facing the challenges of an adventurous lifestyle and risk-taking during periods of political unrest and war, in an attempt to do continuous empirical research next to some activist obligations, proved to be richly rewarding. Perhaps the downside of such engagement lies in the curtailment of ability and time for story-telling. As regards the context of the essays in this volume, I am aware of serious limitations: of repetition, of arguments not worked out in full, and of hints of theological implications without in-depth substantiation or reflection. Yet the story of encounter lies between the pages: the rhythm of dancing feet punctuating Christ's good news in Africa, the baptismal cleansing of people in the flowing waters of 'Jordan', prophetic confrontation through the Holy Spirit of the destructive, brooding anger of the wizard, healing the barren earth by the soiled hands of religiously inspired tree-planters ... revealing stories that should touch the heart of the world church. It is in the bridge-building context, between the churches of Africa among themselves and between them and the world church, that I hope that these essays will obtain (find their) meaning.

I am deeply indebted to and wish to thank two former students of mine and now academic colleagues – Revd Gary van der Pol and Prof. Allan Anderson – for their assistance in the rendering of this publication. Gary took the lion's share in the selection of the essays, grouping them into thematic sections with appropriate headings and brief introductions to familiarise the reader with a variety of themes. He also systematised the footnotes and edited the text. I greatly appreciate his positive comments that place an 'old-timer's' work in the context of contemporary academic and church-historical developments. Somehow I suspect that when he refers to my 'adventurous multidisciplinary', he really has in mind a renegade who, from dancing with the Independents,

became dogmatically footloose, to the point of forgetting about disciplinary boundaries.

Allan Anderson's positive evaluation of my work among the AICs and their contribution towards an emergent African Theology is cause for gratitude. As one reaches the age of watching the afternoon sun, it is good to be reminded about the inspiration of yesteryear when the sharing of research insights about the AICs and subsequent joy of publication was the cause of bonded friendship in mission. Yes, I agree with Allan that we have tended in some ways to romanticise the AICs, possibly, if unintentionally, at the expense of the so-called Mission Churches. In some respects, too, we may have cast shadows on the AICs through our subjective interpretations of them. The admission of such limitations, however, does not detract from our meaningful and privileged participation in the emergence of these churches in relation to the world church.

By way of footnote, I wish to add that I can only take the criticism of African theologians in this field seriously to the extent that they themselves move beyond paying convenient lip-service to the importance of the AICs as the providers of 'building blocks' for African Theology and start devoting serious, in-depth attention to the very real and creatively enacted theology of these churches.

I am greatly indebted to the academic institutions that employed me and gave me unfailing support over many years as I explored the rich world of African religions, namely the Free University of Amsterdam (1964–1972), the University of South Africa (1981–1995) and Boston University – School of Theology (1996 to the present).

I dedicate these essays to the African churches that have carried me when I faltered; the men and women who preach Christ's good news from travel-torn Bibles; and the colour-clad fellow-worshippers who script their theology in song and dance under the African sky.

Marthinus L. Daneel

Series editor

Foreword

By Gary van der Pol

The title of Chinua Achebe's famous novel *Things Fall Apart* encapsulates one side of Africa: the continent's years of suffering under the power of colonialism, cultural upheaval, poverty, and disease. But the title of this book, *All Things Hold Together*, symbolises another important aspect of African reality. Taken together, the thirteen essays in this volume reveal an Africa of the grassroots that energetically confronts its challenges with a holistic approach to religion and life. The African Independent Churches (AICs) and traditional religionists whose stories appear in these pages illustrate an ability, through their faith, to bring together what has fallen apart.

In *All Things Hold Together*, Inus Daneel presents writings composed during nearly four decades of study, work, and worship alongside the Shona Independent Churches and traditional religionists of Zimbabwe. Not only has he sympathetically narrated their holistic theologies, but his own missiological method is strikingly holistic. Professor Daneel's approach has enabled him also to continually break barriers in order to bring things together. While books of collected essays run the risk of appearing scattered or lacking focus, I suggest that this collection is 'held together' by the way it exhibits Daneel's holistic methodology. This introduction begins by highlighting three salutary aspects of Daneel's holism that stand out in the following chapters.

First, Professor Daneel has fruitfully combined empirical observation with theological reflection, frequently crossing the boundaries of academic discipline and literary genre. Trained as a missiologist emphasising systematic theology, he is now best known for his careful 'thick description' of rural religious life. Throughout these chapters, Daneel integrates an anthropologist's eye for detail with a theologian's analytical mind. As he approaches the African grassroots, he refuses to separate doctrine from practice, or theology from action. Instead, his own style reflects the holism of the Africans themselves. For example, 'AIC Pneumatology and the Salvation of All Creation' (chapter 2) uses the AIC's evolving conception of the Holy Spirit as a framework in order to elucidate their healing, mission, and earthkeeping activities. In chapter 11, 'Exorcism as Combating Wizardry', and chapter 4, 'Fission Dynamics', Daneel critiques

contemporary Western theological evaluations of AIC exorcism practices and leadership patterns in light of his field work among the Shona.

That his holism extends to literary genre as well as academic interdisciplinarity is particularly revealed in Daneel's love of storytelling – a form especially appropriate for many of his topics. In this volume, chapter 6 is taken from his novel *Guerilla Snuff*, a work of historical fiction set during Zimbabwe's struggle for independence. Chapter 9, 'Life around the Pool', conveys the sacramental nature of AIC baptism through 'poetic-prose narration' which 'attempts to capture the gut-feeling of baptism ... more readily ... than the kind of rationalistic academic approach which minimises the emotive element.'¹

Second, Bishop Daneel (he is recognised as Bishop Moses by the Ndaza (Holy Cord) Zionists in recognition of his liberative earthkeeping ministry) has always carried out his scholarship in the context of strong relationships with his interlocutors. Refusing to be bound by Enlightenment academic standards that demand objective detachment from one's 'subjects', he has instead engaged in radical participant observation. He has repeatedly chosen to live among the AICs instead of a safer, more distant location in the ivory tower. In many ways, the Apostles and Zionists themselves are the ones for whom Daneel truly writes; in bringing the witness of their faith to a larger world, he appears most concerned to accurately represent his fellow believers in a way they could acknowledge. For example, in 'Liberative Ecumenism' (chapter 13), Daneel notes, 'One bishop, when he saw his own picture next to the historical sketch of his church in one of the books, sighed with relief and said: "Now I can die in peace because the world out there will know and recognize me."² Similarly, he presents 'AIC Pneumatology' 'in truly African fashion, in commemoration of two of the outstanding missionary spirits of our continent³ [who] now belong to the Christian cloud of witnesses'.⁴ Daneel's fusion of responsible, nuanced scholarship with committed relationship perhaps owes much to the mindset of his African comrades themselves, for whom 'church versus academy' would be a meaningless differentiation.

Third, as an activist Daneel has been a significant force in bringing together divided or estranged groups. Indeed, ecumenism is perhaps the strongest theme in his work, and in this book Daneel has used the trust that has been extended to him to promote unity and peaceful cooperation among a wide range of people. In terms of interchurch ecumenism, he initiated a process of reconciliation between AICs who had formerly anathematised each other, believing that 'they did not share the same Holy Spirit'.⁵ The final chapter, 'Liberative Ecumenism', tells this story. Daneel has also been instrumental in bringing recognition from Western-based Mission Churches to the AICs. For example, seminal articles such as 'Black Messianism', reprinted here as chapter 5, have helped to overturn unduly harsh mainline Protestant judgements of AICs.

Daneel's activist ecumenism extends to interreligious relations as well. In the 1980s and 1990s Daneel brought together formerly hostile traditionalists and AICs to work side by side in environmental restoration. Chapter 3, 'Earthkeeping in Missiological Perspective', provides a detailed analysis of this unique combination of inter-religious dialogue and cooperative mission. In fact, through the environmental mission efforts of rural Zimbabweans, ecumenism has come to include even the earth itself.

While Daneel's holistic approach (described above) has at times earned him a reputation as a maverick, it is likely that his work will wear well in a postmodern world. During his formative years, Western theology was still often dominated by systematic dissection, rationalistic evaluation, and objective detachment. Under that paradigm, Daneel's interdisciplinary, relational, and activist methods could be relegated to 'folk' theology instead of 'real' systematic theology. However, with early 21st-century eyes, one can easily re-cast Daneel's methodology as a kind of 'intuitive postmodernism' which is remarkably congruent with a number of positive developments in contemporary missiology and theology. This introduction concludes by selecting three particularly important ways Daneel's work has anticipated present trends.

First, within many Western academic disciplines, especially in the social sciences and humanities, there is increasing emphasis on interdisciplinarity and a call for cross-fertilisation between formerly isolated discourses. Missiology, as an essentially interdisciplinary field of study, has profited from this shift, contributing to its renaissance in the last twenty years (Verstraelen et al. 1995:410). For missiologists and theologians who embrace this shift, especially of the younger generation, Daneel's work provides a model of adventurous multidisciplinary that does not sacrifice careful empiricism.

Second, within many Western theological circles, there is a growing appreciation of narrative and practical theology, not just for oral cultures, but for all theologising. Influential scholars like Walter Bruggeman, Stanley Hauerwas, and Lesslie Newbigin have emphasised that the Judeo-Christian tradition is essentially a story, irreducible to philosophical principles or doctrinal abstractions. These and others have also argued for a reunion of academic theology with the life of the church. Daneel's emphasis on the value of enacted, lived-out AIC theologies that are 'danced and sung' echoes throughout the pages of this book. Far removed from the classrooms of Western seminaries, the AICs have modelled narrative, church-based, contextual theologies, and Daneel's description of their dynamism models the very emphases that many Western theologians are now advocating.

Finally, it is now commonplace among missiologists to acknowledge that Christianity is no longer a Western-dominated religion; in fact, its vital centre has migrated to places such as sub-Saharan Africa. Dana Robert summarises,

'As Christianity shifts southward, interpretations of Christianity by people in Latin America, Africa, and southern Asia are coming to the fore ... the future of world Christianity rests with the so-called "younger churches" and their daily struggles'(Robert 2000:53,56). Similarly, among historians of mission, there is increasing emphasis on Third World Christians' agency in the propagation, adoption, and contextualisation of the faith. 'Mission history' no longer chronicles only Western missionaries, but also brings non-Western church history to prominence in the story of the gospel's global growth. Professor Daneel's constant insistence that the AICs are missionary churches in their own right, instead of merely a reaction to Europeans, perfectly parallels these larger trends. When Daneel first began his work among rural AICs in Zimbabwe, they were seen by the larger Christian world as marginal, perhaps even post-Christian, curiosities. Now a strong case can be made that they have moved close to the heart of dynamic Christian faith.

Thus, I would argue that the work of Inus Daneel has had the good fortune to be ahead of its time, but not too far ahead. In the ways described above, Daneel has been one step ahead of mainstream Western theology. Now that many Western theologians have taken the next step, it is perhaps the right time to offer these essays to a larger public. It is in the hope of future usefulness to a new generation of missiologists, church historians, scholars of Africa, and Christian leaders that this volume is presented.

IN CHRIST ALL THINGS HOLD TOGETHER

Because of the interconnected nature of Daneel's work and the wide variety of settings in which these chapters were originally written, organising the material presented certain challenges. Many chapters could belong in two or even three sections. Frequently material from one chapter overlaps with another; sometimes a story is repeated in more than one chapter, but from a different angle. I suggest that these characteristics are similar to those of a good preacher who repeats a prominent theme or story in order to reinforce it, or like a song with a recurring theme. They are part and parcel of the holism discussed in the introduction. However, despite the lack of perfect, orderly fit, it is still possible to identify prominent themes in his work. This book is therefore divided into six sections, each concentrating on a particular aspect of the whole.

The theme of this first section, 'In Christ All Things Hold Together,' which is a quotation from Colossians 1:17, emphasises holism itself and the source of holism, that is, Christ. In chapter 3, 'Earthkeeping in Missiological Perspective', Daneel recounts how Colossians 1:17 became a rallying cry and the theological rationale for ZIRRCO (Zimbabwean Institute of Religious Research and Ecological Conservation), an ecumenical, earthkeeping movement in rural Zimbabwe. For the AICs, repair of the environment and reconciliation with religious opponents were inspired and empowered by Christ's role as sustainer of the universe. This chapter also explores the implications of ZIRRCO's work for environmental concern and theology in the broader world.

Working backwards in this section, chapter 2 illustrates the rootedness in theology of AIC holistic ministry. Daneel traces the way in which maturing conceptions of the Holy Spirit among the AICs have led to a broader and more zealous activism for the Kingdom of God. More than any other chapter, the material in chapter 2 can be found scattered throughout this volume. However, this chapter perhaps best places the development of AICs in Zimbabwe from the 1960s through the 1980s into a linear, chronological context that will greatly aid in reading the rest of this volume. In a sense, chapter 2 is a microcosm of the book.

Leading off this section, chapter 1 is an introduction to AICs in southern Africa. This chapter documents the massive statistical growth of the AICs, suggests useful typologies for classifying these churches, and chronicles the ecclesial influences that shaped their historical development. According to Daneel, while Western churches have had an impact on AICs, it is inappropriate to place them

under a Western-derived category such as 'Pentecostal'. Instead, indigenous Africa-centred appropriation of scriptural names for themselves has been the central locus of identity formation for the AICs. It is in recognition of this biblical affinity that each of this book's five sections has been named.

AICs: Historical Roots and Ecclesial Interconnections*

The interpretive clues presented in the chapters of this book are largely based on the self-interpretation of AIC members and on many years of my own participation in and observation of their worship and ceremonial life. Having always focused on the phenomenon in its local manifestations in Zimbabwe and South Africa, and having faced the complexities of formulating generalisations even for a single church, I am wary of continent-wide generalisations in a field which I have no pretence of overseeing in its totality. My approach coincides with the conviction that we need more in-depth case studies of an interdisciplinary nature (historical, anthropological, phenomenological, and theological) if we are to assess, fairly and accurately, the diverse identities of the AICs as they relate to African Christianity, the world church, and globalising processes. These chapters may well serve as illustrations of the relative significance of broadly conceived explanatory theories for the origins and growth of AICs when assessed in terms of specific local applicability.

In this introductory chapter I shall place the largely local focus of this book into a broader, continent-wide context. I attempt to draw an interpretive profile of some of the main developmental currents in the African Initiated Churches (also referred to as the African Independent Churches (AICs)) in the course of the twentieth century. The chapter begins with general observations about AIC growth rates, typologies, and the Christian nature of these movements. Next, I suggest that the historical roots of this phenomenon shed light on ecclesial interconnections and raises questions about the appropriateness of classifying the Spirit-type churches as 'Pentecostals'.

Growth of AICs

The significance of the AICs is evident in their spectacular growth over the course of the twentieth century.⁶ Barrett (1968:78–9) estimated the overall number of AICs in the 1960s to be between 5 000 and 6 000. At the growth rate indicated then, and in light of subsequent estimates, the total current number of AICs continent-wide could well range between 7 000 and 8 000. In

* This introductory chapter is excerpted and adapted from 'AICs in southern Africa: protest movements or missionary churches?', working paper, Currents in World Christianity Project, Cambridge University, UK, 2001.

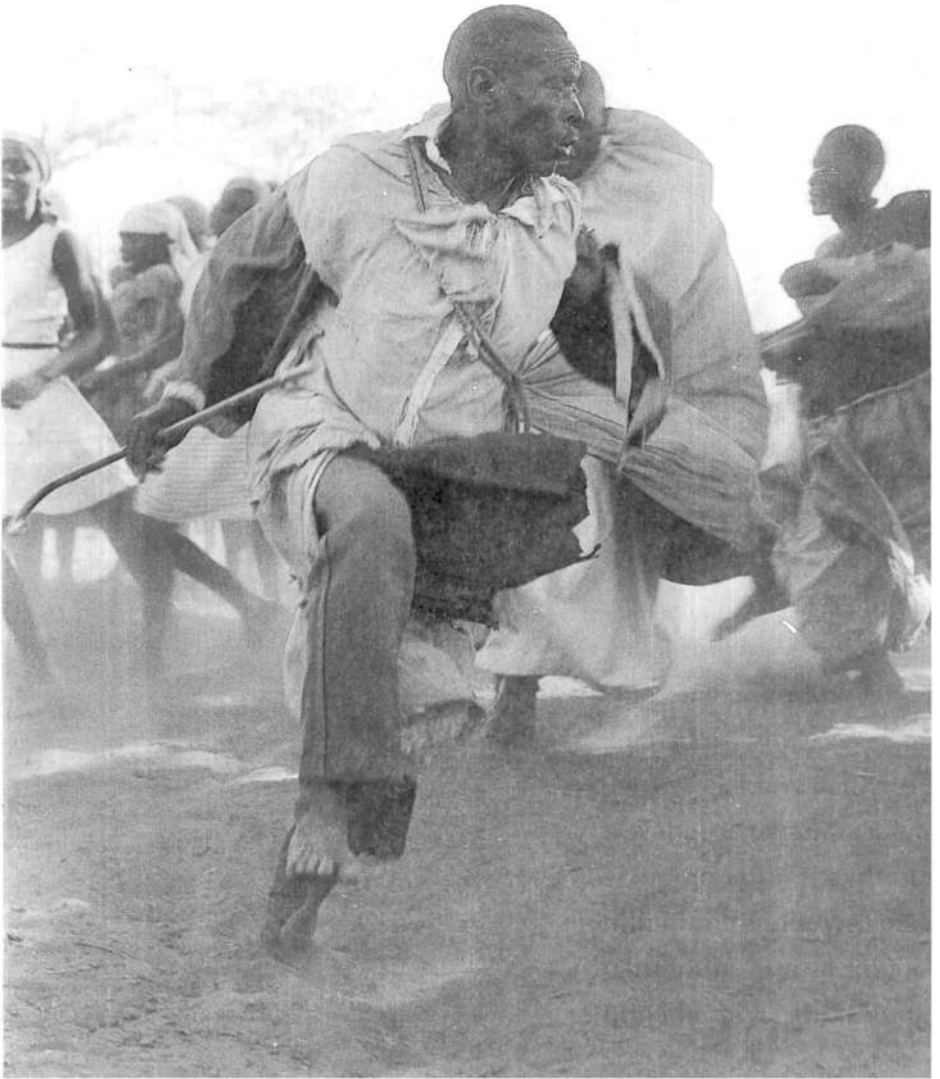


Plate 1: AIC theology scripted in song and dance... *Ndaza* Zionist bishop leads his followers in circle dance during Sunday service

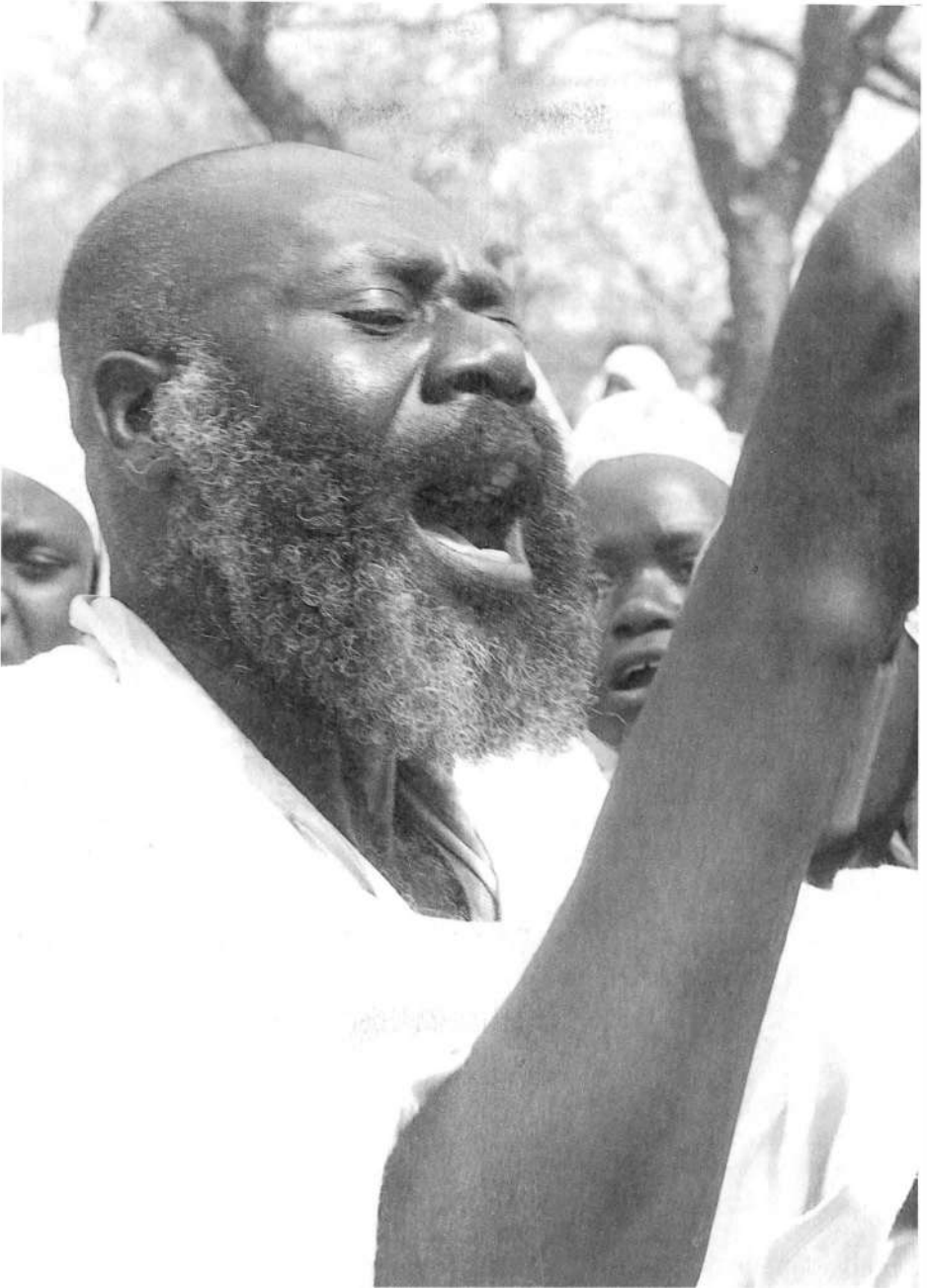


Plate 2: Apostolic lead singer leads thousands of Maranke Apostles in song during preparations for Paschal celebration

South Africa alone, statistics indicate a decline in the growth of major Western-oriented 'Mission Churches', in contrast with escalating growth rates of the AICs. Between 1940 and 1960, for instance, the Methodist Church (once the largest missionary agency in South Africa) has remained static at 12 per cent of the total black population, whereas membership of the AICs during the same period rose from 9.6 to 20 per cent of the black population (Daneel 1987:25). The 1991 official census estimated that fully 46 per cent of black South Africans belonged to AICs, and only 33 per cent to the so-called Mission or mainline churches, that is, the Dutch Reformed, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, and other churches that count additional white membership in South African and abroad. These figures underscore Anderson's assessment that 'significantly more people belong to those churches originating with African initiative than to those originating as "Western" churches' (Anderson 1993:78). Earlier surveys in Zimbabwe showed an approximate configuration of 50 per cent of African Christians belonging to the AICs (Daneel 1974:40). These figures are certainly not representative of all southern African countries. But the sheer weight in numbers and the sustained or escalating growth of these movements in the postcolonial situation suggest that the qualification 'African mainline churches' may be more appropriate as a common denominator than were the past discriminatory designations as 'separatist', 'sectarian', 'non-Christian' or 'post-Christian' movements.

Typology

Typologically the AICs distinguish themselves from a relatively small number of pre-Christian movements. These are the neopagan societies which, in reaction to the influence of Western culture, represent a reversion to traditional religion, and the Hebraic associations who worship the God of the Old Testament without attempting to achieve a specifically Christian position (Turner 1967; Daneel 1987:35ff). Broadly speaking, the AICs can be classified in three distinct groups: first, the Ethiopian type, or non-prophetic churches, which lay no claim to special manifestations of the Holy Spirit and whose patterns of worship resemble those of the Western Mission Churches from which they have originated. Second, the Spirit-type churches, mainly Zionist and Apostolic movements, share a special emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit, manifested in speaking in tongues, prophetic activities, and faith healing. In Zimbabwe these churches refer to themselves as *maKereke omweya* (churches of the Spirit), hence my preference for the designation 'Spirit-type', as distinct from Pentecostal churches. (The reasons for such distinction will be explained below.) In Nigeria the counterparts of the southern Spirit-type churches are variously called Aladura, Spiritual or prophet-healing churches. The so-called Messianic Church emerges as a third category when a Spirit-type leader achieves such prominence that he or she usurps Christ's mediating function, either wholly or in part. In reality few AIC



Plate 3: The drums of Zion guide dancing feet (top) and the young respond from an early age (bottom)

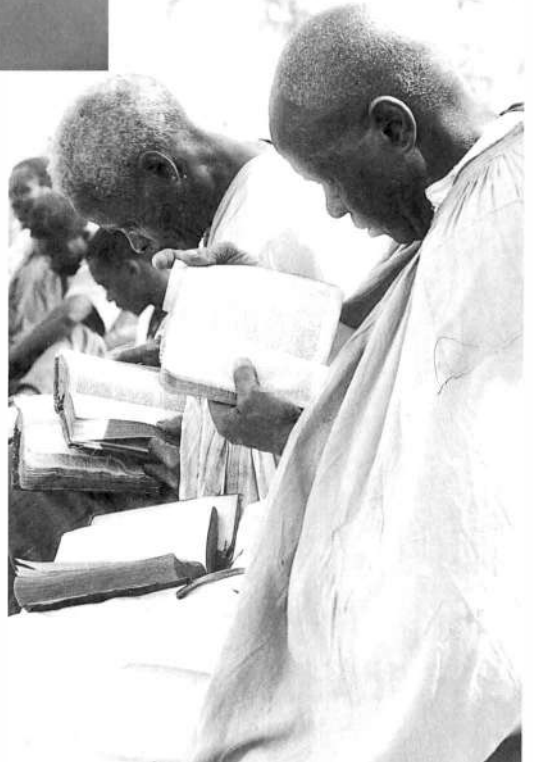
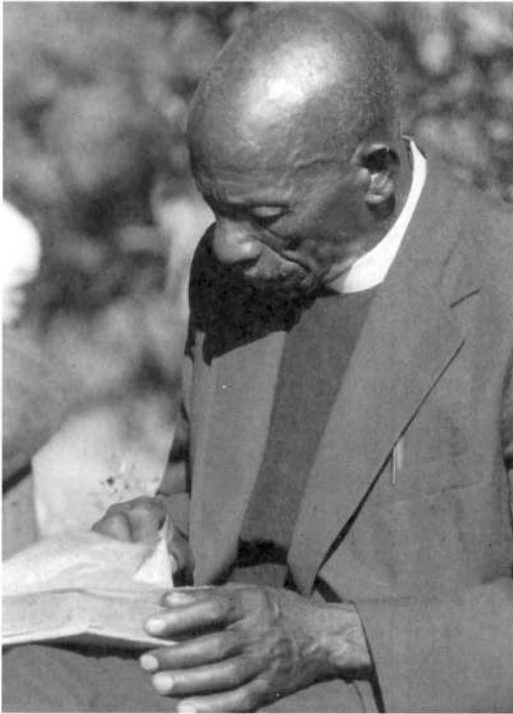


Plate 4: Revd Zubogo searches for the texts in his Bible that affirm the charter of his African Reformed Church (top). The centrality of Scriptures in AICs is in evidence during Zionist Sunday services where preaching coincides with Bible study (bottom)

leaders present themselves as substitute Black Christ figures. Those who do develop messianic traits are more appropriately characterised as 'iconic leaders' (Sundkler 1976:309–10; Daneel 1987:187) insofar as their leadership positively mirrors and concretises the person of Christ for their followers in the African context. In South Africa the best-known iconic leaders are Isaiah Shembe of the Nazarene Baptist Church and Enginas Lekganyane of the Zion Christian Church; and in Zimbabwe Samuel Mutendi, founder of an autonomous branch of the Zion Christian Church, and Johane Maranke of the African Apostolic Church of Johane Maranke. The leadership of these churches has already become the responsibility of the second and third generation male descendants of the deceased founder-leaders.

The AICs vary in size from a single family or extended family unit with only a few members to the mass movements of these iconic leaders, which in some instances count several million adherents. Whereas the Kimbanguist Church in the Congo has long been recognised as the largest AIC in all of Africa, with upwards of 10 million members, the Zion Christian Church of Lekganyane is currently recognised as the single largest and fastest-growing church in all of South Africa.

Despite the preponderance of men as founders and senior office-bearers in these churches, women comprise up to 80 per cent of their total adult membership. The Manyano or Ruwadzano women's associations are well known for their family care, Bible study, and evangelistic campaigns. Individual women often achieve prominence in AIC ranks as prophetesses and healers. But a number of women have founded their own AICs, such as Ma Nku's St John's Apostolic Faith Mission in Gauteng, Mai Chaza's City of God movement in Zimbabwe, and the churches of Alice Lenшина in Zambia and Miriam Ragot and Gaudencia Aoku in Kenya.

On account of limitations in the formulation of doctrines, the acceptance of polygamous marriages in the majority of AICs, the so-called misinterpretation of the work of the Holy Spirit or of salvation, and related problem areas, some theologians tend to question the Christian nature of these movements. However, despite some limitations (which in fact all churches in this world suffer from in one way or another, regardless of the degree of perfection achieved in written dogma, history, and theology), I have no hesitation in classifying the AICs of southern Africa as Christian Churches on the following grounds:

- The AICs by and large consider themselves churches of Jesus Christ. On account of their biblically based faith they claim membership equal to that of all other denominations known to them, in the universal church.
- They recognise the Bible as the Word of God and therefore as normative for all of church life. In some respects AIC biblical interpretation can be qualified as fragmented, literal, and/or fundamentalist, often as a result of limited

or nonexistent theological training opportunities for AIC leaders, but the inspirational, didactic, and ethical impact of Scriptures are unmistakable.

- The AICs generally believe in a triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The salvific work of Christ is understood holistically in the African context and is proclaimed/enacted as good news in a manner that qualifies the AICs essentially as missionary institutions.
- All the churches concerned celebrate the sacraments of baptism and holy communion.
- The AICs develop Bible-oriented ethical codes for Christian living, which also reflect contextualised traditional mores and customs. Church discipline is implemented at various congregational committee and church council levels.
- In the creation of communities that can be characterised as ‘havens of belonging’, the AICs cater to the existential needs of their members in a manner that convincingly and concretely portrays the love and service of an incarnate Christ.

The extent to which these characteristics apply to every AIC is of course open to debate and subject to some theological reservations. Yet I consider them sufficiently representative of the AICs to provide adequate justification for their inclusion in the family of Christian churches.

Historical roots and ecclesial interconnections

Biblically sanctioned charters

Two main factors determine the self-image of the AICs and their interpretation of the historical roots of their movements. Most obvious is their overriding concern for a direct link with the Bible and the early Christian church as the authenticating source of their existence. Then there is the knowledge and experience of those local mainline Mission Churches responsible for the introduction of Christianity in their part of the world, which enables them to define their roots in the more recent traditions of Christian history in Africa and abroad.

In a situation of intense denominational rivalry and a lengthy initial phase of non-recognition of the AICs by the Western Mission Churches, the need was aggravated in AIC ranks for a form of genuine and independent religious legitimation. This partly explains their preoccupation with the re-enactment of Scriptures or scriptural passages as if to safeguard their Christian identity from the critical interpretations of their so-called mainline counterparts. Theirs was, and still is, a quest for an authentic African mythical charter that establishes original closeness and ecclesial descent directly from Christ and the Bible, unlike that already claimed in the genealogies and apostolic successions of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and related Western churches.

The concern for a mythical charter can be gauged from the significance attributed to church names. In a sense the church's name itself is its charter, its historical positioning. Among the Ethiopian-type churches the designation 'First Ethiopian Church' (and variations of it) is a favourite, as it signals the direct link with the early Christian church via the Church of Ethiopia. The Bible text cited as the basis for this name is Psalms 68:31 (Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God). The 'correct interpretation' of this text validates the argument that the Ethiopian Church is the oldest and therefore most authentic of the continent. It was this charter that persuaded the labour migrant Isaiah Charles Chidembo to join the Ethiopian movement in South Africa and then to return home to establish the First Ethiopian Church in Zimbabwe (Daneel 1971:369). It was also the concern of Revd Zvobgo for the roots of a 'truly African church' that caused him to break away from the Dutch Reformed Church and form the African Reformed Church in Masvingo Province of Zimbabwe. Zvobgo was convinced by Moyana, one of the South African leaders of Ethiopianism, that the true church traces its origin back to the queen of Ethiopia who visited King Solomon to learn from his wisdom, and who brought back soil from the Holy Land to found her church (Aquina 1966:8). By aligning his African Reformed Church, historically and ideologically, with the earliest Christian developments in Africa, Zvobgo was dissociating himself from the more complex Western church history of the Dutch Reformed and other white-led Mission Churches then operating in the country. To him and many of his contemporaries in the newly founded AICs, the Western churches in Africa increasingly appeared to be latecomers, lacking the richness of 'true' Christianity as it originally came to Africa (Daneel 1971:381).

The Italo-Abyssinian War of 1935 gave momentum to the spread of an Ethiopian mythology in South Africa and neighbouring countries. According to Sundkler, 'the Abyssinian ideology of the Ethiopians ... is in essence an attempt to give the Independent Church an ancient Apostolic succession and a charter, linking their Church with the Bible' (Sundkler 1961:57-8). Linked with rising African nationalist aspirations, the Ethiopian ideology certainly added to the attraction of these movements as they claimed autonomous leadership and self-styled patterns of inculturation for themselves.

The Spirit-type churches, by contrast, establish the immediacy of the presence of the Holy Spirit and/or of Christ and his Apostles through the use of names such as Zion, Apostolic, Moriah, African Zionist, or African Apostolic. Names of church headquarters such as New Jerusalem, Zion City, Holy City, or City of God illustrate direct identification with the holy places in Scriptures and the need to replicate God's presence for the African situation as portrayed in the Bible. One of the most favoured texts used by Zionist leaders to assert God's presence in the 'holy cities' is Revelations 14:1 ('There was the lamb standing on Mt Zion; with him were 144,000 people who have his name and his Father's name

written on their foreheads'). In the Jerusalem or Mt Zion of Africa, the presence of Christ and his kingdom is mirrored in the iconic leader, surrounded by his or her followers as described in Revelations 14. Sundkler (1961:59) speaks of 'a more or less holy competition between the [Zionist] leaders for acquiring the most truly biblical name possible for their Churches. The name gives status to the church ... they secure for their Church a supernatural bond with those holy guarantees and they signify a charter showing the spiritual strength of the church.'

One need only consider the life histories of the Zionist forerunners in Zimbabwe to gauge the importance of a Bible-based charter as a key factor in the rapid expansion of Zionism. Prior to their recruitment in South Africa, Bishops Samuel Mutendi and Andreas Shoko were both deeply impressed by the Sotho Zionists' adherence to a 'proper biblical name'. To them, it evidently was a significant discovery that the name 'Dutch Reformed Church' – the Mission Church responsible for their earliest encounter with Christianity and for their education – could not be found in the Bible (Daneel 1971:345).

A good example of the desire to establish a direct link with the earliest Christian community in the Spirit-type churches is to be found in Bishop Mutendi's diagrammatic positioning of the Zionist church in the Christian family of churches. According to this diagram, the first group of Christians up to 400–500 AD belonged to the 'Zion Church'. Then the Apostles founded the Catholic Church as an extension of the Zion Church, the latter somehow having failed to perpetuate itself properly. Next to the Catholic Church, two important church branches emerged, the Ethiopian Church founded by the eunuch of Ethiopia; and the Greek 'Catholic' Church. These branches continued to exist up to 1900. The Anglo-Saxon and Calvinist Churches are also clearly indicated. Then, in 1923, the Zion Christian Church of Bishop Samuel Mutendi appears as the true extension of the early Zion Church. The other Zionist offshoots of Zimbabwe are presented as offshoots of the main Zion Christian Church. The exact relationship of the ZCC with the preceding churches apparently is less important than the fact that this church now appears as the genealogical continuation of the formerly discontinued Zion Church in the mainline of Christianity and therefore as a genuine representation of the ancient and authentic Christian community (Daneel 1971:345,492–3).

Whether, ultimately, an AIC charter evolves from an emphasis on identification with and re-enactment of portions of Scripture or the rewriting and interpretation of aspects of church history, the mythical immediacy and authenticating link with the historical Christ and his disciples remain of prime importance. Through ritual enactment and repeated proclamation, divine affirmation of the charter becomes entrenched and obtains canonical value for the church. In the maze of inter-ecclesial competition and earlier rejection of the AICs by the 'mainline' churches, a biblically sanctioned charter also provides a measure of leadership

autonomy and spiritual independence that places the integrity and freedom of innovative religious expression beyond dispute.

The Pentecostal connection?

Does the preoccupation of the AICs with their mythological roots override their recognition of their existential historical roots in the mainline Mission Churches to the extent that this rootedness is relativised or trivialised? Did the schisms that occurred in the early history of some of the AICs cause such a radical severance of ties with the Mission Churches concerned that it effectively eliminated all further interaction and influence of the originating 'mother' churches? And if this question is answered in the affirmative, are the implications that the Spirit-type churches, which constitute up to 80 per cent of all AICs in southern Africa,⁷ are in fact claiming to have Pentecostal roots and should therefore be regarded as 'African Pentecostals' or as 'Pentecostal-type' churches, as Anderson (1992:20-30, 1993:5f) and others are asserting?

To deal with these questions it is necessary briefly to consider the views of those observers who classify the Zionists and related AICs as Pentecostals. In his trail-blazing and follow-up studies on AICs in southern Africa, Sundkler (1961:48; 1976: 13-67) indicated that most of the Western-oriented Pentecostal and Zionist churches in the south had their roots in the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion (CCACZ) of John Alexander Dowie, in Illinois, and in the Pentecostal revival of Azusa Street. Daniel Bryant, who visited South Africa in 1904 on behalf of Dowie's CCACZ, baptised a large number of converts at Wakkerstroom in the south-eastern Transvaal, including P. L. le Roux, a former Dutch Reformed Church minister who eventually became a leading figure in the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM). Sundkler claimed that the Zionist converts of Le Roux and his fellow workers formed the nucleus from which the major South African churches emerged. Anderson (1992:21) concurs and classifies the South African Pentecostals in three categories: the Pentecostal Mission Churches, which originate from the predominantly white Pentecostal missions; the younger Pentecostal or Charismatic churches, founded and governed by blacks, referred to as 'independent African Pentecostal churches'; and the indigenous Pentecostal-type churches, that is, the Spirit-type AICs, which constitute the vast majority of 'African Pentecostals' (Anderson 1993:5). Anderson's justification for this classification lies in these churches sharing common historical, liturgical, and theological roots. Despite some striking differences, he contends that they 'all have a marked emphasis on the working of the Holy Spirit in the church with supernatural "gifts of the Spirit", especially healing, exorcism, speaking in tongues and prophesying'. Those factors distinguish them from other Christian groups and justify their inclusion under the generic category of 'African Pentecostal churches' (ibid:5-6).

In support of his classification, Anderson cites Walter Hollenweger (1972:149), who called the South African Zionists 'independent African Pentecostal churches', and Harvey Cox (1995:246), who asserted that the AICs are indeed 'the African expression of the worldwide pentecostal movement'. In an attempt to place African Pentecostalism in a global context Anderson refers to the statistical findings of Barrett (1996:25), namely that in 1996 the 'Pentecostal Charismatics' had reached a total membership of 480 million, which represents 27 per cent of the world's Christian population, more than the total number of Protestants and Anglicans combined. By 2025 Barrett expects the 'Pentecostal/Charismatics' to constitute 44 per cent of the Christian world total. Anderson (2001:83) concludes that 'this contemporary religious movement is the fastest growing section of Christianity and one of the most extraordinary religious phenomena in the world today'.

I am sceptical of Barrett's statistics on church growth patterns in global Christianity, for the simple reason that some of the internal or subtle factors conditioning growth remain obscure in such an exercise. In Africa, for instance, it would be misleading to juxtapose the membership figures of the so-called AIC Pentecostals with those of the Protestants, as Barrett does. There are millions of AIC Pentecostals who in terms of Christian outlook and church formation are as much Protestant as they are Pentecostal. In his support of the generalised views of Hollenweger, Cox, and Barrett, Anderson fails to mention this complication for the South African Pentecostals. One gets the impression that on account of Pentecostal similarities in worship between classical Western Pentecostals and the African Spirit-type churches, the latter are subtly if conveniently appropriated through a somewhat superficial classificatory exercise that inflates 'Pentecostal' membership and growth figures way beyond the impact that the missionary activity of the Western Pentecostal Mission Churches and independent African Pentecostal churches (Anderson's first two categories) could ever have had. For all his careful and appreciated distinctions between the classical Pentecostals and the Pentecostal-type AICs in Soshanguve, near Pretoria (the location in which he conducted an empirical research survey on local churches) Anderson himself presents statistical data in a manner that raises questions. By lumping all the so-called African Pentecostals together, it becomes possible to contrast the 41 per cent Pentecostal population in Soshanguve with the 33 per cent of the combined 'Mission Churches' and to state that the growth of African Pentecostalism and the AIC movement has been at the expense of the Mission Churches, which have declined drastically in relative membership (Anderson 1993:8–15).

Given the emphasis on the historical roots of the South African Zionists in the American Holiness movement and in early Pentecostal and CCACZ activities at the turn of the present century, Anderson's statistical analysis can easily give the misleading impression that the massive growth of the 'AIC Pentecostals'

is due somehow to Western-related Pentecostal fervour and influence rather than to the impact of the declining mainline Mission Churches. Anderson, however, does not produce conclusive evidence to this effect. On the contrary, he indicates that the Pentecostal Mission Churches have tended to be extremely paternalistic and have not yet integrated their own African 'daughter' churches. Neither do the Pentecostal Mission Churches or the independent Pentecostal churches consider the indigenous Pentecostal-type AICs genuinely 'saved' or 'born again' (Anderson 1993:6). There is therefore considerable distance in practice between the first two categories of Anderson's African Pentecostals and the third category, the Spirit-type AICs. If one considers, in addition, that the white-led Pentecostal mission membership in Soshanguve on its own represents only 6 per cent of the total township population compared with the 9.2 per cent of the Dutch Reformed and the 33 per cent Mission Church total (Anderson 1993:7, 8, 14), it is evident that in terms of numerical strength the Pentecostal Mission Churches could not have impacted African society or AIC growth to the same extent as the other 'mainline Mission Churches'.

Influence of the 'mainline Mission Churches'

I do not contest the assertion that the influence of the 'mainline Mission Churches' in southern Africa is on the wane. I would point out, however, that historically, spiritually, and theologically the AICs have been much more profoundly moulded by the mainline Protestant Mission Churches in the course of this century than the autonomous nature of today's AICs or the statistically manoeuvred 'Pentecostal connection' appears to allow for. The Zimbabwean AICs bear out this point quite clearly. There are several indicators that suggest a negligible connection between the local Spirit-type and Pentecostal churches:

The Pentecostal roots of Zionism in South Africa have received little acclaim among Zimbabwean Zionists and Apostles. In the thirty-five years I have participated in hundreds of ZCC, *Ndaza* Zionist, and Maranke Apostle Church services and ceremonies, I have never heard any spontaneous reference during sermons to Wakkerstroom, Le Roux's work, Dowie's CCACZ, or Azusa Street as a source of origination or inspiration. Real as these roots may have been in southern Africa earlier in this century, they were evidently not directly functional in Zimbabwe's Spirit-type church life. The closest link with classic Pentecostalism lay in the African Zionist church fathers in South Africa who had formed their own movements. So the *Ndaza* Zionists would trace their genealogy back to Bishop Mhlangu, whose Zion Apostolic Church of South Africa was an off-shoot of Le Roux's Zion Apostolic Church, while Mutendi's ZCC would refer to Edward of Basutoland, from whose Zion Apostolic Faith Mission Enginasi Lekganyane and Mutendi had broken away to form the ZCC (Daneel 1971:300). This background is honoured in all ZCC worship services through the introductory reference to 'the God of Enginasi [Lekganyane] and Samere [Mutendi]' in all prayers. Even

more prominent are the Zimbabwean forerunners of Zionism – *Ndaza* Bishops Masuka, Makamba, Mtisi, Shoko, and ZCC Bishop Mutendi – when it comes to reflection on the origin and identity of the local Zionist movement.

The Pentecostal-type Mission Churches in the central and south-eastern parts of Zimbabwe – that is, the Apostolic Faith Mission, Full Gospel Church, Church of Christ, and Assemblies of God – are relative latecomers. They have never developed as wide a scope of influence in African society through education and medical work as did the Dutch Reformed, Methodist, Congregational, Roman Catholic and Anglican Mission Churches between the 1920s and 1950s, the formative years of the AICs. As a result, the formation and growth of the AICs generally had little direct bearing on or interaction with the local Pentecostals. The Zionists of Masvingo Province, as I know them, claim no connection with the Pentecostals in the region other than the ecumenical ties developed with them in recent years through the auspices of *Fambidzano*.⁸ Moreover, despite distinct Pentecostal traits in worship and beliefs, none of the Shona Spirit-type churches, to my knowledge, deliberately characterise themselves as Pentecostal.⁹ They certainly did not develop their churches with a common awareness of belonging to a worldwide movement of *makereke oMweya* churches of the Spirit.

By way of contrast, the evidence reveals an undeniable rootedness of the AICs in mainline Mission Church traditions. First, since the middle 1960s I have frequently heard both *Ndaza* Zionist and ZCC preachers refer in sermons to the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) as 'our spiritual fathers and mothers' (*vaDutchi ndimai nababa vedu*), normally in the context of an appeal to fellow Zionists for improved spirituality and Christian discipleship. Reference to the DRC (now called Reformed Church of Zimbabwe (RCZ)) invariably included anecdotes on the life of the saintly Revd Andrew Louw, founder of the church's mission at Morgenster, or the lives of influential missionaries, such as the well-known Dr Tommy Steyn, Revds Henry and George Murray and their wives. Such sermons signalled an awareness of existential rootedness and spiritual nurturing in the Mission Church with which most of the Zionists have had one or other form of allegiance over the years. A similar trend was noticeable in the discussions I had with the *vaPostori* of Johane Maranke in the Mutare area in the east of Zimbabwe. Some Apostles proudly claimed that they were actually *maWisiri* ('Wesleyans', that is, Methodists), the Mission Church to which many of them, including their founder, Johane Maranke, and the nuclear leadership of his church, had formerly belonged. In a sense therefore it is appropriate to speak of the 'Reformed Zionists' in Masvingo Province and of the 'Methodist Apostles' in the Mutare area in the same way as the names of the Ethiopian-type churches denote their Mission Church descent, for example the African Methodist Church of Revd Nemapare, the African Reformed Church of Revd Zvobgo and the African Congregational Church of Revd Sengwayo. This observation does not detract from the conflicts, schisms, and individual defections from the Mission

Churches in the past. Complaints about the racist or superior attitudes of the white missionaries or, in the *vaPostori*, about the neglect in the Methodist Church of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit were frequently vented in the Spirit-type churches concerned. Nonetheless, as in any close interpersonal relationship, rootedness can integrate the contradictory attitudes of resentment, frustration and even antagonism with those of appreciation, affinity, and a sense of belonging.

Second, the dynamic of sustained interaction between the Dutch Reformed Church and the AICs in Masvingo Province was largely determined by the educational system. From the beginning of this century until Zimbabwean independence in 1980, the DRC controlled a vast number of rural schools throughout the region. At its peak this mission managed more than 600 schools. Consequently the vast majority of first-generation AIC members received their basic theological orientation in Reformed institutions where they received regular religious instruction and catechetical training, irrespective of whether they attained full church membership or not. And even in the event of secession or individual defection from this Mission Church, the ongoing attendance of thousands of AIC children and grandchildren in DRC schools contributed towards sustained interaction and reciprocal ties. Thus autonomous AIC leadership did not entail complete isolation or independence of the budding new movements from the originating Mission Church. Over the years thousands upon thousands of Zionist, Apostle, or Ethiopian-type scholars kept passing through DRC schools. A random sample survey on the correlation between AIC membership and education that I conducted in Gutu District in the 1960s indicated that no less than 83 per cent of the educated AIC adults had attended DRC-directed schools (Daneel 1974:37). Those AIC pupils who came into consideration for higher primary education invariably attended catechetical instruction and obtained DRC membership, even if for many of them affiliation to the Mission Church was only of a temporary nature.

Third, this religio-educational interface between Mission Church and AICs left its imprint on the AICs. Whatever Pentecostal traits emerged in the Spirit-type churches, their theological foundation and premises remain distinctly Calvinist-Protestant. For instance, the emphasis on the sinful nature of human beings, redemption solely through the grace and blood of Christ, the necessity of personal faith, and definite conversion as condition for personal salvation is noticeable. Self-interpretation and inculturation within the AICs have of course contributed towards internal change. The development of Zionist and Apostolic holy cities, for example, has its own biblical and African flavour. But the parallels between the models of these church headquarters and the Reformed mission stations as staging posts for missionary campaigns, as the seats of power where church councils exact discipline over errant church members, and (in the ZCC) as centres of control over schools and faith-healing hospitals are obvious

illustrations of the deeply imbedded influence of the Protestant heritage. Small wonder that the popular image and designation of the church as institution among the AICs became that of *chikoro* (school) and/or *hospitara* (hospital). Small wonder too, that Bishop Mutendi traced the roots of African Zionism not through classical or world Pentecostalism, but through the Reformed and Catholic traditions back to what he considered the original 'Zion Church'.

Fourth, compelling evidence of lasting DRC influence in the Spirit-type churches is to be found in an emergent AIC theology of religions at Zionist and Apostolic healing centres. Both church traditions share an explicit interest in African cosmology, unlike the local Pentecostal churches, whose faith-healing praxis is not similarly undergirded by penetrative interaction with African traditional religion. Admittedly the Zionist and Apostle prophetic healers have developed diagnostic and therapeutic practices that imply a daily and much more continuous dialogue and confrontation with the ancestral world, alien and vengeful spirits, and wizardry than any ministry ever developed by the DRC. In terms of carrying the gospel message into the inner world of African religion and incarnating it at the deepest levels of religious experience, the Spirit-type AICs have in fact moved way ahead of the DRC and most other mainline Mission Churches – a contribution that requires full acclaim. Nevertheless, the Reformed roots are in evidence in the emergent AIC *theologia religionum* in the confrontative, if sympathetic, dialogue of prophetic healers with their patients about ancestral demands as the cause of certain ailments, in the radical rejection of any form of ancestral veneration (*kupira mudzimu*) within the church, and the insistence on deliberate Christianising transformation of all traditional rituals to be incorporated into the church.

Fifth, I was always struck by the noticeable need of the DRC-related AICs to achieve some form of recognition from the 'mother Mission Church'. Despite the conflicts and disaffections of yesteryear, the AIC leaders sought the Mission's acceptance of their dignity, their innovative and evangelistic initiatives as church leaders, and full affirmation of their status as fellow disciples in Christ. Instead, and unfortunately, they were often treated by DRC officials, black and white, as Separatist offenders who posed a threat to the Mission Church or as wayward and syncretistic sects who had moved to the periphery of Christianity. I attribute the privileged position I have experienced among the Shona Independents since the mid-1960s to the notion that I somehow represented to them in person this sought-after recognition even though I had no official mandate and was in reality a lay theologian who was never employed by this church. Integral to the quest for recognition is the pervasive bondedness and loyalty of the AICs to the 'mother church', despite their fiercely independent nature. During crises, this trend would surface. Thus at the height of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle, it was Revd Zvobgo of the African Reformed Church and some *Ndaza* Zionist leaders who during *pungwe* (night vigil) meetings persuaded the

guerrilla fighters not to attack 'their' DRC mission station, Morgenster, on the holy mountain of Sekuru (grandfather) Louw. The AIC leaders would not have exposed themselves to the risk of antagonising the guerrilla fighters – many of whom were known for their repudiation of Christ as the white colonialists' God, for Bible-burning and the destruction of places of worship – had it not been for deep-seated feelings of bondedness with the Mission Church.

Provisional conclusions

Our discourse on the historic roots and ecclesial interconnections of the Shona AICs has revealed three interlinked sets of historical interpretation as regards their origin and by implication their relatedness to other churches. Psychologically, their mythological rooting in the early Christian church by way of a biblical charter is probably the most gratifying. Divine sanction liberates the AICs from the judgementalism of Mission Churches and from the complex history of Western Christendom. In so far as Pentecostal roots are recognised by the Spirit-type churches, they trace these back to the founding African church fathers rather than to classical Pentecostalism. There is little evidence that the latter represents a bridge to world Pentecostalism for them, or that they specifically seek to be classified as Pentecostals in the world church. Instead, their more immediate roots in the mainline Mission Churches – paradoxically in relation to their mythological roots – appear to function more directly at the existential level of church life. Historically, and in terms of their theological foundations, it may therefore be correct to interpret the AICs as a self-made and fully Africanised branch mainly of Western Protestantism, regionally reflecting Reformed, Methodist, Anglican or Lutheran characteristics in accordance with the earlier or still prevailing dominant Mission Church influence in the region. Similar trends are likely where AICs have emerged as a result of schism in or defections from the Roman Catholic Church. Comparatively, however, relatively few AICs have emerged from within the Roman Catholic tradition.¹⁰ The Pentecostal traits found in the Spirit-type churches can hardly be claimed to be the fruit of the missionary endeavour of Western Pentecostal churches, that is, the Apostolic Faith Mission, Full Gospel, Assemblies of God and others. Despite obvious parallels in worship and emphasis on the centrality of the Holy Spirit, the actual development of Zionist and Apostle prophetic healing and related Spirit-led inculturated ministries suggests that these have evolved more directly from internal and independent Bible interpretation in relation to the African needs and worldviews than from sustained nurturing or directives by Pentecostal missions.

Having based most of my argument on the Shona AICs, the question remains about the representative nature of this case study for southern Africa. I have little hesitation in suggesting that my findings may apply to most Zimbabwean AICs. Two of the Spirit-type churches I have referred to and have studied intensively

– the Maranke Apostles and the ZCC – constitute the largest AIC movements in the country. Taken together with all the other indigenous churches in the central and south-eastern regions of Zimbabwe, we are talking about millions of AIC adherents, a significant cross-section of the Spirit-type churches in southern Africa. Considering the pitfalls of sweeping generalisations about this phenomenon in Zimbabwe alone, I am admittedly loathe to introduce alternative classificatory categories for all South Africa. At most, I can surmise, on account of periodic contacts with outstanding AIC leaders in the Gauteng region, notably Bishops Ngada, Ntongana, Mofokeng, Dr Lydia August and others, that some of my observations may have broader application also in South Africa. It is my impression that here, too, the connection with classical Pentecostalism is incidental rather than focal. Bishop Ngada, for instance, prefers to call Spirit-type churches in the ecumenical movement he had founded 'African Spiritual Churches' rather than 'African Pentecostal Churches'. It is also likely that the South African AICs, against the backdrop of the bitter struggle against apartheid, will use typologies for themselves entirely free from such theologically loaded terms as Protestant or Pentecostal to avoid the connotation of being in any way appropriated by Western-oriented churches, irrespective of the formative influence these churches may have had in the past and patterns of interaction that may still prevail. As the AICs increasingly participate in local and global ecumenical movements, they will find their own niche and craft their own typologies in the context of the world church.

My attempt to distinguish and characterise the historical roots of a number of AICs achieves little more than illustrating the complex nature of our efforts to determine the correct locus of this phenomenon in relation to African and World Christianity. The AICs, as a richly varied phenomenon, elude the categorical distinctions and typologies we as Western academics somehow feel obliged to make. Our observations remain provisional until such time as local in-depth studies and the response of a representative number of AIC leaders provide the kind of data that warrant accurate generalisations. Theoretical considerations about the identities and contributions of this branch of African Christianity in the context of the global village should be weighed in the light of local studies as well as the self-interpretation of the AICs themselves, lest our subjective attempts to paint the global canvas fall short of African realities.

AIC Pneumatology and the Salvation of All Creation*

Ever since the beginning of this century AICs have taken root, proliferated and shown phenomenal growth throughout our continent, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (Barrett 1968, Daneel 1987, Ndiokwere 1985). Because many of these churches originated through a variety of schismatic processes within Western-oriented Mission Churches (either large-scale schisms or individual defections), they were often characterised negatively as 'separatist', 'parasitic', 'nativistic' or 'sectarian' movements (Turner 1967, Daneel 1987:28f). In Christian terms they were regarded either as non-Christian movements whose members should be approached as objects of mission or evangelism to be baptised or rebaptised into Mission Church folds or as marginally Christian because of their alleged syncretism and therefore did not properly belong to the mainstream of Christianity – the so-called mainline churches.

In contrast to these one-sidedly condemnatory views I wish to point out at the outset that despite obvious limitations (notably the lack of a written theology) and with the exception of those movements that deliberately move away from a Christian position (Turner 1967, Daneel 1987:35–6), I consider the AICs on the whole to be integral to the mainstream of Christianity. Most of them accept and apply scripture as literally and fundamentally normative. Belief in a triune God, the reign and closeness of a creator father, the saviourhood and mediation of Christ and the pervasive presence of an indwelling Holy Spirit, together with the regular or intermittent practice of the sacraments of baptism and holy communion, are common and key features of these churches (Daneel 1987:223f, 250f). Their enacted theology, moreover, represents a sensitive and innovative response to Africa's existential needs and must be seen as a central – if not *the* most important and authentic part – of African theology. Consistent with this view is the assertion that the AICs constitute an integral and legitimate part of the universal church and that their response to the gospel, their belief systems and missionary strategy are well worth regarding as integral to the worldwide evangelistic outreach of Christ's church.

Significantly, the vast majority of AICs in southern Africa at least, are of the prophetic type. They reveal definite Pentecostal traits, in that the Holy Spirit features prominently in their worship and daily activities. 'Jordan' or adult

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baptism is directly related to the conversion experience. Spirit-induced faith healing and exorcism become focal in Christian living. The Spirit, moreover, is believed to manifest itself through the visions, dreams, prophecies and/or glossolalia of the believers. It follows that numerical growth, geographical expansion and the development of church headquarters at the holy cities – the 'Zions', 'Moriahs' or 'Jeruselems' of Africa – are attributed directly to the activity of the Holy Spirit.

In this chapter, I shall briefly sketch the AIC experience of the working of the Holy Spirit. The admittedly limited pneumatological profile which emerges, both in its historical contextuality and in its relevance for an interpretation of salvation, may present a challenge and/or inspiration for the ongoing missionary task of the universal church.

In probing for the essentials of AIC pneumatology I am engaged as a fellow Independent from a Protestant (Dutch Reformed) background. In the course of many years of identification with and participation in the life of the Shona Independent Churches in Zimbabwe I have become part of that movement. Consequently my observations and insights are based mainly on the AICs of Zimbabwe. Special attention will be given to the two largest Spirit-type churches in that part of the world: Bishop Samuel Mutendi's ZCC and Apostle Johane Maranke's *uaPostori*. As these founder leaders have both passed away and been succeeded by their sons, I wish to present this chapter in truly African fashion, that is, in commemoration of two of the outstanding missionary spirits of our continent. By now they belong to the Christian cloud of witnesses, so their message to the world church is essentially the one they proclaimed so fervently to their followers: salvation in Christ and renewal through the Holy Spirit to the four corners of the earth!

The Holy Spirit as saviour of humankind

Before they founded their own churches, Bishop Mutendi and Apostle Johane Maranke were members of the Dutch Reformed and Methodist Churches respectively. Both were attracted by the Pentecostal features of the Independent Churches they came across (Daneel 1971:287f, 315f) in South Africa (Mutendi) and Zimbabwe (Maranke). As a result, the work of the Holy Spirit featured prominently in their campaigning activities right from the start. Their ministries were preceded by call-dreams, visions and spells of Spirit-possessed speaking in tongues, which they considered to be the visible manifestations of a missionary mandate received directly from God.

In the ZCC *Rungano* (the handbook of Mutendi's church) the leader's first important sermon in 1923 in the Bikita district is described:

He stood up and preached with great power from Luke 3, as he was told



Plate 5: ZCC Bishop Mutendi mobilises his followers for the coming missionary campaign by preaching about the great commission (Mtt 28: 19) at Zion City (top); and leading his forces into spiritual battle in uniformed and militant style (bottom)

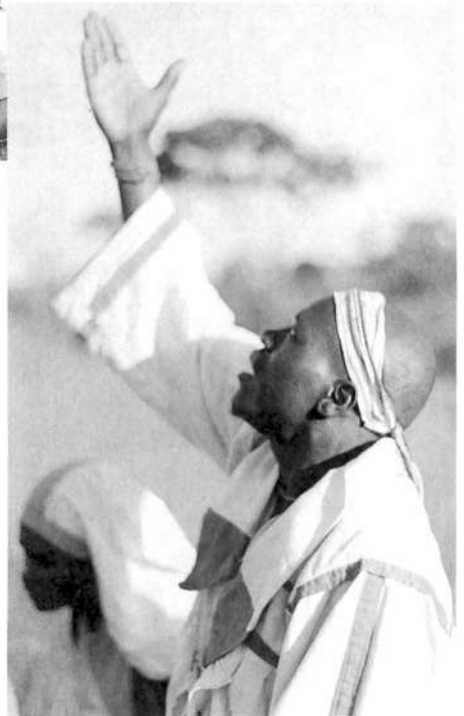
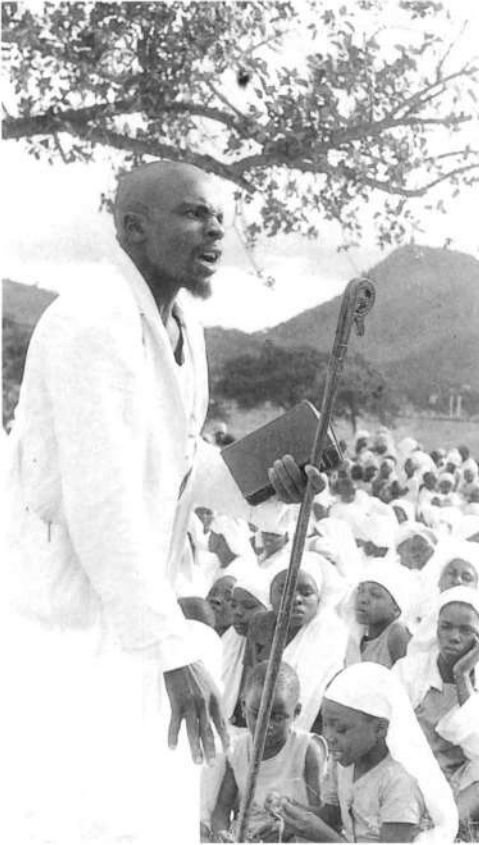


Plate 6: Apostolic preacher urges church members to submit to the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit (top). Apostolic prophet affirms presence of the healing and protective Holy Spirit as introduction to baptismal exorcism (bottom)

to do by the prophets ... Many believers were possessed by the Holy Spirit. The people present got frightened and some of them ran away, saying: 'That man arouses *zuitebwe* [vengeful spirits which destroy cattle] ... Some people laughed when they saw the others getting possessed by the Spirit ... From that day Mutendi never stopped preaching the Word of God, and he was greatly strengthened by that same Spirit' (*Rungano*:19, Daneel 1971:294).

Johane Maranke's visionary spells are recorded in his Umboo utsva hwava Postori (New Revelation of the Apostles). He is said to have received directly from God two books, which he could only understand through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and not through the education he had received at the European mission station. The contents of these books held the message of eternal life (*sadza risingaperi*: literally porridge, that is, food, of eternal life), and this message of salvation for human beings became focal in Johane's sermons. In his visions Johane saw himself as a Moses figure, leading his followers from many countries through hostile terrain and fires to a safe, heavenly destination. The host of followers was likened to the sand on the shores of Lake Nyasa in Malawi.

The ministries of these two prophetic leaders were characterised by awareness of the lostness and sinfulness of humanity and the urgent need for conversion and baptism as a means of avoiding God's judgement through entry into his kingdom. God himself was the one responsible for drawing people into his kingdom (John 6:44). The Holy Spirit was the main agent directing the judgement prophecies against sinners and unaware ministers in Mission Churches, the healing miracles in and around baptismal pools or rivers, and the building of new communities of the kingdom. The prominence of and dependence on the Spirit are clearly portrayed in the song that the *vaPostori* of Johane have sung ever since the inception of their church near Mutare in eastern Zimbabwe in 1932:

Everywhere we see people who do not know Christ, They are lost, that is
why they sin,
Our mighty God send the Holy Spirit to those who do not have it. God
bless Africa and hear our prayers; God bless it!
Come Holy Spirit, come Holy Spirit, come Holy Spirit! Bless us your
servants.

In both movements the Holy Spirit provides the full charter for the new church. All the laws and customs of the church, the innovations and deviations from Western Christianity are justified by attributing them directly to the inspiration and command of the Holy Spirit. In a sense therefore the Spirit legitimates the exodus from the religious house of slavery, the reign of the white Mission Churches. Salvation takes the form of black liberation from foreign institutions where the full benefit of the gifts of the Spirit was allegedly withheld from black converts. The reaction to missions during this first phase of new AIC formation finds its most poignant expression in the allegation that white Christianity

dropped the banner of the Holy Spirit and that this banner has now been picked up by Africans, the black, rejected (by whites) house of Ham. Consequently the black race of Africa – the neglected, the poor and the oppressed – are now the exalted and the elect; called by the Holy Spirit to spread the true message of salvation throughout the continent.

How was this to be achieved? Both leaders responded to the challenge by designing their churches as missionary institutions in which the sacrament of holy communion was to become the launching pad from which wave upon wave of Zionist and Apostolic missionaries was sent forth to preach the good news of salvation to their fellow Africans.

Bishop Mutendi developed his church headquarters as a 'holy city' where he conducted at least three Paschal celebrations annually, each culminating in holy communion. In preparation for the sacrament Mutendi used to preach about the great commission (Matthew 28:19), encouraging his followers to prepare themselves, like Christ's disciples, to 'go forth and make disciples of all the nations'. In his treatment of Matthew 28:19, Mutendi seldom dwelt on the meaning of the words, 'all the nations', and he rarely defined the object of missionary endeavour. Instead he gave the text a specific Zionist connotation by relating it to such texts as Isaiah 62:1: 'For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest.' In addition he would protest against the half-hearted response of some of his followers to the church's mission by citing Romans 11:25, which deals with the hardening of the Israelites' hearts (Daneel 1980:107).

Following the climactic celebration of holy communion, the ZCC teams of missionaries would set out on properly planned two- to three-week campaigns all over Zimbabwe and sometimes beyond its borders. Meanwhile, the congregation at Zion City engaged in daily intercession for the campaign. Upon the return of the emissaries, their reports on conversions, healings, establishment of new congregations, church growth, etc., were preached to the people at Zion City. Thus the entire church participated actively in a variety of ways in fulfilling its missionary mandate.

Johane Maranke, again, interpreted his calling as an apostle not in terms of building a holy city, but in setting a personal example – together with a band of fellow apostles – as an itinerant missionary. For just over thirty years, from the founding of his church in 1932 until his death in 1963, he travelled – on foot, by ox cart, then by bicycle, and ultimately in a Landrover – preaching the gospel, converting people and establishing new congregations. In his church the annual 'Pentecost' ceremony – in commemoration of the Holy Spirit's institution of the movement – became the pivot of spiritual renewal and missionary outreach. Here, too, the ritual of holy communion was the overriding statement on Christ's Saviourhood, triggering waves of Apostolic evangelising activity. Apart from

campaigns throughout Zimbabwe, Johane regularly travelled south as far as the Transvaal, westward to Botswana, east to Mozambique and north to Zambia, Malawi and way up into Zaire; overall he and his fellow preachers converted and baptised hundreds of thousands of people (Daneel 1971:327–31).

One of the remarkable features of Johane's ministry as a travelling missionary was that it was undertaken on the basis of an agrarian subsistence economy. Budding Apostolic congregations all over Zimbabwe and in the surrounding countries, consisting mainly of relatively poor peasant families in rural areas, supported – both economically and spiritually – what they considered to be the salvific movement of God's Spirit in their midst.

In both Mutendi's *ZCC History* and Johane's *New Revelation* salvation, conversion and baptism into the kingdom in preparation for eternal life (in the sense of the Holy Spirit drawing individual people to repentance) are set against a background of God's imminent judgement. This remains focal in Zionist and Apostolic evangelistic outreach up to this day. In the 1960s I accompanied some of the ZCC missionaries on their campaigns. Their appeal for individual conversion was direct and blunt. 'To those who do not believe God's word,' the Revd Ezekiah proclaimed, 'there will be gnashing of teeth on the day of judgement ... My friends, we have not come to put up a show or to show you how to dance, but to warn you of the coming danger ... Even love between people on this earth comes to an end. My friends, let us believe what the Bible says in order to be saved ... *Pindukai! Pindukai! Pindukai!* [Be converted].'

In Ezekiah's sermons the destructive power of God's judgement was always expressed in terms of the biblical deluge, the destroying sword of Ezekiel 33 or the pit of fire (*gomba romwoto*). Such destruction could only be avoided by seeking shelter in God's kingdom, symbolised in this existence by the Zionist Church and, in the African context, likened to a maize granary (*dura*). The real purpose of ZCC evangelisation, then, is to gather people into the *dura raMwari* (the granary of God), where they would be safe from eternal damnation. It is to this end that the missionary activities of Mutendi, the 'man of God,' and the mighty stir of the Holy Spirit are directed.

Ezekiah's elucidation of the granary concept highlighted the eschatological tension between the partly realised kingdom and the one yet to come. On the one hand there were the this-worldly benefits of church affiliation and of Zion City as a shelter against racial discrimination, illness, witchcraft, etc. On the other hand suffering (for example the persecution of Zionists) remains, 'for we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come' (Hebrews 13: 14). Ezekiah's frequent use of this text to emphasise the apocalyptic, futuristic character of God's kingdom meant that his campaigning sermons – like those of his fellow missionaries – centred more on the eschatological 'not yet' than on the 'already' of God's kingdom (Daneel 1980:112–3).

Here we have a significant indicator that AIC pneumatology, as perceived in the prophetic churches, is not confined to this-worldly salvation, despite strong trends in this direction (see below). Ever since the inception of the two churches under discussion, the good news of their missionary proclamation implicitly upheld the eschatological tension between an incarnate Christ present in the prophetic leader and the work of the Holy Spirit here and now, and the yet to be fulfilled eternal salvation of human beings.

The Spirit as healer and protector

Although the healing ministry of Christ featured strongly in the proclamation and practice of both Zionist and Apostolic churches from the outset, it was only in the 1940s and 1950s that there was a shift of the pneumatological focus. During this period faith-healing colonies were established at Mutendi's Zion City in Bikita and at the homesteads of several Apostolic healers in the vicinity of Johane's headquarters in the Maranke chiefdom. In both instances, the dwindling of Mission Church influence, the powerful drive towards genuine contextualisation of church practice and the amplification and diversification of the main leader's prophetic task through the activities of a host of subordinate prophetic healers operating daily in the healing colonies contributed to change. Church life started to revolve to a large extent around faith healing. Healing interpreted in its widest sense (that is, not only of physical maladies, but also of the 'illness' of oppression, racial discrimination, lack of job opportunities, conflicts between spouses, family members, factions, etc.) became the most potent recruitment instrument in these churches.

Healing and protection against evil forces now manifested more than anything else the pervasive presence of the powerful Spirit of God. Speaking in tongues became the prelude to all prophetic diagnostic sessions, during which the Holy Spirit would reveal to the prophet the cause of the patient's illness. All symbols used during healing rituals, such as holy water, paper, staffs and holy cords, symbolised the power of the Holy Spirit over all destructive forces. 'Jordan' baptisms increasingly became purificatory, healing and exorcist sessions, during which the power of the Spirit to expel all evil was persuasively evident. Witness preaching about successful healing became focal, and in Mutendi's case Zion City started to represent an African Jerusalem in which the triumphal reign of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, permeated every activity. In a sense the Holy Spirit had turned the Black Zion of Africa into a haven for the afflicted, the lost, the poor, the widows, orphans and social misfits.

Increasingly the liturgy of these prophetic churches reflected their preoccupation with healing. The very songs sung during daily prayer, Bible reading and healing sessions challenged all comers to consider God's act of transforming human brokenness into wholeness. At Zion City one frequently hears the following words, sung jubilantly:

Come and see what Jesus does,
Come and see what Moyo [Mutendi] here performs.
Come from the East and look
You from the West, come and observe what Zion does. You who are sick,
to Zion for treatment come!
Come and see!
You epileptics, come and be healed,
Come and see what Jesus does.
The other day we were with him
Last night we were in his sight
Last year we were with him
Even today he's with us
Come and see what Zion does!

A close scrutiny of the diagnosis and therapy of prophetic healers reveals parallels with and deviations from traditional divination and healing practices. It is at this level, so crucially important to healer and patient, that there is continual dialogue between contextualised Christian and traditional African worldviews. Here an intuitive and unwritten, yet very real African theology takes shape. Here, too, AIC pneumatology finds its existentially most meaningful expression.

Diagnosis: All prophetic consultations start with prayer and speaking in tongues, to recognise and establish in the mind of the patient(s) the presence of the Holy Spirit as the source of revelation. Yet to the casual observer the prophet's obvious concern – much like that of the *nganga* (traditional doctor) – with the personal causation of illness (be it ancestral spirits, vengeful spirits or witchcraft) appears to be sufficient evidence of a return to the old order and a warning against syncretism. Significantly, however, the prophet claims an entirely different source for his extra perception, namely the Holy Spirit of the Bible, as opposed to the *nganga* who relies on divinatory slabs (*hakata*), ancestral or *shavi* (alien) spirits for divination. This does not mean that all prophetic claims in the name of the Holy Spirit are valid or genuine. But the prophetic insistence on the direct involvement of the Holy Spirit reflects an important departure from traditional divination. For prophetic diagnosis, unlike traditional divination, is not aimed at satisfying the demands of the afflicting spirits. Instead, through revelations inspired by the Christian God, the prophet seeks to take the thought world and experience of the patient seriously and to introduce, at an existentially important level, the healing and salvific power of the Christian God.

A sure sign of the Christian prophet's more critical approach, compared with that of the *nganga*, is his general qualification of the afflicting spirit, once it has been identified in terms of traditional conflict patterns, as a demon or evil spirit which must be opposed. This is a far cry from the early observations of Sundkler (1961:250), who suggested that in Zulu Zionism in South Africa the inspiring Angel or Spirit visiting the prophet-healer was in reality the ancestral

spirit itself; also the statements of Oosthuizen (1968:120), who saw prophetic concern with the spirit world as a reversion to ancestor domination at the expense of genuine Christianity. To the Shona Zionist and Apostolic prophet, however, the work of the Holy Spirit excludes any form of ancestor worship or veneration. Compromise solutions are prescribed only in family conflicts when patients are pressurised by non-Christian relatives to produce sacrificial beasts to appease afflicting spirits with legitimate claims in terms of customary law. In such instances the threatening spirit is exorcised by the prophet-healer in the church context, while traditionalist relatives conduct an appeasing ancestral ritual on their own. Thus the liberating power of the Holy Spirit is ritually acknowledged and family conflicts are resolved in order to create the best possible circumstance for successful therapy.

Therapy: After the diagnosis of illness, the similarity between *nganga* and prophetic activity ceases. Both trace the origin of disease to a disturbed society. Both recognise the disruptive effect of evil powers unleashed in interhuman relations. But they ward off these powers differently. While the *nganga* seeks a solution that accedes to the conditions of the spirits, prophetic therapy is based on belief in the liberating power of the Christian God, particularly the Holy Spirit, which surpasses all other powers and is consequently capable of offering protection against them.

In an attempt to restore disrupted social relations the *nganga* advocates ancestor veneration in the case of neglected ancestors, and the expulsion of evil witchcraft or vengeful *ngozi* spirits through magical rites. To the Zionist and Apostolic prophet the ancestral claim to sacrificial veneration is inadmissible on biblical grounds. Once identified (as an ancestral, alien or witchcraft spirit), the afflicting agent is qualified by the healer-prophet as a demon or *mweya yakaipa* (evil spirit). In true Christian tradition the prophet prescribes only one solution: exorcism of the demon in the name of the triune God! This is done by means of whichever one of a variety of dramatic exorcist rituals is applicable. Sometimes the spirit is virtually 'drowned' in Jordan water; or it may be tied down with holy cords; or chased away by condemnatory curses. All such activity is designed to vividly demonstrate the Holy Spirit's triumphal power over evil. Even where a compromise solution is found to satisfy non-Christian relatives, the overriding aim of prophetic therapy remains the incorporation of the patient, or preferably the entire family, into the 'new community' of Zion or the Apostles, which in terms of the healer's convictions offers the best prospects of physical and spiritual security and wellbeing.

The extent to which therapeutic treatment of this nature enhances the image of the church as a healing and more specifically as a protective institution is clearly reflected in the observation of Elias Bope, a young epileptic who was treated for many years in Mutendi's Zion City:

My cousin and a vengeful [*ngozi*] spirit are conspiring to cause my downfall. I was carried here in a totally debilitated state. That same day I was baptised as a protection against the *ngozi*. The baptismal water [of Jordan] was blessed with prayer beforehand to make it more potent for the *ngozi*'s expulsion. At present I drink the hallowed water regularly and undergo the laying on of hands daily. Sometimes during fits of possession [presumably epileptic seizures] Bishop Mutendi treats me with his holy staff, which contains great power. This power [of the Holy Spirit] is from on high. *Here at Moriah I am protected against the ngozi spirit*, and for the time being I remain here, because I am shielded from the destructive attempts of my cousin (Daneel 1983a:3).

The question is whether this shift of focus in AIC pneumatology does not lead to a one-sided and limited understanding of salvation. It stands to reason that in the prophetic healing colonies salvation can easily be identified with healing, as it includes the restoration of harmony in interpersonal relations, as well as physical and material wellbeing, in a society marked by conflict, suffering and deprivation. In theological terms this tendency can be described as an overemphasis on this-worldly progress, on a realised eschatology. God's kingdom must take on concrete form here and now! The Spirit saves and uplifts humankind in this existence through his prophets, the totality of whose activities is a sure sign of God's blessing on his African Zion or apostles.

Several theologians have criticised this trend in the AICs. Mention is often made of a secularistic or materialistic distortion of eschatology. Oosthuizen (1968:96), for example, maintained that in all 'nativistic' religious movements (which would include the Shona prophetic churches) the objective is material wellbeing – an Africanised utopia in which Christ plays no role and where the black messiah effects health, fertility and material progress for his disciples. The profoundly felt need for liberation from physical and social suffering makes the message of a future salvation a stumbling block. Full salvation must be available now. Consequently, according to M. L. Martin (1964:158), the prophetic quest is for healing rather than redemption. In this version of salvation the eschatological tension between the 'already' and 'not yet' of God's kingdom lapses. Because the future kingdom is to be taken by force – as Martin and Oosthuizen (1964:160, 1968:97) put it, there is a 'seizing' and a 'snatching' of the future – the prospect of eternal life and the hope of Christ's second coming is lost.

In my view, however, empirical reality does not warrant such a harsh judgement. The manifestly heavy emphasis on Spirit-inspired realisation of God's kingdom in this existence, in the case of the Shona Zionists and Apostles, does not lead to a so-called snatching of the future. The shift of pneumatological focus resulting from the Zionist and Apostolic preoccupation with healing and protection is not absolute. One should rather speak of an extended, more comprehensive and holistic interpretation of salvation, which at no point excludes the kind of conversion or missionary proclamation described above. The themes of a

futuristic kingdom and ultimate eternal salvation for individual beings keep recurring in the Zionist and Apostolic sermons preached in their holy cities and healing colonies. Pneumatologically, the work of the Holy Spirit comprises eternal salvation for a redeemed humanity and a concretely experienced wholeness and wellbeing in this existence for those who place themselves in faith under his healing care. Hence the good news of eternal salvation is not superseded, but acquires concrete and understandable contours through healing in this troubled and broken existence.

The Spirit of justice and liberation

In the prophetic movements the activity of the Holy Spirit has never been conceived of as restricted to spiritual matters or healing. At an early stage Bishop Mutendi entered the political arena by opposing the colonial administration on educational, land and religious issues, for which he was detained several times. To his followers he became a Spirit-led Moses figure, champion of the oppressed. Like Shembe of the Zulu Nazarites in South Africa, Mutendi drew many chiefs and headmen into his church. Through regular advice to these tribal dignitaries and the appointment of Zionist prophets in their tribal courts, the Zionist bishop managed to secure considerable influence in tribal political affairs. In the 1950s and 1960s many of the Zionist chiefs openly stated that the power of the Holy Spirit, represented by supportive prophets, enabled them to maintain some form of just rule and balance amid the complex and conflicting demands of white colonial rule and the rising tide of black nationalism. They also considered the role of prophetic court counsellors to be crucial for fair trials both in the administration of customary law and in harmonising these laws with Christian principles in a changing situation.

As a descendant of the royal Rozvi tribe, Mutendi, in the context of his impressive 'Zion City', appealed to the sentiments of tribal leaders who had not forgotten the past glories of the once-powerful Rozvi dynasty. Mutendi represented the supra-tribal unity that had once been the backbone of a great nation. In addition to Zionist religious connotations, his popular title ('man of God') had distinct political overtones to many of his followers. Zion City became a safe spiritual anchorage for tribal dignitaries, a place where they could discuss the pressing issues of boundary disputes, unruly tribesmen and even intimidation by extremist politicians. Here a message of liberation could be evolved. It was not a message that promised easy solutions or revolutionary change in the political constellation, as if sudden freedom from bondage would be ushered in by divine power. It meant the presence of Mwari in his Spirit, which could liberate chiefs and headmen from fear and anxiety, enabling them to deal more effectively with the issues confronting them.

Just as Christ failed to introduce a messianic order that would satisfy Jewish nationalistic aspirations, Mutendi did not promise another Rozvi confederation or a Zionist empire that would overthrow white rule. But throughout his life he set an example to the chiefs of how one could realistically cooperate with the rulers of the day without loss of dignity and how one could fearlessly resist unjust legislation or action, even if it did not always bring about the desired results. In a sense his Zion City became to the chiefs a halfway house between white local government and African nationalistic factions, a refuge where they could participate in the subtle resistance of their people to the imposition of foreign influence without entirely jeopardising their position in relation to the white administration on which they depended financially. As Isaiah Shembe did for his 'Israelites' in South Africa, Bishop Mutendi presented his Zionist followers not with an indifferent, remote deity, but one who, through the power of the Spirit, manifested his involvement in the totality of life (politics in particular) as 'a God who walks on feet and who heals with his hands, and who can be known by men, as God who loves and has compassion' (Sundkler 1961:278).

Possibly the most dramatic episode of Spirit involvement in Mutendi's resistance to colonial rule was the Rozvi-Duma boundary dispute in Bikita, which came to a head in 1965. Mutendi's Zion City itself was situated in the disputed area and he organised the Rozvi chief's opposition to the district commissioner's decision, which favoured a rival Duma chief's claim. Ultimately, when all else had failed, Mutendi sponsored and initiated legal action in the high court against such formidable colonial opponents as the Bikita district commissioner, the provincial commissioner of the then Victoria Province and the Minister of Internal Affairs. The outcome was predictable. Mutendi had become too prominent an adversary to the administration, and the state machinery was set in motion to destroy the Rozvi bishop's power base.

I lived in Zion City at the time. The spiritual mobilisation of the entire community during the months of uncertainty and stress while the 'man of God' did battle was a moving experience. Sermons became more intense. Regular prayer meetings were held on behalf of those involved in the struggle, and in a host of prophecies the Holy Spirit was considered to give guidance on future action that would lead to justice and liberation. But liberation in this instance did not mean the preservation of Zion City. Liberation meant suffering and loss. Liberation to the 'man of God' implied not compromising, overcoming fear, and at the cost of the most prized achievement of a lifetime – a 'holy city' symbolising African achievement – standing up and protesting against impossible odds.

As the Zionist chiefs and headmen rallied round their leader during a Paschal celebration before the court case, one of them, Chief Ndanga, preached as follows:

Let those with the strong hearts stand up and stand by his [Mutendi's] side.
Let this man build our hearts so that we will be humble people. Africa has

started to listen to the voice of Mutendi ... Allow this chief sent by God to examine your hearts. Praise him because he works through the spirit of Jesus!

Bishop Mutendi himself on the same occasion called on his followers to be courageous:

Fear not and do not be offended when people accuse you falsely. He who does not stay amongst the proud is blessed. The police and the prophets [i.e., the administration and the church] should first consider the word of God before setting about their tasks, if they want to perform well. In Zechariah 8 God says: 'I am back in Zion, the City of Jerusalem, therefore it will not be destroyed any longer.' We take these words to support us. This Jerusalem of ours will not be destroyed! Zion is small but strong. It will never die because it belongs to nobody but God.

These were prophetic words, inspired by the Spirit of liberation. Only as the message was translated into the ensuing events at Zion City did its real significance become evident. For it was Mutendi himself who, in the aftermath of bitter defeat, was liberated by the Spirit he propagated from bitterness, indecision and even from his ties with the settlement in Bikita. His vigour in leading a large contingent of Rozvi kinsmen and Zionist followers to settle in a remote area in northern Gokwe, far away from his original sphere of influence, gave real meaning to his publicly declared conviction that Zion would not die, because it belonged to God. Like Moses of old, the ageing bishop arranged the exodus of his people. In the course of only a few years another Zion City was erected in the far north of Zimbabwe and the Zion Christian Church, instead of fizzling out, showed an increased growth rate.

In the same period in the late sixties, the Apostles of Maranke voiced the mood of black nationalism in even more aggressive anti-white statements than the Zionists. Here the interjections during sermons were not 'Peace in Zion' or 'Joy be with you all', but, challengingly and stridently, 'Peace to us Africans!' and even in some cases 'Peace to Africans only!' Feelings of naked resentment surfaced in the repeated accusations that the white race had killed Jesus and that the whites, in their oppression of the blacks, had deliberately repressed the message and benefits of the Holy Spirit.

At the Pentecostal festivities of the *vaPostori* near Mutare in April 1966, the following messages were preached:

The true witnesses of Mwari were buried by the Europeans, until God gave them the task of witnessing to us, the Apostles of Africa. They killed Jesus and the early apostles because they wanted to eliminate the Church of the Holy Spirit. So God decided to send the Church of the Holy Spirit to our race in Africa. Peace to Africa!

The houses of Shem and Japheth were blessed long ago. Now *we, the descendants of the house of Ham, are blessed!* We are blessed because the prophecy of Isaiah, 'I will send them a leader of their own race', has come true. God sent us black people a leader to do the same things that were done by Moses in Egypt. My brothers, let us obey the message which a black man of Africa has brought us. A donkey does not low like an ox. Therefore we shall not follow the instructions of the Europeans, but of our own black messenger.

Racial bias and concern for a unique supernatural mandate for the Apostolic church, free from white interference, are evident in these sermons. One should remember that they were delivered on the eve of *chimurenga*, the Zimbabwean liberation struggle, when anxiety and uncertainty were rife and intimidation and detentions were becoming more frequent. Basically, the Apostolic preachers aimed at reassuring their people. They were using the church as a place to vent their frustrations at white rule and were virtually claiming the work of the Holy Spirit exclusively for their cause of liberation.

It should be noted that the Zionist and Apostolic movements in the 1960s officially maintained a certain aloofness from politically organised violence and subversion. Bishop Mutendi even dissociated the ZCC from the then banned political parties, ZANU and ZAPU. Nevertheless, these churches gave full expression to African nationalist sentiments. They became the propagators of equality between the races, the dignity of back Africans, and their ability to rule themselves. In doing so they sharpened the concept of a just God who sided with the oppressed and who, through his Spirit, could be counted upon to inspire the poor and the dispossessed in their struggle for the lost lands. At this stage, therefore, the prophetic contribution to political liberation, particularly in the rural context, lay in providing what was considered to be a sound, scripturally based legitimation and justification of the struggle.

Against this background it is not surprising that Zionist and Apostolic prophets increasingly played a key role at the war front as *chimurenga* escalated in the form of a bush war throughout Zimbabwe in the 1970s. Much like the traditional spirit mediums, who were providing the guerrillas with mystical ancestral guidance, prophets were moving around with the fighters at the front, prophesying to them in the name of the Holy Spirit about enemy movements and related security matters. Thus the diagnostic and revelatory services of the prophets became a significant factor in the determination of guerrilla strategy as the fighters improvised their tactics from one situation to the next. On the one hand the senior ancestral spirits, as 'guardians of the land' (*varidzi venyika*), directed the fighters in their battle for the lost lands through their spirit mediums (*masvikiro*). On the other hand the Holy Spirit, also acting as a kind of 'guardian of the land' against the white intruders, was directing the forces of liberation through his emissaries, the Zionist and Apostolic prophets.

Much depended on the predilections of Christian and non-Christian guerrilla commanders whether they favoured traditionalist or prophetic guidance. Many of them made use of both, cross-checking one against the other.

Apart from the 'fighter prophets' operating at the front, there were others who stayed at their church headquarters or healing colonies, from where they provided the guerrillas with information, pastoral support, faith-healing services and the like. Stressed or wounded fighters at times lived at healing colonies, or in secret caves nearby, in order to receive regular prophetic treatment.

Possibly the most important *chimurenga* function of some prophets was their assistance in 'community-cleansing' operations during *pungwe* meetings. There they had to help the guerrillas to determine who were the sell-outs, the traitors to the cause. Much of this work took place in the traditional idiom of tracing wizards. Invariably collaborators of the Rhodesian army, or villagers involved in attempts to poison or expose guerrilla fighters, were branded *varoyi*. Ritual affirmation of accusations, either through ancestral or Holy Spirit revelations, was required before cleansing, through execution or other forms of punishment, could take place. Thus the Holy Spirit of the prophets was publicly seen to act radically and judgementally against the opponents of *chimurenga*.

The role of prophets in the *pungwe* courts could raise critical questions about arbitrary judgements, executions and the possible misrepresentation of the work of the Holy Spirit. In fairness, however, one should consider that it was in this very context that the Spirit invariably revealed himself to suspect members of the community as a life-giving and protective force. In a number of case studies I have established beyond doubt that prophets were often also instrumental in preventing executions whenever it was apparent that villagers were merely using the *pungwe* to project their prejudices and animosities in order to get rid of people they resented. When wizardry accusations during *pungwe* sessions merely reflected tensions and internal village conflicts, prophets elicited public confessions from suspects, the background to which demonstrated to the guerrillas and village elders that they were not dealing with war offences. In numerous cases suspect villagers were actually ordered to go and live in prophetic healing colonies, where the scrutinising, revelatory and disciplinary power of the Holy Spirit could, over a period of time, bring the culprits into line with the requirements of society at the time. Hence, by appealing to the ultimate authority of the Holy Spirit, prophets managed to introduce an element of moderation and sanity, often at grave personal risk, into *pungwe* situations where flaring emotions and the need for revenge in a war-torn society could easily claim innocent lives.

Judging by these prophetic activities one surmises that the pneumatology evolved by the Spirit-type churches during *chimurenga* was one of a warring Spirit, deeply immersed in a just cause, inspiring the fighting cadres to overthrow

the oppressive rule of an alien enemy, as well as do combat with the enemy within their ranks, which could devastate innocent lives if left unchecked. During the war the theology of liberation – unwritten, yet spontaneously enacted by the Independents – led to a closer identification of the concepts of salvation and political liberation. Yet the quest for political and socio-economic liberation at no point obscured the prophetic vision of God’s saviourhood in terms of eternal life. Whereas the perception and experience of the Spirit’s direct involvement in the achievement of peace and improved living conditions in this existence were certainly broadened and deepened, this did not obscure the good news of future salvation. On the contrary, the indications are that during the liberation struggle numerous AICs intensified their quest for conversion and eternal life. Quite a number of guerrilla fighters and people who sought refuge in the prophetic healing colonies were actually evangelised by the prophets whose assistance they sought. To such converts, prophetic Spirit manifestations certainly meant both liberation from unjust rule and individual salvation, the culmination of which still lay in the future.

Despite religious revival and church growth during the war years, there were signs of retrogression. Paradoxically, intensified concern with a liberating Spirit was in many instances countered by a submerged or diminished Christology in both AICs and mainline churches. The reason was that a renaissance of traditional religion caused many of the bush fighters to oppose Christianity. Some of their units destroyed or closed down church buildings. They saw Jesus as the white man’s god, the epitome of oppressive rule. Consequently they operated under the slogan, *Pasi na Jesu!* (Down with Jesus!). Many of the church leaders and congregations who continued to profess their faith in Jesus Christ publicly had their Bibles and vestments burnt by the guerrillas. Some were martyred, while others were forced to go underground. Many church leaders today frankly admit that during the war years they continued to preach about Mwari the Father, the one God who was known in Africa long before Christianity came, and that they prophesied or acted in the Spirit; but that they seldom spoke about Christ for fear of being branded traitors to the cause. The war years therefore present us with a chequered picture that defies easy generalisation; but a picture which, for all its complexity, does not erase the predominant image of God’s liberating Spirit operating in his black prophets throughout the war.

The earthkeeping spirit

In the post-Independence period in Zimbabwe, starting in 1980, the AICs increasingly turned their attention to development projects. *Fambidzano*, the ecumenical council of Independent Churches, raised funds for quite a number of churches to erect community development and vocational training centres, to develop small-scale industries such as carpentry and clothing manufacture, and to engage in agricultural and water projects. Here, too, the Independents saw

the Holy Spirit featuring prominently, in this instance inspiring socio-economic progress. Having delivered his people from political bondage, the Holy Spirit was now increasingly seen as the liberator from poverty and economic despair, as one intimately involved, through the *Fambidzano* and other churches, in nation building. Development projects and even educational training centres at AIC headquarters – such as the multi-million dollar college that Bishop Nehemia Mutendi (son of and successor to the late Samuel Mutendi) erected at Zion City – increasingly became the hallmarks of God's blessing on his people. This was not an entirely new development. It was rather a broadening of a pneumatological trend manifest earlier, namely that the Holy Spirit's function as healer and life giver holistically encompassed everything relating to human wellbeing. The Spirit was also the healer and protector of crops. Through a host of symbolic, supplicatory rites the Spirit could be persuaded by the faithful to safeguard or multiply their agricultural produce.

As was argued before, the perception of salvation undergirding this pneumatology does not exclude faith in a redemptive future for believers, or a heavenly eternity beyond this existence. Nevertheless, a strong focus on this-worldly salvation, which includes Spirit-led improvement of the quality of this life – whether in terms of spiritual, cultural or socio-economic progress – is unmistakable. A pragmatic anthropocentric trend is also discernible. After all, it is human beings who are saved, individuals who make progress through schools, community development centres and agricultural projects, and oppressed people who are liberated from unjust rule. The totality of creation is indeed holistically considered, as the prophetic appeal to God for good rains, bumper crops and prolific cattle breeding indicates. But pragmatism leads to exploitation! And African holism does not of necessity imply a worldview that altruistically incorporates all of creation in the humanly perceived salvific work of God. So in the AICs – as elsewhere in the world church – human self-centredness and the tendency to emphasise a personalised soteriology at the expense of the cosmic dimension of salvation easily lead to a triumphalist attitude; one which plays down human stewardship over all of nature, prioritises human liberation and, by implication, promotes unjust and destructive over-exploitation of a suffering creation. In a sense therefore, the AICs, despite their peasant environment and holistically contextualised liturgies, share with the rest of Christianity a limited and incomplete perception of the grace of God; a grace that encompasses the entire creation as a gift from God. All of us together have somehow proved unworthy of this gift and we must all confess that 'the ruin of nature and the denial of God go hand in hand, because both over-exalt human beings' (Carmody 1983:79).

It is against this background that we of the AICs in Zimbabwe are endeavouring to reinterpret and develop a praxis-related pneumatology on the basis of existing belief systems. For example, while seeing the Holy Spirit as saviour, healer and liberator, we are moving away from a predominantly personalised

and therefore exploitive soteriology towards a more universal, cosmic and – by implication – altruistic approach that proclaims and promotes justice, peace and salvation for all of creation. Such a comprehensive pneumatology, one hopes, will characterise AIC theological trends in the future (Daneel 1991: passim). The main difference from the historical pneumatological trends described above is that some of the incentive for change derives from external, more specifically Western-related sources, such as my own participation in the AICs concerned. In other words, Western theologies of the environment or of ecological liberation (for example those of Moltmann, Carmody and Granberg-Michaelson) are being reinterpreted, adapted and blended with AIC prophetic praxis in a mutually enriching learning process, instead of all development being determined solely by spontaneous prophetic praxis, as in the past. In this respect, ecumenical interaction is complementing prophetic contextuality and exclusivism, underscoring in the process AIC recognition of their integral relatedness to the universal church. This realisation, however, does not detract from the fact that current developments in pneumatology still basically reflect the local church's response to deeply felt needs or crises, as happened during the liberation struggle. In this instance, peasants in the communal areas are increasingly faced with overpopulation, overgrazing of lands, soil erosion, diminishing crop returns on overextended soils, deforestation and the related problems of desertification, scarcity of firewood and spoilt water resources.

How do the prophetic movements respond to this crisis? In my opinion the prophets are starting to conceive of and respond to the Holy Spirit as the earthkeeping Spirit. Increasingly the guidance of the Spirit appears to point to the healing and restoration of nature as a vitally important part of his salvific work. As this conviction grows – an experience that I share with and propagate among the AIC prophets – the churches are being mobilised into ecologically liberating action.

I shall attempt to sketch briefly the current profile of such action and some of the more pertinent theological convictions behind it. First of all, the prophets have been critically watching and assessing the conservationist work of AZTREC (Association of Zimbabwean Traditional Ecologists), a body consisting of traditionalist spirit mediums, chiefs and ZANLA ex-combatants. Founded in 1988 as a sister organisation of an institute (Zimbabwe Institute of Religious Research and Ecological Conservation or ZIRRCO) of which I am the director, AZTREC aims at extending *chimurenga* from the socio-political arena to ecological conservation – tree planting, wildlife conservation and the protection of water resources. As happened during the struggle for political independence, the implementation of projects to liberate nature from destruction is inspired by the guardian ancestors of the land and the traditional oracular deity, Mwari. At present the prime objective is afforestation of communal lands where the threat of desertification is greatest.

On AZTREC's initiative several nurseries have been developed in Masvingo Province. Since 1988 more indigenous seedlings have been grown than ever before in Zimbabwe. Mobilisation of rural communities has resulted in the planting of 5 000 trees in 1988, 150 000 trees in 1989 and more than 500 000 during the 1990/91 rainy season. Rural committees were formed by peasant villagers to take responsibility for all the woodlots: planting ceremonies, fencing, watering of trees, protective measures and so on. Thus the largest earthkeeping movement in Zimbabwe was developed at grassroots level over a relatively short period of time – its success deriving from ecological commitment rooted in traditional religion and philosophy.

Not to be outdone by AZTREC, yet taking their cue from AZTREC activities, the AICs recently formed the Association of African Earthkeeping Churches (AAEC). Some 35 churches have already joined. A constitution has been drafted and an executive, with a salaried general secretary, is already in charge. The new movement has similar ecological objectives to AZTREC, the main difference being that earthkeeping activities are based on Christian principles evolved in the AIC context.

A situation has therefore developed in which ZIRRCO, besides being the nerve centre, provides funding, policy-making and organisational services for two sister organisations: one traditional, the other Christian, but both aimed at the liberation or restoration of nature in terms of their respective religious traditions. Attempts are made to establish meaningful interaction between AZTREC and AAEC at all levels, resulting in sustained interfaith dialogue on common religio-ecological goals.

In the second place, the immediate practical consequence of forming the AAEC has been the development of several church nurseries for exotic, fruit and indigenous trees at or near prophetic church headquarters. Plans for large-scale tree-planting operations by participant churches during the next rainy season are already under way. The unfolding 'battle of the trees' in the churches is being interpreted in prophetic circles as the movement of the earthkeeping Spirit, who aims at healing the land by clothing the earth once again with life-restoring vegetation (*kufukidza nyika*, to clothe the earth). This battle takes the form of prophets diagnosing the illness of mother earth in terms of human greed and ecological offences, and prescribing a therapy of Christian renewal and commitment, manifested in earthkeeping action. As this ecological side of the healer and protector Spirit emerges, the wider cosmic dimensions of salvation gain prominence. This inevitably adds a new perspective to the AIC understanding of the good news of Christ's Saviourhood, so ardently proclaimed during evangelistic and missionary campaigns. For it is in Spirit-led tree-planting activities that the churches are announcing the reign of Christ, to whom belongs 'all authority in heaven and on earth' (Matthew 28:18); a reign that liberates and heals not only human beings, but all of creation.

Third, attempts are made to develop, for and with the AICs, a written theology of the environment. Their characteristic theology, enacted in dance, song and prophetic revelations, is being complemented by a somewhat more organised, reflective and written record. In this field the Revd Ruben Marinda and Solomon Zvanaka, both Zionist leaders who hold advanced theological qualifications and key positions in ZIRRCO and the AAEC, are assisting me with the drafting of conscientisation courses for training programmes in religion and ecology.

Fourth, Western and AIC theological insights blend in the context of course development and teaching. At this level new trinitarian perspectives are being worked out and incorporated into training materials. Thus Jurgen Moltmann's emphasis on God's immanence in creation provides an important guideline for a new theology of ecology:

God is not merely the Creator of the world. He is also the Spirit of the universe. Through the powers and potentialities of the Spirit, the Creator indwells the creatures He has made, animates them, holds them in life, and leads them into the future of His kingdom (1985:14).

Moltmann's views correlate closely with the convictions of the late Bishop Samuel Mutendi, who preached about the biblical Mwari as a creator truly present and totally involved in all of creation – in a peasant society as the God of the farmers and their crops. Through ZCC rituals to bless the seed to be sown and the implements to be used in the fields, etc., Mutendi managed to bring the remote oracular deity (Mwari of the Matopo hills), traditionally approachable only to a few select cultic officials, into daily peasant life. His was already a theology of ecology, albeit focused on seasonal cattle and crop farming. By combining Moltmann's ideas with some of Mutendi's rituals we relate the pervading presence of Mwari, the immanent creator, to a long-term ecological strategy. At this point the message is: Indeed, recognise Mwari as the one who blesses and germinates the seeds for the coming season! But let him also be the God of the seedlings nurtured in church nurseries and the God of tree crops in plantations that will not only provide the building materials and firewood for coming generations, but will also clothe the earth for its own sake.

In the fifth and last place, an attempt is made to reflect on AIC pneumatology and to draw the consequences for church praxis. Special attention is given to the Spirit's ecological healing activity in relation to the sacraments. Here, too, the centrality of the Spirit in prophetic earthkeeping corresponds with current theological notions in the Western world. In his trinitarian interpretation of creation, Moltmann for instance deliberately chooses to concentrate on the third person. He argues that all divine activity is pneumatic in its manifestation. It is always the Spirit who brings the activity of the Son to its goal. The cosmic Spirit he refers to has no relation to Stoic pantheism. It remains God's Spirit acting in this world in the differential modes of creating, preserving, renewing and consummating life. Thus he comes to his basic assertion:

Creation in the Spirit is the theological concept which corresponds best to the ecological doctrine of creation we are looking for and need today. With this concept we are cutting loose the theological doctrine of creation from the age of subjectivity and the mechanistic domination of the world, and are leading it in the direction in which we have to look for the future of an ecological world community (1985:112).

Through the Spirit we are bound together with the natural environment. This association is a system comprising human beings and nature. We might describe it as a spiritual ecosystem. Through the Spirit, human societies as part systems are bound up with the ecosystem 'earth' (Gala). So human beings are participants and sub-systems of the cosmic life-system, and the divine Spirit that lives in it (1985:18).

Moltmann's views are entirely relevant to current ecological concerns of the prophetic AICs. His idiom may be alien and the context of his appeal may be mainly the academic West and the threat of modern industrialisation to our planet. Yet the AIC prophets of Africa will agree with his emphasis on the need to establish an ecological world community and in their own way express the conviction that only through the indwelling of the Spirit can such a goal be realised. In some respects the AIC prophets probably understand and experience the life-giving power of the outpoured and ever-present Spirit better than Moltmann and other Western-oriented theologians such as myself. Their intuition was shaped by their forefathers, who sensed as well as any Old Testament sage that the spirit (*mweya*) imparted by God the creator (*musiki*) was the source of all life. This intuition ultimately blossomed in an all-absorbing and most persuasive testimony to the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit (*Mweya Mutsvene*) in the Spirit-type churches, especially in their healing colonies. And now the extension in prophetic praxis of the healing power of the Spirit from the specifically human condition to the entire 'cosmic life-system' (to use Moltmann's words) is becoming manifest in the AIC sacraments.

Conversion and sin are being ritually reinterpreted in the sacramental context of baptism and the Eucharist. It is in preparation for baptism that the prophetic leader emphasises the need for radical public rejection of sin under the guidance of the Spirit. Ecologically conscientised prophets now reveal that the Spirit expects novices to confess not only their moral sins in disturbed interpersonal relations, but also their ecological sins: chopping down trees without planting any in return, overgrazing and neglecting to make contour ridges, thereby causing soil erosion, etc. – in other words admitting to human greed and exploitation of the good earth, taking it for granted without nurturing it or reverencing it in return. At 'Jordan' (any river, called Jordan for the duration of the baptismal ceremony) it makes sense to the newly converted to confess ecological guilt, where the barren treeless plains, the ever-deepening erosion gulleys, the denuded river banks and the clouds of dust testifying to wind erosion are clearly in evidence. Here the prophet has a unique opportunity to

instruct converts that crossing the river Jordan into a new life implies more than individual incorporation into the body of Christ and the prospect of salvation in heaven. It requires the new convert's commitment to help restore creation and to engage in ecological stewardship, in recognition of God's grace and in selfless service to the generations yet to come.

To many Independents baptism is also a healing ceremony, in which the life-giving water of 'Jordan,' filled by the Spirit, is drunk by baptisands for individual cleansing and curative purposes. In this respect the ceremony offers a unique opportunity for interpreting the Spirit as healer of the people and of the land. In that case the drinking of Jordan water symbolises not just the baptisands' healing or salvation, but their identification with desecrated mother earth and their participation in cosmic healing. The focus then shifts from private, personal benefit by the Holy Spirit's healing powers to a statement of solidarity with all creation and an affirmation of new commitment, through individual conversion, to the healing and restoration of nature.

In most of the Spirit-type churches the Eucharist is preceded by an even more dramatic public confession of sin than happens at baptism. Johane Maranke's *vaPostori* spend an entire night performing a massive preparatory cleansing ritual. Thousands of participants run around huge fires shouting their offences out loud. Then they pass the symbolic gates of heaven, each consisting of twelve prophets standing in pairs. All sins must be confessed at the gates, as the Holy Spirit, through the prophets, detects all hidden sins, from adultery to wizardry. The unrepentant are disqualified from participating in the sacrament. Some of the prophets involved in the AAEC tree-planting programme have started to combat ecological sins. Offences that lead to a shortage of firewood, soil erosion and poor crops are increasingly branded a form of *uroyi* (wizardry) – the most serious of all sins, as it threatens human existence and life itself. I anticipate that unrepentant ecological wizards will in years to come find themselves debarred at the Zionist and Apostolic gates from participation in the Eucharist. Through the earthkeeping Spirit the AAEC prophets already know who such *varoyi* are: the ones in the resettlement schemes who prejudice the common good by chopping down as many trees as they can for a quick profit from selling firewood, those who refuse to accept the principle that firewood can only be used by those who plant the trees that supply it; the resisters of government conservationist measures and of the chiefs' prohibition of chopping down trees in the holy groves of the ancestors, and the destroyers of river banks.

In addition to such reinterpretation of conversion and sin in the sacramental context, our theologising in the earthkeeping churches includes a strong plea that in an ecologically ravaged environment each church should conduct at least one tree-planting Eucharist annually. This would be one of the most relevant and convincing ways of publicly witnessing to Christ's reign over all creation and ritually acknowledging human involvement in its realisation. It

would be another way of agreeing with Granberg-Michaelson (1984:136) that God's gift of grace received through the bread and wine cannot be treasured and held within our own selves. Instead, we are liberated to pour out our lives for the sake of Christ's reign over all creation, incorporating into our concern for internal, individual spirituality the ministry of global sanctification.

A tree-planting Eucharist is one of the most powerful ways of saying that Christ's good news not only liberates and saves human beings, but also heals and protects nature where it agonisingly awaits redemption. Thus the missionary task acquires a wider dimension and sacramental empowerment. For mission, seen in this perspective, entails evangelistic outreach and environmental restoration.

In the AAEC churches, where the Eucharist is already linked with tree planting, the realisation is dawning that sacramental participation in the body of Christ inspires both spiritual growth and ecological responsibility. Under the guidance of the earthkeeping Spirit the cosmological inferences of Colossians 1:15–20 – 'in Christ all things hold together' – are being drawn in a profound manner.

Such sacramental activity excludes the pretence that we, the earthkeepers, are the saviours of creation, for that we can never be. But, as believers we are erecting not only symbolic, but concrete signposts of life-giving hope in a creation suffering while it awaits redemption. For, as Duchrow and Liedke (1989:64) correctly state:

Spirit-endowed beings do not save creation, but creation looks to us. The way that we cope with its suffering shows how much hope there is for creation. When we increase the suffering of creation its hope sinks. When we sharpen the conflict between human beings and nature, and also the conflict between humans, then creation lapses into resignation. When, instead, in solidarity with nature and our fellow human beings, we reduce suffering, then the hope of creation awakes into new life.

Challenge to the World Church

We have now traced some of the major characteristics of AIC pneumatology as it emerged in response to distinct historical phases and ecclesiastical developments in Zimbabwe. In the process we have gained an impression of how a section of the world church has interpreted and experienced the movement and guidance of God's Spirit in its midst. We have also noted different emphases in the related concepts of salvation.

It is greatly significant that the richness of the Spirit's involvement and presence in the movements concerned was never obscured by prophetic preoccupation with historically and contextually determined issues at a given historical time. As I have pointed out, the prophets' involvement in the political liberation struggle and the concomitant image of the Holy Spirit as liberator

of the oppressed – in spite of a temporarily weakened Christology – in no way quenched their missionary spirit or zeal for individual conversions and the propagation of eternal salvation in the present yet still coming kingdom of God. Likewise, the current response of the AICs to the Spirit as earthkeeper and the resultant widening perspective on salvation as extending to all creation, instead of overriding evangelistic outreach in the traditional sense, is incorporated into and enriches the individual conversion experience. It enhances the hope in the future fulfilment of salvation.

In a sense, the earthkeeping venture is part of an ongoing and comprehensive conversion process of the entire church. Thus engaged, the church is actually carrying out an expanded missionary mandate: proclaiming through its Spirit-led life and work that the good news of salvation, of God's grace, extends to all of creation. Salvation here and now, manifest in the black 'Jeruselems' and 'holy cities' in this existence – in terms of healing, liberation and earthkeeping – in no way 'snatches the future', but meaningfully concretises the dominion of Christ over heaven and earth and maintains the eschatological tension between the 'already' and 'not yet' of God's kingdom.

In this respect, the prophetic movements are enacting their own unique liberation theologies, without falling into the pitfall of reducing the message of salvation exclusively to a this-worldly programme of liberation from socio-political oppression or poverty. They also avoid the pitfall of reducing the good news to one-sided future salvation of souls through their holistic interpretation of the Holy Spirit's comprehensive involvement in all of life. Thereby they escape the Western classifications of 'liberationist', 'evangelical', 'charismatic' or 'ecumenical'. Instead, they encompass all these distinctions and many more, as they uninhibitedly read the scriptures and intuitively feel for the Holy Spirit's guidance in Africa. Herein lies their challenge to the world church as it ponders both vision and strategy for a renewed evangelistic thrust.

Together with them we pray:

Come Holy Spirit, come Holy Spirit, come Holy Spirit,
Bless us, your servants.

Earthkeeping in Missiological Perspective*

A growing awareness of the global environmental crisis is manifest in world Christianity. Through the publications of numerous Western theologians our attention is increasingly drawn to eco-theology, environmental ethics, creation theology, eco-feminism and related subjects. In addition, significant developments such as the presentation of the WCC's JPIC (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation) programmes, the Reformed initiative in the Au Sable Institute, the participation of churches in the Rio Earth Summit and Orbis's introduction of a new series of publications, Ecology and Justice (Burrows 1995:173) all point to a growing will within the Christian church to address environmental issues consistently and realistically. Yet despite these positive signs, one cannot deny that on the whole the Christian church as institution has been slow to respond to the environmental crisis in terms of prophetic witness and telling action.

McDonagh (1994:103f) convincingly highlights the failure of church leaders in the 19th and 20th centuries to comprehend the full implications of the destruction of nature and the urgent need for all human institutions to contribute towards its remedy. The Second Vatican Council of the 1960s, for instance, for all its significance to the Catholic Church, is not grounded in an ecological vision of reality. It subscribes to a 'dominion theology' and does not escape the typical anthropocentric bias that subjects all of nature to the rule of humanity; human beings featuring as the crown of creation (ibid.:104, 105). Recent papal encyclicals mention the ecological crisis only in passing and even the Holy See's submission to the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 appears to be supportive of human domination of nature when it states that 'the ultimate purpose of environmental and developmental programmes is to enhance the quality of human life, *to place creation in the fullest possible way at the service of the human family*' (McDonagh's emphasis; ibid.:107). Similar anthropocentric trends characterise the churches of the Reformation. Here the message of salvation tended to focus on the individual human being, a trend which enhanced the dualism between spirit and body, spiritual and worldly kingdom. McDonagh (1994:110) quotes the Methodist theologian Johnston McMaster's verdict that 'the location of God's Kingdom in the soul eliminated God from the ecological as well as the political

* An earlier version of this chapter originally appeared as 'Earthkeeping in Missiological Perspective: An African Challenge' in *Mission Studies* 13(25/26)(1996): 130-188.

arena'. It follows that in a spiritualised kingdom, only to be realised fully in the future dispensation of the *parousia*, little scope was left for the protection and/or redemption of all the earth in the here and now.

Against this background McDonagh (1994:114–5) urges all churches to adopt a prophetic stance. This entails, first, the criticism of unjust economic, political and social systems which impoverish people and destroy the environment; and second, the attempt to empower people to formulate a new vision of a more equitable and sustainable world. In the struggle for justice and ecological reform the common culture of contentment needs to be confronted and a 'prophetic liberation of the imagination' (ibid.:119; with reference to Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (1978:13)) should be facilitated, whereby new and creative patterns of action can be envisioned and implemented.

Whereas I fully support this call for prophetic witness, I wish to draw on a case study of Independent Churches in Africa which have developed in recent years a remarkable prophetic ministry of earthkeeping; a ministry which contains a profound challenge to the world Church. My presentation is made by way of endorsement of Burrows' assertion that 'although Third World Christianity – in its concreteness, as opposed to an idealised image of it – is not taken seriously in the North, *it is today the living centre of the Christian tradition*' (my italics). Moreover, this chapter underscores Burrows' hypothesis that First and Third World Christianity face essentially similar missionary situations, as a result of which Northern and Southern Christianity 'stand at a crossroad where *collaboration as equals in a world mission* is possible and, quite probably, essential' (my italics; Burrows 1995:172,173).

There are a number of reasons that a consideration of an AIC earthkeeping ministry in missiological perspective could prove fruitful to the global Christian community. First, the AICs concerned have hardly had any exposure to eco-theological literature and can therefore be said to have developed earthcare concerns in direct response to what they themselves consider nature-related biblical injunctions, relatively free of Western influence.¹¹ Second, the environmental ministry concerned relates directly to African peasant perceptions and experience of ecological deterioration, such as deforestation, water pollution and droughts, and depleted wildlife resources. Consequently, one obtains an idea of the spontaneous development of a grassroots theology born of existential need in direct relation to local conditions rather than one based on abstract reflection and burgeoning ideological conditioning. Third, the action, suffering and celebration in the lives of believers caught up in an earthkeeping mission somehow carry more persuasive weight than a world of important conference statements and correct formulations in conscientising literature. Not that I wish to belittle the latter! On the contrary, the reflective and praxis dimensions are essential and complementary to each other. They should be kept in a meaningful dialectic. Invariably, however, our missiological deliber-

ations tend to be eschewed by rationalistic and academic considerations at the expense of insights drawn from praxis; or we refrain from action once we have delivered the ecologically correct message! We therefore need to trace more deliberately the movement of God's Earthkeeping Spirit in today's world, as it is already manifest in Christian communities, if we are to revision and understand his and the church's mission on this beleaguered planet. Fourth, despite the paucity of missiological and ecological literature in African theology,¹² and the tendency of observers to characterise the AICs as protest movements rather than as missionary institutions in their own rights,¹³ the latter have a rich tradition of missionising activity in Africa;¹⁴ a factor which contributes towards the Independents themselves identifying their earthkeeping ministry with what they understand as Mission.

An attempt will be made to briefly sketch the rise of the green movement concerned and its most striking strategy of combating deforestation through a tree-planting Eucharist. Subsequently, a few of the major features of an evolving African green theology will be highlighted. The insights thus achieved indeed have missiological implications. As a study of this nature does not allow for detailed analysis, I can but trace a few contours of an eco-missiological challenge worth our consideration. I make no pretence to outline in any way a comprehensive agenda for future eco-missiological reflection. My intention, rather, is to draw attention to an unfolding green struggle in African Christianity and to capture something of its spirit, its boldness and commitment for those of us faced with the arduous task of theologising on matters of such import.

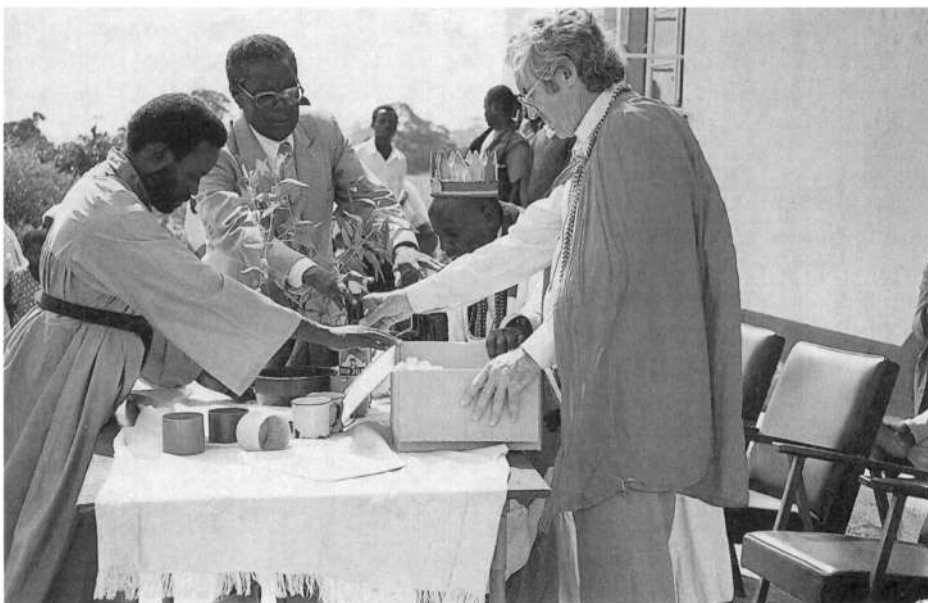
AIC theology at best eludes written definition and the industry of bookmaking. It finds expression in the throb of celebration: spontaneous proclamation, holistic cleansing of body, spirit and earth, in rousing song and the rhythm of dancing feet. Its reflection surfaces in communal enactment of richly symbolised ritual, finds a focus in iconic leaders who excel in ethical directives rather than dogmatic decrees, and communicates through the medium of stories, told and retold in endless variation, until some of it gels in historical myth as oral tradition takes shape. Hence, it is with a degree of trepidation that I, as a white African and 'privileged insider', tell the story of our green struggle in Zimbabwe. One needs to feel carefully and intuitively for the emergent strains of eco-theology, admit subjectivity and risk generalisations which may or may not measure up to the scrutiny of future research.

Mobilisation and a declaration of war

The Association of African Earthkeeping Churches (AAEC) was born of a period of intensive field research in the mid 1980s. At the time, in an attempt to determine the role of religion in the liberation struggle (*chimurenga*), prior to Independence, I was in touch with the practitioners of traditional religion



Plate 7: Tree-planting eucharist. In preparation for the use of the sacraments even the bishops are required to confess their ecological sins, under prophetic guidance (top). Leading earthkeepers prepare the sacraments and seedlings with prayers (bottom)



– chiefs, spirit mediums and ex-guerrilla fighters – and AIC leaders. Endless discussions about the military struggle to recapture the lost lands from colonial control and usurpation led to consideration of land and environmental issues. Great concern was expressed about an obviously deteriorating environment, never-ending droughts and the growing pressures on the land caused by population growth. The traditionalists were inclined to blame the droughts on ZANU politicians who had angered the senior guardian ancestors of the land (*varidzi venyika*) by not publicly acknowledging or acclaiming their guidance in the struggle for the success achieved. AIC leaders in turn showed concern about the failure of the government's resettlement schemes and redistribution of farmlands to satisfy the aspirations and needs of peasant communities. Moral decadence and corruption, in both government and civil service, they felt, were souring the liberationist trend set by the movement of the Holy Spirit during the troublesome yet spiritually reorienting war years.

In this context traditionalists and AIC leaders were eager to form a national ecological association. In peasant society there was a growing awareness of the paradox: the lost lands, having been recaptured politically, were still being lost ecologically at an accelerating and alarming rate. Something massive and revolutionary was required to arrest the slide towards environmental bankruptcy and the accompanying mood in rural society of helplessness and apathy. As we virtually became obsessed by the theme of *chimurenga* and the lost lands, the resolve grew that a new movement should take shape as an extension of the pre-Independence liberation struggle; shifted in this instance into the field of ecology. Thus, in the drafting of constitutions and the mobilisation of a green force we declared *hondo yemiti*, the 'War of the Trees'. We were then in the first phase of a struggle which at its core aimed at the liberation of creation; a struggle based on the same religious tenets and holistic African cosmology as the foregoing struggle for political independence.

In this development the facilitating and financially empowering agency was ZIRRCO, the institutionalised and extended version of my research team. Founded in 1984, this body took responsibility for the initiation and development of two sister organisations, one for traditionalists and the other for AICs. The organisation for traditionalists started in 1988 as the Association of Zimbabwean Spirit Mediums, before it was renamed AZTREC (Association of Zimbabwean Traditional Ecologists). Currently it represents a powerful green force comprising the majority of traditional elders (chiefs, headmen and spirit mediums), mainly from the Masvingo Province. The Association of African Earthkeeping Churches (AAEC) was formed a few years later at the request of a growing number of AIC members who had participated in tree-planting activities since the movement's inception. This association currently counts some 130 member churches, mainly prophetic Zionist churches, but also including the country's largest AIC, namely the AACJM – African Apostolic Church

of Johane Maranke. These churches represent an estimated total of two million adherents throughout Zimbabwe. Each of the two movements, traditional and Christian, which together represent the largest NGO for environmental reform at rural grassroots in Zimbabwe today, has its own governing executive and religious identity within the encompassing umbrella-organisation ZIRRCON. The headquarters of this green liberation front is situated in Masvingo town.

Despite the movement's predominant concern with tree-planting so far, the War of the Trees constitutionally has three aims: afforestation, the protection of water resources, and wildlife conservation. More than two million trees have already been planted in some 1 500 woodlots. Ten nurseries in various districts of Masvingo Province cultivate between 50 000 and 100 000 seedlings each year. A recently instated Women's Desk, comprising 60 women's clubs and the participation of an increasing number of school communities, adds momentum towards our goal of cultivating and planting at least one million trees each year. Through AZTREC and the AAEC, peasant communities are mobilised on a massive scale to establish their own woodlots near stable water points. A variety of trees are planted: fruit trees in orchards for personal and commercial use, exotics, such as eucalyptus, for building operations (in an attempt to curb tree-felling in existing forests), indigenous trees for firewood and the restoration of denuded land, lucaena for cattle fodder, firewood and nitrate fixing in arable lands, and indigenous hardwood such as kiasat and red (pod) mahogany as a long-term investment for the benefit of future generations. Currently, ZIRRCON and its sister organisations cultivate larger numbers of indigenous tree seedlings than any other institution in Zimbabwe. The Forestry Commission has expressed its surprise and appreciation at the ability of the movement to engage large numbers of rural people with great consistency in the planting and nurturing of trees.

A tree-planting Eucharist

The best example of the AAEC member churches committing themselves to the War of the Trees is to be found in their integration of an earthkeeping ministry with the sacrament of holy communion. This is achieved through a tree-planting Eucharist. On the member churches' annual calendar a tree-planting Eucharist takes place only once during the rainy season. So we are not dealing with an entire substitution of standard liturgical procedures, of a sacrament popularly referred to by the prophetic AICs as *Paseka* (Paschal ceremony). Nevertheless, the practice of a green Eucharist is of great interest for various reasons. First of all, the participation of numerous churches in each ceremony and the sharing of leading ritual roles on an inter-church basis strengthen environmental-focused ecumenism. Second, the combination of Eucharist and tree planting binds environmental stewardship, which in Christian tradition has often been treated as peripheral, right into the heartbeat of church life and

biblically based spirituality. In a sense, this is a way of witnessing to a 'change of heart' within the church, an illustration of willingness to revision the church at its core and to introduce liturgical and structural change for the institution as such to become a better vehicle for the message it wants to convey. Third, this ceremony highlights the characteristic trends of an emergent AIC theology of the environment, one not written in books, but symbolised in budding trees protecting a ravished countryside. And fourth, the new liturgies, forged and enacted in practice, are imaginatively contextualised in relation to African religious holism and worldviews, whereby they are not only better understood by participant church members, but also convey a relevant message to a religiously pluriform audience.

The pattern of activity for any given tree-planting Eucharist is briefly as follows. Preparation starts with the digging of holes in the vicinity of an AIC headquarters or local congregation. The woodlot is fenced and in some instances referred to as 'the Lord's acre'. General ceremonial procedure is in the hands of a principal church leader who, under the supervision of the AAEC president and general secretary, attributes various functions to office-bearers in his or her own and other participant churches. A special church committee with future responsibilities such as watering seedlings and general aftercare is appointed.

While the communion table with neatly pressed tablecloth, bread, wine and a number of tree seedlings on it is being prepared, groups of dancers dance around the bulk of seedlings to be planted, stacked near the communion table. Dance and song bring praise to Mwari, the creator and great earthkeeper, encourage the green fighters to be vigilant, and even implore the young trees to grow well. The service itself comprises several earthkeeping sermons by AAEC bishops and ZIRRCO staff members. It invariably includes speeches by visiting government officials, cabinet ministers, and representatives of the Forestry Commission, Natural Resources Board, Agritex, Education and Parks and Wildlife. Thus the outdoor setting, religiously pluriform audience and speeches of high-ranking environmental and government officials cause the tree-planting Eucharist to be an open-ended, inclusive rather than a strictly exclusive, in-group event.

The sacrament itself is introduced by the public confession of ecological sins. All the participants, church leaders included, line up behind a band of prophesying prophets to confess their guilt in earth-destruction. The idea is that the Holy Spirit reveals through the prophets the still unconfessed sins of communicants lest they partake of the bread and wine in an unworthy manner. Thus divine intervention and opposition to wanton exploitation of the earth are vividly enacted.

After satisfactory completion of the confession, each communicant picks up a seedling and moves towards the table as if to draw creation symbolically into

the inner circle of communion with Christ, the Redeemer, head of the church and Lord of all creation. Establishing communion with Christ in this instance, apart from its salvific implications for the individual, is understood as a form of recognition of his role as Earthkeeper and a way of being empowered by him for the earth-healing activity to follow. Meanwhile, one of the AIC bishops blesses the stretch of land to be healed by trees, by sprinkling holy water and scattering holy soil over it; yet another way of drawing the earth into sacramental participation. Subsequently, all the tree planters congregate in the new woodlot and 'converse' with their 'fellow communicants' – the seedlings – as they plant and water them. In conclusion, many of the tree planters themselves kneel in queues in front of the prophetic healers for the ceremony of laying-on hands and prayer. Thus the healing of the barren earth and of human beings blend into a single sacramental ceremony which witnesses poignantly of Christ the crucified and resurrected Saviour of all the earth.

A few excerpts of the AAEC liturgy (translated from the original in Shona) illustrate essential features of the message conveyed during the ceremony:

Mwari [God] is the one
Who declares to his church people
The value of their friends, the trees.
They will provide you with shade
to protect you from the heat of the sun.
They will give you fruit, for you to lead healthy lives.
These trees will clothe the barren earth:
protecting it against soil erosion,
preventing it from turning into a desert,
keeping the moisture in the soil.
Look at the stagnant water
where all the trees were felled
Without trees the water holes mourn
without trees the gullies form
For, the tree-roots to hold the soil ...
are gone!
These friends of ours
give us shade
They draw the rain clouds
breathe the moisture of rain
I the tree ... I am your friend
I know you want wood
for fire:
to cook your food
to warm yourself against cold.
Use my dried branches ...
What I do not need
you can have.

I, the human being
your closest friend
have committed a serious offence
as a *ngozi*, the vengeful spirit.
I destroyed you, our friends.
So, the seedlings brought here today
are the 'bodies' [*mitumbu*] of restoration –
a sacrifice to appease
the vengeful spirit
We plant these seedlings today
as an admission of guilt
laying the *ngozi* to rest.
Strengthening our bonds with you
our tree friends of the heart.
Let us make an oath today
that will care for God's creation
so that He will grant us rain.
An oath, not in jest ...
but with all our heart
admitting our guilt
appeasing the aggrieved spirit
offering our trees in all earnest
to clothe the barren land.
Indeed, there were forests
abundance of rain.
But in our ignorance and greed
we left the land naked.
Like a person in shame
our country is shy
in its nakedness.
Our planting of trees today
is a sign of harmony
between us and creation.
We are reconciled with creation
through the body and blood of Jesus
which brings peace.
He who came to save
all creation (Colossians 1:19–20).

Preachers often elaborate on the liturgical text at this point by linking Christ's salvation of all creation to original sin in the Genesis story; sin in this context given a specifically ecological connotation. Zionist Bishop Marinda, who drafted the original liturgy in consultation with the AAEC executive, for instance, prefers to introduce Genesis 2:15–17 at this point. He would then contend that, corrupted by Satan, man became an enemy of God and nature by cutting down all the trees. 'As a result,' he commented on occasion, 'the weather pattern of



Plate 8: AIC women set an example as earthkeepers. With seedlings in hand they queue at communion table (top); partake in the sacraments (bottom left); and subsequently move to the 'Lord's Acre' where they do combat in the 'War of the Trees' by planting the seedlings (bottom right)



all the world has changed. Man became the destroyer of the rain forests, the killer of the world's eco-systems.' God retaliates by sending severe droughts (as were clearly noticeable in Zimbabwe in the past two decades!). 'Look, the rivers are dried up and the fish have gone, because we have cut away all the vegetation on the river banks and catchment areas, causing the riverbeds to fill up with sand.' Against this background of sin against nature, and God's judgement in response, an urgent appeal is made repeatedly for the confession of environmental sins. Christ is proclaimed as the One who, in the midst of ecological devastation, holds everything together (Colossians 1:17); as the One who atones for such sins. 'As the recipients of Christ's salvation,' Marinda would insist, '*humans have the duty to extend salvation to all of creation as Christ's co-workers*' (my italics).

The liturgy for the bishop's blessing of the Lord's acre where the trees are to be planted, is as follows:

Sprinkle with water.
This is the water of purification and fertility
We sprinkle it on this new acre of trees
It is a prayer to God, a symbol of rain
So that the trees will grow
so that the land will heal
as the ngozi we have caused, withdraws.

'Holy soil' which had been prayed over is then scattered in the woodlot with the words:

You soil ...
I bless you in the name of Christ
for you to make the trees grow
and to protect them.
Provide the trees with sufficient food
for proper growth
Love the trees and keep their roots
for they are our friends.

The bishop leads the green army into the Lord's acre to do battle against the earth's nakedness. The seedlings are then addressed one after the other by individual tree planters as they are placed in the soil:

You, tree, my brother ... my sister
today I plant you in this soil
I shall give water for your growth
Have good roots
to keep the soil from eroding
Have many leaves and branches
so that we can:
- breathe fresh air



Plate 9: Zionist tree-planter of the AAEC uses a little cross with holy cord to symbolise the christological dimension of tree-planting eucharist (top). Christian and traditionalist earthkeepers at work in one of ZIRRCON's main nurseries (bottom)



- sit in your shade
- and find firewood.

To the Western mind this liturgy may sound simple and only of relative significance, considering the enormous, near impossible task of halting deforestation, desertification and soil degradation. In the African cultural and linguistic context, as part of spontaneous ecological ritual activity, it is, however, a powerful statement of Christian commitment to the healing of all creation.

Ecumenical sacrament and mission command

In the sacraments of Eastern Orthodox Christianity the archaic instinct that the cosmos is sacred takes shape. God's power and dominion over the cosmos are pervasively present in all sacramental elements. 'Like the incense that spreads to each corner of an Orthodox church, the spiritual power of the holy God spreads to each corner of the universe' (Carmody 1983:76). Similar perceptions are noticeable in AIC sacramentalism. In these churches, however, the sacramental power of God relates specifically to the church's outreach into, and its growth in, the world. Several AICs have a tradition of the Eucharist functioning as a springboard for the planning and execution of missionary campaigns.¹⁵

This tradition of a mission-activating Eucharist was extended and given new content in the context of the AICC (African Independent Church Conference), popularly called *Fambidzano* (literally 'Cooperative of Churches'), the first ecumenical movement of substance among the Zimbabwean AICs, founded in 1972 (Daneel 1989b).¹⁶ *Fambidzano* selected as its core-message the texts of John 17:21–23 where Christ prays that his disciples be united so that the world can see and believe that he (Christ) has been sent by his Father. To the AICs concerned, these texts called for church unity as condition for effective missionary witness. Their newly found reconciliatory ecumenism, in the face of former conflicts and isolation, first of all spelled a joint enterprise in theological training (ibid.: chapters 5–7) and then a message of good news and hope in the implementation of community development programmes (ibid.: chapters 8–9). In the weekend meetings of member churches, joint Paschal celebrations eventually caused the former exclusively conducted Eucharist to be given a broader ecumenical base. Although such Eucharists did not ensue in united missionary action of the same magnitude as that of the ZCC, they remained the vehicles of missionary outreach. *Fambidzano's* ecumenical paschal sermons, for instance, invariably triggered conversions and baptisms. Hence, the direct result of open-air sacramental celebrations was baptismal ceremonies in 'Jordan' in which the leaders of participant churches would enter the water of dams or rivers together to baptise converts according to the church of their choice.¹⁷

The AAEC capitalised on this twofold eucharistic tradition by building on its ecumenical and missionary dimensions in the new treeplanting ceremony. Quite

a number of the AAEC member churches are former or still active members of *Fambidzano*. In this instance, the driving force for ecumenical interaction is the divine injunction for earthkeeping, in itself clear illustration that inter-ecclesial unity seldom achieves meaning as an end in itself. The history of the Shona AICs of the past three decades shows that ecumenical interaction has made lasting sense only to the extent that it revolved around some form of joint venture or service, be it theological training, attempts at liberative development in the face of poverty, evangelistic outreach, or environmental reform. Ecumenical activity in a peasant society, moreover, finds expression in outdoor events where unity uncannily assumes a much broader meaning than merely the bonding of Christian churches. What I have observed in *Fambidzano*'s inter-church activities applies to the AAEC: 'Because of the typical African holistic worldview, which precludes any dualistic distinction between sacred and profane, one intuitively feels that the central issue ... is the bonding of the entire God-created family comprising man, beast, bird and vegetation. The harmony of the entire universe is at stake!' (Daneel 1989b:222). The AAEC's tree-planting Eucharist undoubtedly assumes such cosmic union and enacts it more explicitly than the ecumenical communion of *Fambidzano* where it had remained dormant.

Unlike the ZCC practice where the Eucharist was the flash point of missionary mobilisation within the confines of a single church, followed up by a geographically wide-reacting campaign of evangelistic work and membership recruitment in its aftermath, the AAEC tree-planting Eucharist is in itself the witnessing event, the proclamation of good news unto all creation! It is enacted in nature and in the presence of non-Christian fellow fighters of the War of the Trees. These traditionalist earthkeepers do not partake of the bread and wine, but they assimilate the message, observe the sacrament and assist with tree planting. In this circumstance the classic mission command of Matthew 28:19 is assumed rather than featuring as a central theme of proclamation. Not that ecological endeavour in any way supersedes the call for repentance, conversion, human salvation and church formation – the essential missionary dynamic of all prophetic AICs. But the mission mandate here is derived from the healing ministry of Christ, related to the believer's stewardship in service to all creation, as required by God in the creation story of Genesis, and highlighted repeatedly with reference to Colossians 1:17 – in Christ all things hold together. Christ emerges in these sermons as the healer of all creation and his disciples as fellow earth-healers. Hence, the popular designation of these eucharistic events as *maporesanyika* (healing the earth) ceremonies; the Christian counterpart of AZTREC's ancestral tree-planting rituals, called *mafukidzanyika* (clothing the earth).

That the tree-planting Eucharist is mission, that it constitutes and empowers earth-healing mission, is reflected in the sermon of Bishop Wapendama, leader of the Signs of the Apostles Church. During an AAEC afforestation ceremony

at his headquarters he roused his multi-church audience of tree planters as follows:

Mwari [God] saw the devastation of the land. So He called His envoys [ZIRRCO/AAEC leaders] to shoulder the task of delivering the earth ... Together with you, we, the Apostles, are now the *deliverers of the stricken land* ... We, the deliverers were sent by Mwari on a divine mission ... Deliverance, Mwari says, lies in the trees. Jesus said: 'I leave you, my followers, to complete my work!' And that task is the one of healing! *We, the followers of Jesus, have to continue with his healing ministry* ... So, let us all fight, clothing, healing the earth with trees! ... It is our task to strengthen this mission with our numbers of people. If all of us work with enthusiasm we shall clothe and heal the entire land with trees and drive off affliction [the evil of destruction]. I believe we can change it!

Although Wapendama does not specifically mention the Eucharist, his message in the context of holy communion implies that at the point where the union between Christ and his disciples (cutting across denominational boundaries) is sacramentally confirmed, the mission of earth-healing integral to it is visibly acknowledged and revitalised. God certainly takes the initiative to deliver and restore the ravaged earth, but the responsibility to deliver the stricken earth from its malady here and now lies with the Christian body of believers, that is, the church. Implicit in Wapendama's words is the currently emerging AAEC image of Christ's church as keeper of creation. Focal in it is the healing ministry of Christ extended through grace to the entire cosmos.

Wapendama's insights may not represent a rounded theology on the interaction of Eucharist and mission. Yet they signal one of the ways in which AICs update their sacramental-cum-missiological tradition in the face of ecological needs (Carmody 1983:78). They also hint at Africa's understanding of the church's comprehensive missionary task in this world, not as a privileged community of mere soul savers, but in terms of Bishop Anastasios of Androussa's vision that 'the whole world, not only humankind but the entire universe, has been called to share in the restoration that was accomplished by the redeeming work of Christ' (quoted in Messer 1992:69–70).

Good news

The good news of salvation at the heart of AIC proclamation of the Gospel has always included concern for the individual human being. The call for conversion at no point excluded soul-salvation and the promise of eternal life for believers in heaven, however diverse the futuristic perceptions of heaven as 'holy city of God', as antithesis of the 'pit of fire' or merely as being with God in the afterlife, could be. And yet one of the major characteristics of AIC eschatology has always been its emphasis on a visible salvation in the here and now, the realisation of God's saving grace in this existence, in the creation of black 'holy cities' or

Jerusalems' where security, health and wellbeing could be experienced in a closely knit community of believers. In these communities iconic leaders mirror the life of Christ, particularly his healing ministry, and prophets remind their followers of the pervasive presence of the Holy Spirit who liberates humankind from all forms of evil, be it life threatening wizardry or vengeful spirits, colonial oppression, or poverty. Salvation therefore to many Independents has strong connotations of healing – that is, healing in the widest sense of mending any aspect of human life: the brokenness of individuals, communities and relations, etc. – and of liberation.

The trends of the latter dimension – spontaneously expressed and implicit in church life rather than staged as a special agenda – can be traced historically. Early in this century, when the first AICs were formed in Zimbabwe, the leaders liberated themselves and their flocks from white missionary tutelage. They needed to interpret the Bible for themselves and develop new church structures in relation to their own religio-cultural context. Subsequently, healing became the single most effective recruitment strategy in ritual activity of liberating people from a wide range of spirit forces, which in combination with living human agency, was and still is – in terms of African cosmology – considered capable of destroying or spoiling life. Prior to the pre-Independence liberation struggle (*chimurenga*) some AIC leaders, such as Bishop Mutendi of the ZCC, had already become known as figures of resistance to colonial rule, with records of imprisonment for defying government rulings on education, land allocation, and so forth (Daneel 1971: chapter 6). This tradition surfaced during the *chimurenga* war years in various forms of AIC support of the guerrilla fighters and prophetic participation in politicised *pungwe* night vigils. In those years the good news, though muted and in some respects secretive, revolved around religiously sanctioned political liberation; saving the lost lands from alien control. In the post-Independence period *Fambidzano* introduced development programmes that rendered the conference a vehicle of socioeconomic liberation, of combating poverty, a task which ZIRRCO's Women's Desk is also addressing through income-generating projects in rural grassroots society. The decade of the 1990s for the AICs, of course, stands in the sign of environmental liberation.

How is this form of 'good news' conveyed through the AAEC's tree-planting Eucharist? First of all, the Eucharist is conducted as an integral part of the church's war for justice. It is in a sense the sacrament of the War of the Trees, directly linked to the country's and the AIC's history of liberation through the presence of church leaders and also traditionalists who had played prominent roles during the *chimurenga* struggle. Zionist Bishop Musariri, the patron of the AAEC, for instance, attends as former 'war-prophet' who had played a crucial role as mediator between village society and guerrilla fighters in the Gutu district.¹⁸ His very presence evokes a sense of destiny and reminds the green fighters of how Mwari, the God of all creation, had dealt with different forms of

oppression through the passage of time in their own country. Bishop Musariri, moreover, is supported by a host of AAEC bishops and other officebearers, all of whom are thoroughly committed to the cause of environmental reform. Bishop Machokoto, first president of the AAEC, stated:

There is absolutely no doubt about the connection [between our tree planting and the former liberation struggle] ... I will go so far as to say that this is the most important war, following the first *chimurenga*. We are all committed to this struggle to restore the vanquished land through afforestation ... Trees are our *life-line!* We say, 'A ward with dense forests knows no death!' Even President Mugabe and the government know that the earth cannot be the earth, and we cannot be people, without trees.

This combination of *chimurenga* experience and holistic views about the interaction of human beings and nature in the AAEC leadership responsible for the conduct of tree-planting Eucharists contributes towards a potent and convincing message of God's mysterious and protective presence in all of life, in all creation.

Second, the AAEC's innovative use of nicknames in similar fashion to the former guerrilla fighters further enhances the perception of liberating an afflicted environment. Instead of using such names as 'Batai Magidi' (Hold The Spears Of War), Subcheka (The Sub-Machine Gun That Mows Down) and Tickabayana (We Shall Stab Each Other) – the reminders of bloodshed in mortal combat – an assortment of tree names are used to depict various aspects of the green struggle. Bishop Musariri, our patron, is known as Muonde, the wild fig tree. He is the one who nourishes the fighters with fruit, who sustains their morale when the going gets tough. Those who wish to convey their persistence, dedication to or courage in the struggle use names such as *murwiti*, the black ebony, noted for its hard inner core, or other hardwood trees, for example *mabvamaropa* (literally 'that which draws blood'; kiaat), *mukamba* (red or pod mahogany) or *msasa* and *mutondo* acacia species. Those who see themselves as reconcilers between people, churches or humanity and nature use the names of 'softer' wild fruit trees, such as *mukute* (waterberry tree), *mushuku* (wild loquat) or *muroro* (custard apple); trees which sustain humans, animals and birds with their fruit.

During the first few years of our ecological struggle I was known as *Muchakata* (wild cork tree). This name suited me as founder of the movement because the *muchakata* symbolises ancestral protection; in this instance the financial protection provided by the fund-raiser. While the traditionalists continue to use this name in the context of AZTREC, the AAEC leaders have meanwhile insisted that my 'Christian *chimurenga* name' should be 'Bishop Moses', a reminder of the Israelite exodus from Egypt. My successor as director of ZIRRRCON, Revd Solomon Zvanaka, is called *Muzambiringa*, the vine, in recognition of Christ as source of Christian unity in terms of the vine image used in John 15.

The combination of these AAEC names during ceremonies informs and enriches the good news of earthcare by linking several traditions: that of politically liberating Zimbabwe's lost lands, Israel's liberation from Egyptian oppression, christological tenets for an ecumenical front against ecological injustice, and the pre-Christian tradition of nature conservation – attributable to Mwari, the creator – evoked by the tree symbolism implicit in the names of indigenous trees. I am not suggesting that this presentation of the good news in a specific historical and religio-cultural context represents 'pure theology', or that the strong emphasis on human responsibility is entirely free of the hubris and judgementalism of the earthkeepers thus involved. But the passion for and commitment to ecological mission are unmistakable emotive forces which call for respectful consideration by other members of world Christianity.

Third, the tree-planting Eucharist signals much more than the liberation of nature. It repeatedly underscores the empowerment of the poor and marginalised people of the two-thirds world to make a contribution which will be of such significance that it captures, for once, the imagination of the nation, the recognition of the government. To a large extent, the earthkeepers engaged in these ceremonies are similar to those in Brazil who flock to the popular religious movements and are described by Leonardo Boff (1995:66) as:

Impoverished people who are of no account socially, who are wanted by no one, not even by the politicians whom they have elected; people who are anonymous, disoriented in a society that ejects and marginalises them ... (those) who discover in these popular celebrations some measure of dignity, as well as a purpose in continuing to live, hope and struggle.

To the Shona earthkeepers too, involvement in the environmental struggle is not only about greening a barren countryside. It also incorporates quality of being for the earthkeepers, *their* liberation from obscurity in a remote part of Zimbabwe, *their* overcoming of marginality and futility as news media repeatedly report on their work, and *their* liberation from the hopelessness of poverty as salaried nursery keepers, budding woodlots and small-scale income-generating projects at least revive some hope for a better future. Hence, the good news of engagement in a sacramental service to nature is that the dehumanising shackles of decades of colonial rule and the desecration of nature caused largely by disproportionate land apportionment are shaken off in the quest for holistic healing for all life on earth.

Fourth, good news is sacramentally proclaimed by incorporating its inanimate members – the trees, water and soil – as ritual participants in the sacred communion between Christ and his disciples. By virtually standing in embrace with trees at the communion table, earthkeeping communicants are admitting to God that they are incomplete as individuals, that their humanity is informed and qualified by and in nature, and that in such 'widening' of the concept of communion they are not interfering with, but recognising Christ's Lordship

over all the earth (Matthew 28:18) by paying such respect to all 'members' of creation as was originally required by the Creator God. This is the AIC way of replacing exploitive perceptions of human dominion over nature with a service of humble stewardship. The earth is liberated in acknowledging its ability to retaliate as a *ngozi* (vengeful spirit) does when abused, in the address of trees as 'brothers' and 'sisters' in a kind of dialogue which recognises the value and dignity of the tree and allows 'him or her' to respond in the liturgy, and in the request to the soil to receive and protect the seedlings entrusted to it. Respect for the tree allows 'him or her' to have a say about the conditions for the human use of firewood.

Impersonating the vengeful *ngozi* spirit in the liturgy, in terms of earth-destruction, is a striking way of accepting responsibility for the suffering of the earth through deforestation. The *ngozi* is an aggrieved spirit of a murdered person or someone against whom a grave injustice has been perpetrated prior to death (Gelfand 1959:153; Daneel 1971:133–40). In customary law and traditional religion the *ngozi*, which creates havoc in the offender's family through illness and several deaths, has a legitimate claim to full compensation in the form of up to ten sacrificial beasts, called *mutumbu* (literally 'corpse or body') as they pay for the corpse of the deceased. Presenting the trees to be planted as *mitumbu* compensation for the *ngozi* spirit, provoked by wanton tree-felling, is a thoroughly contextualised illustration of appeasement between offending humans and a denuded environment. Compassion is ritually expressed for the badly abused friends, the casualties of human exploitation: the trees, soil, water and other members of nature's community.

As presented in the liturgy, the *ngozi* image has several connotations. Basically it reflects the reckless and distorted spirit of the supposed human stewards of the earth who attack nature with a ruthless determination to destroy, as does the *ngozi*. The seedlings offered to the soil are therefore, in terms of customary law, the legitimate, sacrificial replacement of the stricken tree-trunk corpses. Then there is the suggestion that the earth itself can turn on humanity with a vengeance if pushed too far. Even God turns *ngozi* to ecological offenders by punishing them with severe droughts. Hence, the sprinkling of holy water over the new woodlot, as prayer to God and symbol of rain, is an attempt to appease an angered deity and avert ecological catastrophe. Such an interpretation corresponds with the still persistent traditional belief that the creator-god punishes transgressions against nature by withholding rain. In admission of guilt, the ritual plea for divine discipline to be lifted, and the renewal of human resolve to heed the environment as ordained by Mwari, absolution is found. God responds by sending life-giving rain. Transformed as they are in Christian liturgy, some of these traditional notions are still in evidence.

In this version of extending Christ's salvific good news to all the earth there is no pretence that we, the earthkeepers, are the saviours or the liberators of

creation. Instead, sustained awareness of the limitations of our endeavours in the ranks of the AAEC is cause for humility and recognition of a ministry entirely dependent on divine grace. But as followers of the One who holds all things together, we are erecting not only symbolic but concrete ecological signposts of life-giving hope in a creation suffering as it awaits redemption. For, as Duchrow and Liedke (1989:61) correctly state:

Spirit-endowed beings do not save creation, but creation looks to us. The way that we cope with its suffering shows how much hope there is for creation. When we increase the suffering of creation its hope sinks. When we sharpen the conflict between human beings and nature, and also the conflict between humans, then creation lapses into resignation. When, instead, in solidarity with nature and our fellow human beings, we reduce suffering, then the hope of creation awakes into new life.

Confession and conversion

The confession of sins has always played a prominent role in the healing and sacramental ceremonies of prophetic AICs. Confessions by patients prior to healing treatment enlighten prophets about the causation of illness and give direction to their therapeutic treatment (Daneel 1974: 214f, 292f). The confessions of converts prior to baptism symbolically illustrate the neophyte's acceptance of the authority of the church, as represented by the prophet eliciting and listening to such confessions, as well as the ultimate and permeating guidance of the Holy Spirit mediated or witnessed to by the prophetic leader. Public confessions prior to the conduct of the sacrament of holy communion are in essence a mass demonstration of right-mindedness and obedience in relation to God. In the Zionist and Apostolic movements, such activity represents an intricate interplay of ecclesial control and cleansing the community of believers so that it can appear in a worthy state before the holy God during the most revered and intimate ritual expression of divine-human encounter. In the Apostolic movement of Maranke and Mutendi's ZCC, the numerically strongest AICs in Zimbabwe, the ceremonies of confession consist of night-long vigils, during which prophets in the name of the Holy Spirit spend hours in assessing whether the self-confessed or prophetically accused wizards (*varoyi*: witches and/or sorcerers) are sufficiently prepared or repentant to participate in the sacrament.

In these movements, the basest form of evil of human sinfulness is *uroyi*, wizardry. The wizard, as the destroyer of human relations and of life itself, is the personification of the biblical Satan, the antithesis of the state of harmony and wellbeing in grace worked by the Holy Spirit. This explains the heightened preoccupation of the prophets with *uroyi*, where church cleansing precedes the anticipated sacramental union of the believers with the body of Christ (Daneel 1974: chapter 4; Daneel 1990:220f). Against this background, it is understandable that conversion, among other things, will imply the individual's

turning away from any inter-relational negativity associated with *uroyi*. In addition, conversion means integration of the convert into the community of believers where the power of the Holy Spirit in prophetic praxis shields the faithful against the onslaughts of evil, *uroyi* in particular.

Some AAEC prophets are already applying their new insights about ecological stewardship to their role as 'guardians of the morals' of their respective church communities. In the baptismal context they are increasingly revealing that the Spirit of God requires converts to confess not only their failings in relation to fellow human beings, but more specifically their ecological sins: random tree-felling without planting any in return, overgrazing, riverbank cultivation and the neglect of contour ridges, thereby causing soil erosion – in other words, taking the good earth for granted, exploiting it, without nurturing it or reverencing it in return. Increasingly these sins are called the *uroyi venyika*, that is, 'the wizardry of the land', implying earth destruction to which all humans are party. The qualification *uroyi* illustrates how seriously the AICs view human abuse of the earth. Conversion, in this mindset, can no longer ignore the relationship between humans and mother earth. The individual's change of heart in re-birth will remain incomplete if it does not include a deliberate move from earth-destruction to earthcare. Membership to the community of believers is preceded by public confession of having practised ecological *uroyi*, of having offended the Creator and the community of all creation. The counterpoint is turning towards Christian discipleship – an essential feature of which includes responsibility for the earth. Subsequently, spiritual growth of the individual believer is not merely the fruit of worship, Bible study and prayer in the conventional sense, but also the result of encountering God in the protective stewardship of his garden.

At 'Jordan' it makes sense to the novices to confess ecological guilt in a place where the barren landscape, erosion gullies and the unprotected river banks are clearly in evidence. Entering 'Jordan' in baptism, after such confession, means more than individual incorporation into the body of Christ, the church, and the prospect of personal salvation. In a sense the earthkeeping church is rendering the broken environment party to the sacrament of baptism, just as the trees to be planted 'participate' in the Eucharist. The barren plains and erosion gullies, so to speak, enter the waters of life to be baptised into a future of healing and recovery, in the person of the novice who, in crossing the river, gives witness to his or her transition from earth-abuser to earthkeeper.

To many Independents baptism is also a healing ceremony. Here the life-giving water of 'Jordan', filled for the occasion according to common belief by the Holy Spirit, is drunk by the baptisands for cleansing and curative purposes. It follows that the ceremony offers a unique opportunity for interpreting the Holy Spirit as healer both of the people and of the land. Baptism, therefore, becomes yet another feature of an extended ministry of sacramental healing. In this instance, the drinking of 'Jordan' water symbolises the shift from personal,

individual benefit of the baptism by the Holy Spirit's healing and salvific powers to a ritual statement of solidarity with all creation; an affirmation of a new commitment, through individual conversion, to earth-healing. As the Spirit-filled water of 'Jordan' heals and empowers the newly converted earthkeepers, it also touches the wounded earth where it courses down a riverbed troubled by siltation, in itself a silent reminder to those with eyes to see that they have to be more than mere spectators in the realisation in this existence of the new heaven and new earth.

The development of new perceptions of environmental sin is best illustrated in the confessions preceding the tree-planting Eucharist. A group of 'green prophets' from the Spirit-type churches in the AAEC brand all offences that cause firewood shortage, soil erosion, poor crops and the absence of wildlife as the gravest of all sins – a genuine form of *uroyi*, threatening not only human survival, but all other forms of life in this world. This trend has not yet developed into a practice of separating the unrepentant ecological *varoyi* from the other partakers of the holy communion, as a parallel to the pre-sacramental cleansing praxis of the Maranke Apostles (Daneel 1974:293f). Nevertheless, as the resolve of the earthkeeping churches hardens and the convictions of the prophets grow – to the effect that the Holy Spirit rather than human beings motivates and guides the green struggle – unrepentant *varoyi* in the AICs will increasingly find themselves debarred from participation in the tree-planting Eucharist. Discussions with earthkeeping prophets indicate that they already have clear perceptions of who the earth-destroying wizards who resist 'true conversion' are. They mention, for instance, the exploiters in resettlement areas who indiscriminately fell as many trees as they can for quick profit from selling firewood; those who refuse to accept the law made by freedom fighters who wage the 'War of the Trees', namely that firewood can only be used by those who plant the trees that supply it; the resisters of government conservationist measures and of the prohibitions of AZTREC's tribal elders against tree-felling in the traditional holy groves (*marambatemwa*) of the ancestors.

Ecological confessions at the Eucharist have a salutary effect on church life. They stimulate reorientation as regards the meaning of conversion. They also serve as a form of repetitive, public reaffirmation of individual commitment to the church's mission of earthcare. The use of the concept *uroyi* is certainly effective in driving home the seriousness of earth-destruction. Inbuilt safeguards, however, prevent the introduction into the church of the excesses of the traditional system of witchcraft accusations. It is recognised, for instance, that sin cannot be externalised through scapegoating and stigmatising whereby only one or a few individuals are held responsible for the ills in society and nature. The AAEC prophets and preachers recognise the sinfulness of all human beings and set an example by confessing that they themselves have committed acts of *uroyi* against nature. What is rejected is the unrepentant

heart which, despite promptings for change, remains motivated by greed and ruthless selfishness at the expense of the environment. Yet, even in the extreme cases, the earthkeeping church offers the prospect of reconciliation between offender and community of believers, as substitute for the traditional punitive measures of social ostracism or execution of the *muroyi*. At the cross of Christ, the invitation unto individual repentance and reconciliation with God and the entire earth-community remains open.

Views about sin, repentance and conversion obtain relief in the AAEC's eucharistic sermons where a discernible profile of a new and thoroughly contextualised theology of creation, a theology of God's kingdom and the role of humans in it, is emerging. I can but touch on a few features. In the 'garden of Eden' theme, which features prominently in most green sermons, Adam and Eve do not figure as the crown of creation at all, or as rulers over creation. Instead they are seen as the co-equals of animal and plant life, in a relationship of complete interdependency. This union is repeatedly emphasised in terms of Shona peasant philosophy. For instance, a preacher would say: 'I am alive because I am *one* with this *muchakata* tree in whose shade I stand. Without this tree I cannot breathe; without this tree I do not exist.' This union qualifies all human beings per definition as earthkeepers, in a relationship of communication and mutual respect with nature. As 'brothers' and 'sisters', the trees themselves now develop a sense of dignity and self-respect, knowing that they are no longer to be the objects of mindless destruction by humans.

Revd Mandondo of the African Reformed Church (*Shonganiso Mission*, Daneel 1971), in one of his tree-planting sermons, depicted God as 'the first tree planter':

First, God made the trees, His children. We, human beings, in turn, are the inheritors of this garden, this *kingdom of God* consisting of trees and animals. The inheritance of this kingdom means that we are responsible for the continuation of the work God had started. We say that as Christians we are the inheritors belonging to God. If we are serious about this claim, it means that we, too, are children of God and as such have to proceed with the planting of trees and taking care of living beings. Genuine inheritors are stewards of the land.

Here, once again, plant life and human beings feature as equals. In fact the kingdom of God is portrayed as basically starting with the garden of Eden in which trees and animals feature as 'God's children'. Then come humans, who happen to be *also* God's children. They inherit instead of reign over God's kingdom and their very inheritance qualifies them as stewards who give, restore and protect, rather than take or invade the life of God's creatures on this earth. In this earthkeeper's view, conversion implies acceptance of the privilege of claiming the Creator's inheritance and the responsibility of environmental guardianship that goes with it. The imagery of God's kingdom is not spiritualised

in the inner world of individual believers, but concretely observable in all of nature. Remote from the triumphalist attitude of the technological age, which supposedly conquers and reigns over nature, the appropriate position of God's earthkeepers is qualified by humility in relation to and respect for the fellow 'citizens' – the trees and the animals – of God's kingdom.

Another feature of the earthkeeper's 'garden of Eden' theology that is gaining prominence is that Adam's original sin is given contextualised African ecological connotations. Zionist Bishop Farawo suggests, for instance, that because God had planted the first trees of creation he was and still is particularly jealous and protective of all his trees. In a near-pantheistic, immanentist perception of the presence of God's Spirit in trees, Farawo literally considers God to hurt and experience anguish whenever trees are felled. It is this love of God for his creation which Adam disregarded and antagonised when he first sinned against God. Said Farawo:

When there was harmony between God and Adam, God was happy to observe the wellbeing of his animals and trees. But when Adam sinned everything was spoilt. *Mwari's disappointment caused Him to withdraw and to become remote* [my italics]. Even today we are still far away from Mwari because we sin against Him much more grievously than did Adam. Take, for example, the Masvingo Province, especially Chivi district. The land is barren because all God's trees had been felled. So God is absent.

In Farawo's views one is struck by the parallel with traditional African creation myths, where the theme of the Creator God's anger and withdrawal from creation through some mishap or misbehaviour of human beings invariably is quite prominent. To the earthkeeper of today the cardinal sin against God is the disrespect for his presence in nature and the mindless provocation of his protective jealousy over his forests – the present-day symbolic extensions of the garden Eden – as is evidenced in the deforested regions of the Chivi district where Farawo himself leads the church's 'War of the Trees'. Adam's sin, moreover, is not judged and rejected, but is identified with and given particular poignancy in a rural context where environmental destruction reflects God's anguish and withdrawal. Absolution and deliverance, it seems, are directly related to restoring Mwari's creation whereby harmony and closeness between Creator and human beings are restored.

In all this, human beings quite clearly are called upon to be co-workers of *Mwari* in the struggle for the preservation and ultimate redemption of all creation; a conviction which features prominently in current eco-theological literature in the West.¹⁹ The AAEC contributes to such insight a certain reserve about humanity sharing in God's all-powerful dominion over nature. The confessions of ecological sins (above) instead, point to an awareness of human hubris and rebellion against the Creator, as evidenced so overwhelmingly in all forms of human-induced earth-destruction.

On the one hand, therefore, the AAEC earthkeepers will concur with Zerbe's (in de Witt 1991:85) observations that 'while the kingdom is fundamentally God's act of redemption, *Christians are co-workers in it* [my italics]. Thus Paul says that while the reconciliation of the cosmos is God's ministry in Christ, this same ministry has been given to Paul and his co-workers (with reference to 2 Corinthians 5:17-21).'

Despite strong leanings in the AAEC's Zionist and Apostolic member churches towards apocalyptic expectations regarding heaven as the final station for eternal life, our earthkeeping association will be existentially inclined to underscore Zerbe's (ibid.:91) claim that 'the final hope of Christians is not heaven, but participation in God's restoration of all things. This is the ultimate vision that informs the present task of Christians in this world.'

On the other hand, however, on account of the experience of how easily the peasant's 'axe of destruction' takes over, the co-workers of Christ – according to Revd Mandondo – will always have to recognise and respect Christ's power and reign in heaven and earth, as condition for human participation in the restoration of creation. For, as he repeatedly insists: 'No (environmental) work that we can do can be complete without God's approval and his empowerment.'

The church in environmental mission

Outreach in the name of Jesus Christ to the Spirit-type churches has always meant the communication of a message of wholeness in healing, whereby the people of God could find wellbeing, peace and belonging in an often hostile world. The black 'Jeruselems' and 'holy cities' epitomised the presence of God where church leaders and their bands of prophetic healers mirrored as icons the healing powers of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. Healing in this context encompassed all of human life. Not only were assailing spirits exorcised, wizardry banished, barren women cured and socially reinstated and all kinds of ailments treated, but those without spouses or jobs were taken care of, entire congregations in drought-ridden areas were fed, mediation of rain and sound farming methods secured good crops and so forth. Hence, through a comprehensive healing ministry the church obtained the image of 'hospital' (*hospitara*)!

There can be little doubt that the AAEC's engagement in the War of the Trees has led to a breakthrough in these AIC notions of the church as hospital! As propounded by Bishop Wapendama, the healing ministry of Christ is still focal in the church's mission, or the church understood as mission. But it now includes more deliberately than before the holistic deliverance and salvation of all of Mwari's stricken land. This extended perception of salvation obtains clarity to the extent that the church realises its role as *keeper of creation*, in a mission which mobilises its entire membership as active agents, instead of only a number of

specialised evangelising missionaries. It is as if Bishop Wapendama anticipates in such healing of creation a new dimension of liberation in the church itself – liberation from an overriding preoccupation with the human condition. In healing the earth, by reaching out beyond the physical and mental ailments of human beings, by setting internal leadership and inter-church conflicts aside for a higher, God-given purpose, the earthkeeping church, the earthkeeper him/herself is healed. In such liberation unto earth-service the apostolate of the church obtains prominence and meaning.

There is endless variation in the AAEC's tree-planting sermons which bear out the strong theological undercurrent of understanding earthcare as *missio Dei* and therefore as the mission of God's church. Revd Davison Tawoneichi of the Evangelical Ministry of Christ Church, for instance, preached on occasion:

Earthkeeping is part of the body of Christ. It is so because we as humans are part of His body and the trees are part of us; they are essential for us to breathe, to live. So, trees, too, are part of Christ's body. Our destruction of nature is an offence against the body of Christ ... it hurts Christ's body. Therefore the church should heal the wounded body of Christ ...

This view complements Bishop Wapendama's assertion about mission as an extension of Christ's healing ministry. Only, in this instance, Christ's body is understood as being itself afflicted by the abuse of nature.²⁰ This statement underscores the growing tendency in AAEC tree-planting Eucharists to view Christ's body in both its ecclesiastic and its cosmic connotations: first, through partaking in the elements of the sacrament the earthkeepers witness to their unity in Christ's body, the church, and derive from it strength, compassion and commitment for their environmental struggle; and second, they subsequently set out on their healing mission of tree planting to restore the cosmically wounded body of Christ.

In both prophetic and non-prophetic churches the recognition of a *divine* mandate for the earthkeeping mission prevails. The emphasis on Mwari's initiative, Mwari's care for creation and Mwari's commissioning of his church in earthcare, is always patently in evidence. Said Revd Mandondo in conclusion to a non-prophetic tree-planting ceremony at Shonganiso Mission:

Today we did God's work. You will see, in only a short space of time the trees will grow tall. And we shall say: God exists. God does what pleases him? Today we have done his bidding. Today we have learned that if we want to be God's children, we must do His work ... God sent us and commanded us to do this [tree planting]. It is not so much a matter of success or failure [in terms of the survival rate of trees planted], but in the first place complying with God's will, giving him joy through our obedience.

Here God's commission unto earth-stewardship is verbalised by someone who bases the church's divine mandate for environmental reform on more than

scripture reading. For, to Revd Mandondo all of nature is sacrament, testifying to the creator's presence. Standing in awe at the wonder of creation and the mystery of God's closeness in itself draws the beholder unto the responsibility of earthcare. Mandondo's assertions that tree planting is God's work was not preceded by direct references to biblical texts – and this without minimising the importance of scriptures – but the mystic's intuition:

Up in the mountains I can see Mwari. There his strength and his works are revealed. Whose strength do those massive trees [at Mt. Selinda] reveal? Mwari's, of course ... His work is clearly seen in the things he has created. Follow the rivers and observe the remaining waters! Whose work do you think it is? Of Mwari!

How then does the green mission affect the life and shape of the earthkeeping church? First, the most convincing sign of adjustment is noticeable in the shift of a healing focus at church headquarters. The black 'Jeruselems' are still healing colonies where the afflicted, the marginalised and the poor can feel at home. But the concept *hospitara* is visibly expanded in so far as dedicated earthkeeping prophets are expanding their colonies into environmental hospitals to accommodate the wounded earth. The 'patient' in this instance is the denuded land. The 'dispensary' (that is, the faith healing arsenal of holy cords, holy water, staffs, paper and related symbols of divine healing power to serve people) becomes the nursery where the correct 'medicine' for the patient, in terms of a wide assortment of indigenous, exotic and fruit trees is cultivated. The entire church community – both at headquarters and at outlying congregations; both church residents and visiting patients – now becomes the healer agent under the guidance of the church's principal earth-healer and the 'high command' of the War of the Trees, at the ZIRRCO-NAAC operational headquarters in Masvingo town. Consistent aftercare in new woodlots provides proof of the church's commitment in mission; the woodlot itself becoming the focus of witnessing sermons and the source of inspiration for an expanding ministry, as the testimonies of healed human patients in the past contributed both to a reaffirmation of belief in God's healing powers and to the church's recruitment of new members. Far from interfering with the church's worship and pastoral work, the earth-healing ministry – as observed in the churches of leading NAAC leaders, that is, Bishops Wapendama, Marinda, Machokoto, Chimhangwa and others – appears to provide new impetus and direction to church life, as well as numerical church growth.

The impact of the green struggle on the NAAC's member churches is best illustrated in the case of Bishop Farawo of the Zimbabwe Zion Apostolic Church. Having moved from his church headquarters in the Bikita district to the Chivi local government headquarters to take charge of one of our largest nurseries, the bishop and his family turned the nursery complex with its residences and toolshed into a veritable little 'Zion City of the Trees.' Bishop Farawo tends

to the members of his church in the district, but afforestation has become the hallmark of his entire ministry. He collaborates with Forestry Commission representatives and land extension officers on a regular basis. He mobilises school communities to assist him with seed collection for the nursery and to engage in competitions of nursery and woodlot development. The bishop oversees numerous tree-planting ventures in the district and supplies not only the AAEC members with seedlings but also other churches, associations, clubs and traditionalist elders belonging to AZTREC. Thus a distinctly Zionist Christian ministry of afforestation serves a religiously pluralistic society, strengthening in the process a growing network of inter-church ties, as well as goodwill and mutual interaction between Christians and adherents of traditional religion.

Second, in the context of the AAEC a new generation of iconic church leaders, environmental missionaries, whose evangelical drive includes good news for all creation, emerges. They replace the prominent first-generation AIC leaders like Bishop Mutendi (ZCC) and Johane Maranke (AACJM) who featured as 'black Messiahs'²¹ to their followers – illuminating the mediation and saviourhood of Christ in an existentially understandable idiom. Now, instead of a single leader giving substance to the presence of the biblical Messiah in African rural society, through the mediation of rain and good crops for peasants, through faith healing, education and socio-political involvement, revolving around a single 'holy city,' the mode of operation is shifted to an entire group of 'Jerusalems' to help establish the grace and salvation implicit in Christ's presence in the Creator's neglected and abused garden. Thereby the entire oikos is declared God's 'holy city.' In these iconic missionaries Christ reveals a disturbing truth in the African context, namely that all agro-economic development and progress will be meaningless unless it includes environmental sanctification, nature's restoration, an ecological economy which – under the reign of Christ – consciously strikes a balance between exploitive agricultural progress and altruistic earth-restoration. This is the true purpose of an expanded missionary mandate and message proclaimed by the AAEC's iconic missionaries. Moltmann (1985:227f) describes such calling for all humanity:

In the messianic light of the gospel, the appointment [of humans] to rule over animals and the earth also appears as the 'ruling with Christ' of believers. For it is to Christ, the true and visible image of the invisible God on earth, that 'all authority is given in heaven and on earth' (Mt 28:18). His liberating and healing rule also embraces the *dominium terrae* – the promise given to human beings at creation. Under the conditions of history and in the circumstances of sin and death, the sovereignty of the crucified and risen Messiah Jesus is the only true *dominium terrae* ... It would be wrong to seek for the *dominium terrae*, not in the lordship of Christ, but in other principalities and powers – in the power of the state or the power of science and technology.

The AAEC missionaries give expression in the African context to the messianic



Plate 10: AZTREC earthkeepers at work. Traditionalist spirit medium Lydia Chabata explains the process of planting fruit trees to paramount chiefs (top). Two former guerilla fighters of the *chimurenga* struggle assist tribal elder during tree-planting ceremony (bottom)



dominium terrae, not so much in conference debates, not through repetitious reference in sermons to Christ's lordship in creation but by mediating the power of Christ mentioned in Mt 28: 18 through persistent presence in village life where commoners, the masses of people, all who want to participate, are empowered to share a new dominion of service. The 'mediation' thus facilitated by the earthkeeping icons through tree planting, is not obscuring Christ's Lordship or Saviourhood – as some evangelicals may be inclined to think – but unveiling and illuminating dimensions of the mystery of divine presence in nature which to many believers and non-believers alike may have gone unnoticed.

The iconic missionaries all have their roots in peasant society. Be they salaried staff members at AAEC headquarters, full-time nursery or woodlot keepers, bishops and prophets with 'environmental hospitals' or women developing ministries of compassion, they all rely on the land for sustenance and are therefore well placed to demonstrate their churches' solidarity with nature. Their identification with Christ's Lordship in all creation reminds one of the Old Testament prophets who related Israel's salvation to the history of their holy land. As Amos prophesied the fall of the kingdom of Judah because of Israel's over-exploitation of the land and disregard of the poor, the Shona iconic prophets are attributing wanton destruction of the earth and related droughts, floods and famines to human hubris and defiance of the universal reign of Christ.

Third, the AAEC's afforestation programmes have stimulated a need for new ethical codes. There is little hesitation amongst leading earthkeepers that green church laws should be drafted and that stringent church discipline should be applied if such laws are trespassed. Bishop Farawo has propagated a process of church councils trying tree fellers and punishing wanton offenders through extra duties of tree planting and aftercare to compensate for the damage done. Bishop Chimhangwa urged prompt earthkeeping legislation to reinforce the gospel message of the earth's salvation and to set the parameters for the church's ecological mission. He considered many people still to be ignorant of the 'gospel of the trees,' as a result of which 'the threat of the destructive axe must be repelled.' Mrs Chimhangwa, his wife, felt so strongly about the unchecked use of the 'destructive axe' that she argued the church should be instrumental in having trespassers thrown into jail until the urgency of environmental protection was fully understood.

The more radical exponents of the green struggle who identify the church's mission with environmental legislation and control insist that the prophetically exposed 'wizards of the earth' be debarred from holy communion or even be excommunicated if they persist in their evil ways. Evangelist Samuel Nhongo of the Zion Christian Church (an offshoot of the original ZCC of Bishop Mutendi), for instance, expresses such views as these:

Simon Peter was told by Jesus that on him, Peter the Rock, the church will be built. Jesus said: 'I give you the keys to lock and unlock!' It is in this light

that I see the earth-destroyers whom we expel from the church. We cannot keep undisciplined tree fellers for they are the *varoyi* who should be locked out of the church. The churches, the chiefs [AZTREC] and the government should sit down together and plan properly for this war. The church's new environmental laws should be universally known and respected! Otherwise, we will be merely chasing the wind. In the Bible it says you have to leave the weeds to grow with the come This means the church cannot judge finally in this world. But cleansing of the church must proceed lest the [green] struggle stagnates.

Seen as an institution with legislative and disciplinary powers the church – in the earthkeeper's view – also becomes the vehicle of uncompromising struggle as it discerns and opposes evil forces that feed on mindless exploitation of the limited resources of the earth. In this mission the church is at risk, willing to be controversial, to suffer and sacrifice whatever discipleship in this realm requires.

Earthkeeper's dialogue

The AICs have always had a lively dialogue with the practitioners of traditional religion. Issues of ancestral veneration, the use of magic, vengeful *ngozi* spirits, and wizardry were, and still are, addressed by healing prophets where they operate in their healing colonies or surrounding villages (Daneel 1974: chapters 3 and 4). A prophetic condition for faith healing treatment has always been intensive interaction and probing discussions between the patient and the healer. Thereby the demonic source of affliction – diagnosed initially as ancestral, alien or vengeful spirit in terms of the traditional cosmology – could be exposed and exorcised from the affected host through the superior power of the Holy Spirit. Dialogue with the traditional worldview was taken seriously by the Zionist and Apostolic healers in an attempt to achieve religious ascendancy over rather than appeasement with the old spirit forces. Likewise the contextualisation of ceremonies within the prophetic churches proceeded from a 'fulfilment theology' which retained traditional rituals only to the extent that these were adopted for the customary needs of people still to be addressed in an understandable manner, yet sufficiently transformed in accordance with Christian norms to be 'new' and 'fulfilled'. In the prophetic tradition therefore, the purpose of dialogue was effective witness on behalf of the exclusive demands of Christ as Saviour; antithesis in the name of ultimate truth as opposed to the tolerance of religious relativity.

However, the closing of ranks of Christians and traditionalists in the 'War of the Trees' set the stage for the development of an *AIC theology of religions* with different religious qualifications, emphases and patterns of interaction than was the case before. It should be stated at the outset that there is no deliberate agenda or group pressure which compromises religious identity or imposes new forms of religious integration. The constitutions of AZTREC and the AAEC

Plate 11: AZTREC chief addresses ancestral guardians of the land during beer libation as introduction to traditionalist tree-planting ceremony (top). ZIRRCO delegates annually visit the oracular high-god shrines to report on the progress of the War of the Trees. Here Chief Muriye – former patron of AZTREC – confers with junior priests about the care of fruit trees (bottom)



call for inter-religious cooperation in the green struggle and at the same time insist on respect for religious identity. The member churches of the AAEC share union in a common mission without unification in all facets of church life through a centralising agency imposed from above. Likewise, the members of AZTREC and AAEC share the responsibilities of the struggle without interfering in the divergent religious moulds in which such activity is cast.

Nevertheless, there is a great difference between prophets developing policies of antithesis to traditional religion from within the relative privacy or protected confines of their healing colonies, as opposed to the more 'open' situation where earthkeeping requires the conduct of religious ceremonies in the presence of members of out-groups who in the past were the still to be converted 'heathen' or at least the 'religious opposition.' Much greater caution is required in the evaluation of another's religion when the 'other' is always present in what has in effect become religiously pluriform brother- and sisterhoods bonded together in a common cause. The earthkeeping brother and sister is no longer an 'opponent', but a fellow pilgrim in the quest for eco-justice; someone whose religiosity is seen and respected in the reverencing of creation and the creator. What has in fact happened is that the 'War of the Trees' has created sufficient common ground for a process of meaningful inter-religious dialogue. Such dialogue is marked by tolerance and mutuality based on growing friendships across the lines of religious divisions and a preparedness to share religious insights relevant to a common destiny. This by no means implies religious relativism. For an AAEC tree-planting Eucharist, as opposed to an ancestral beer libation, amongst other things, highlights the stark difference in religious approaches. Yet it is as if the green struggle through the newly planted trees breathes the message: you cannot afford the luxury of religious conflict if it causes the wounded earth to suffocate!

The emergent earthkeepers' theology of religions is not only tolerant and inclined towards reconciliation in the face of religious feuds of the past. It is quite deliberately daring and adventurous, seeking new patterns of encounter which have not previously been explored. And in doing so a green ministry takes shape, one which somehow, in terms of the AAEC's mission, keeps in balance the love for and acceptance of the non-Christian earthkeeping partner, together with the testimony of a unique Saviour for all the world who challenges all concerned to engage in Christ-discipleship, without eliminating the creative tension between these two seemingly irreconcilable realities. In other words, the AIC earthkeepers on the whole are identifying with their traditionalist counterparts, attending traditional tree-planting rituals and maintaining constructive communication at virtually all levels of interaction, without obscuring or compromising the 'otherness' or inherent evangelistic outreach of Christianity.

A few examples will suffice. Through their attendance of AAEC tree-planting eucharists, the AZTREC chiefs cause issues concerning the involvement of the guardian ancestors (their opposition to land degradation, the scope of their ecological authority and so forth) to surface. Consequently, the role of the Holy Spirit is related to the world of the senior ancestors more positively than Zionists and Apostles generally allow for. Instead of the *varidzi venyika* (guardian ancestors of the land) being branded as 'demons', fit only to be exorcised or disassociated from by Christian prophets, a certain reverence for them is observed by the Christian tree planters. Their protection of nature is more readily identified with the biblical code of Christian stewardship, and the question is at least considered whether these ancestors do not represent a theologically acceptable form of African *praeparatio evangelica*. Can the church not at this point recognise a foreknowledge about and responsibility for nature, inspired by the universal God of all creation and developed by the pre-Christian sages of Africa? Whatever the answer to this question and however genuine the respect shown the chiefs by the prophetic earthkeepers, this preoccupation with the ancestors is also used by the *maporesanyika* preachers as a point of contact to introduce and explain Christ as the fulfilment of all ancestorhood, as the true *muridzi venyika* guardian of the land, *the 'Ancestor' of all the universe*, commissioned and empowered by the Godhead to introduce new life to all creation. In this vision of Christ's fulfilment of traditional spirit guardianship, the attitude towards the old order – as reflected in the respect shown the participant chiefs – is less that of judgment than of encouragement of the traditionalist elders to develop fully in the present earthkeeping dispensation the ecological instincts which have all along permeated African holism. The message thus proclaimed and enacted, for all its irenic insight and tolerance, seriously questions the popular myth held in many traditionalist circles that Jesus Christ is merely the white man's *mhondoro* ('tribal ancestor') who commands no more authority or power than the Shona hero-ancestors: Chaminuka, Kaguwi and Nehanda. In AAEC theology Christ's 'ancestorhood' and his communication with the guardian ancestors in no way detracts from acceptance of his lordship (Mt 28:18) over all creation. Whatever the demands of human partnership in the struggle and however strong the drive for dialogue without bias, this cornerstone of Christian earth-stewardship remains. The entire tree-planting Eucharist testifies to Christ's lordship in heaven and on earth!

Dialogue at times erupts into dispute and strife. Discussions about converting *marambatemwa* (holy groves) into fenced game sanctuaries have, for instance, led to fairly serious religiously based conflicts between spirit mediums and AIC prophets. The spirit mediums opposed game fencing on the grounds that the senior ancestors would feel offended if a game fence was to obstruct their passage between their graves in the holy mountains and the surrounding villages where their living descendants lived. The Zionist prophets, in turn, favoured a game fence, provided they were still permitted occasional entry for

fasting and prayer on the mountains concerned. When such disputes erupt during conference sessions it is not an unusual sight to see mediums becoming spirit possessed, whereby the ancestors themselves can express an opinion through their hosts. AIC leaders respond to such a 'spirit offensive' by speaking in tongues to demonstrate the presence of the Holy Spirit, and by spontaneously singing the church songs associated with exorcism. Emotional outbursts of this nature invariably quench rising tensions and are mutually experienced as a form of 'comic relief', which ends in laughter and a restored communal equilibrium suited for further discussions. At times such events stimulate follow-up discourse between the respective delegates of AZTREC and the AAEC; unofficial debates which carry on late at night and serve to enlighten the parties involved about each others' religious persuasions. Temporary conflicts and polarisation along religious lines, in the end, is overcome in friendship forged by shared commitment in a common cause.

One of the highlights of the development of new patterns of dialogue through earthkeeping is the accompaniment of chiefs and mediums by prominent AAEC leaders to the high-god cult shrines at Matonjeni (the Matopo hills near Bulawayo) during AZTREC's annual pilgrimage there. This is a far cry from the conventional structures in the Spirit-type churches which prevent church members from any form of participation in traditional rituals. In the light of the bitter conflicts between Bishop Mutendi's ZCC and the high-god cult officials in the past, over rainmaking and tribal political issues (Daneel 1970:61-71), any form of association with the 'demons of Matonjeni' would still be anathema to conservative Zionists. Yet Zionist earthkeepers have now attended and witnessed the secretive oracular sessions, befriended the cult priests and priestesses and spent hours with them discussing rainmaking and related religio-ecological issues.

As a result, former barriers are broken down as new opportunities for joint ecological endeavour are explored. In the process a fund of religious information is exchanged as the differences and similarities between the Mwari of the Bible and the Mwari of Matonjeni are considered. Greater understanding is achieved about conceptual interaction: about traditional notions of the creator as Wakumusoro (the One above) still influencing the Christian understanding of God, and about the Christian perception of a deity as personal being replacing the former remoteness of an angered creator who had withdrawn from creation and left the day-to-day affairs of human life to the ancestors. Stark contrasts about the uniqueness and saviourhood of Christ are indeed registered. But these obtain a humane face where Mwari, as the one creator of the universe and as the One who directs the 'War of the Trees,' breaks through the barriers of religious self-interest and judgementalism.

When the delegation of AZTREC and AAEC representatives head home from the Matopo shrines the requested rain for the newly planted trees often starts falling. Loud thunderclaps are greeted by the raising of traditionalist and Zionist fists

with shouts of 'Tovera!' – that is, the traditional praise-name of Mwari. In this context the raised fist signals reconciliation and liberation. For Mwari, creator of the universe, is One, and his earthkeepers are one.

Trinitarian perspectives

In conclusion I shall attempt to sketch briefly the profile of a commissioning God as envisaged and encountered in the earthkeeping mission of the AAEC.

Divine immanence and missio Dei

Imaging God as immanent in all creation is an existential reality in the ranks of the AAEC which runs parallel to the consensus of numerous modern eco-theologians. Moltmann (1985:13) gives expression to the latter when he says that 'an ecological doctrine of creation implies a new kind of thinking about God. The centre of this thinking is no longer the distinction between God and the world. The centre is the recognition of the presence of God in the world and the presence of the world in God.' In this perspective God is not a remote creator but the Spirit of the universe. 'Through the powers and potentialities of the Spirit, the Creator indwells the creatures He has made, animates them, holds them in life, and leads them into the future of His kingdom' (ibid.:14).

AIC leaders have expressed similar convictions in a different idiom and in ritual activity rather than in written theology. The problem they faced in peasant society was not so much the image of a pantheistic deity sustained by matriarchal fertility cults, as the Israelites experienced among the Canaanites. They were confronted with traditional perceptions of *Wokumusoro*, the One above, a *deus remotus* who had remained somewhat of an outsider because of the predominance of tribal and family ancestors in everyday religious life. Even if Mwari, the creator in his/her oracular manifestation in Shona religion, was less distant than some of the other African high-gods, an element of absence of the divine – as described by J. V. Taylor (1963:85) – was noticeable in Shona village life: 'Beginning in this world as part of the human hierarchy of the living and the ancestors, they [the gods] are eventually, as we might say, pushed through the sky-light and lost sight of.'

The route which the AICs followed in 'bringing the remote creator of tradition into creation, into everyday life' was quite different from that followed by some of their more sophisticated counterparts, the African academic theologians. The latter, as passionate apologists, tended to argue via the prefiguration paradigm that the God of Africa and the God of the Bible are essentially one. What linked the two deities were lines of continuity into fulfilment of African religion rather than discontinuity as propagated by white missionaries.²² By contrast, the AIC prophetic leaders realised that the immanence of the ancient God of the Matopo

hills was not the same as the pervasive, overriding mysterious presence of the biblical God, as they believed was increasingly manifest in their 'Zion Cities' and 'Jeruselems.' So they proceeded by confronting and transforming the old Mwari cult. Bishop Mutendi of the ZCC, in particular, substituted the old system of sending cult officials to Matonjeni with the Zionist *ungano yembeu* (seed conference) at the onset of the rainy season, when the 'man of God' could be petitioned directly for rain and good crops at church headquarters. The remote One of Matonjeni emerged more clearly at 'Zion City' as the immanent Christian God in creation. His protective blessing was now related directly to the seeds and crops in the presence of thousands of ZCC subsistence farmers. In a very real sense the bishop mirrored the incarnation of the biblical, ecologically active Mwari at Zion City. Himself a subsistence farmer, as dependent on the agricultural economy as his followers, the bishop identified with them totally in his petitioning of God.

In so far as Bishop Mutendi and other prophetic leaders did not shirk conflict with the Matonjeni cultists and other practitioners of traditional religion they appear to have been less inhibited than their academic counterparts in presenting the uniqueness of the Christian Mwari, who both accommodates and judges the God of Africa. Their attempts at witnessing about the creator-God as Insider resemble the penetration of the Old Testament Yahweh into the Semitic world. Bosch (1984:51f) gives a striking description of the *continuity* and *discontinuity* between Yahweh and El, a prominent Semite God. 'El was king, creator and judge, the holy one, the One to whom the heavens belonged and the God of the heavenly council (Psalm 82). Yahweh absorbed all these characteristics and still emerged as uniquely different deity. Without being equated with El, he penetrated the Semitic world via El.' Likewise in the Shona prophetic movement, Yahweh enters a world already occupied by pre-Christian concepts of Mwari and, as with El, he gives fresh content to these concepts to gain access to the Shona worldview.

The AAEC understanding of an immanent God in creation is an extension of this prophetic (mainly Zionist) tradition with its central focus on a pervasively present deity in a peasant world. Mwari is the power behind all activities in his 'holy cities' – the provider of rains and crops, the very spirit of all life. As initiator of the 'War of the Trees' he once again breaks through remoteness and draws nigh, as Insider. In the struggle for the restoration of creation, Mwari emerges as the Old Testament Yahweh of the 'battlefields' who summons, directs and commands his missionaries in continual interaction between himself, human beings and all of life in creation.

As already suggested in passing in the course of this chapter, the immanent God of the AAEC is characterised by three prominent attributes: his pervasive presence, his commissioning and empowerment of ecological endeavour, and his suffering in environmental abuse.

Mention was already made of Revd Mandondo's perception of Mwari's presence in nature. As so many sermons in the Spirit-type churches, Zionist Revd Chitapa's address of tree planters in 1993 revolves around the same theme. 'If we restore the land,' he said,

God will live amongst us. He will be near in the trees, because he does not live in a barren wasteland without trees. God, his Son and the Holy Spirit are present in the person who does not proceed with the evil of earth destruction, but who heeds God's commands regarding earthcare. Humans and trees belong together. *God is present where this is recognised.* Trees and humans are one! God loves humans. God loves trees. *Mwari* speaks from trees and not from barren plains. He likes the winds and wetlands ... not desolate landscapes. And me, too; when I am up there on the thickly-wooded mountain slopes, where I can feel the wind and the moisture, I am happy.

Revd Chitapa's assertion of God's presence in creation, like that of Revd Mandondo, reveals an attitude of reverence, even awe. Yet despite an awareness of divine mystery in nature there is no suggestion here of a pantheistic-type immanence, an IT-presence of a depersonalised deity. God is indeed immanent in the trees, in the thick forests and in the wetlands where his majesty and power are manifest. But, he remains a personal being with anthropomorphic attributes; the 'transcendent' one who is not far away, yet the other in the I-Thou encounter. He observes the earthkeepers, commissions their work, rewards them for earthcare, lives amongst and in them, calls upon them to restore creation, talks to them from within the trees, and rejoices at the sight of nature's renewal.

Generally speaking, the Shona earthkeepers derive their understanding of the transcendental otherness of the Creator, in balance with his immanent presence, from intuitive readings of the creation story in Genesis, where God is seen as distinct from creation (Wilkinson 1991:278-80) and the prophet Isaiah's descriptions (mainly in chapters 40 to 43) of Yahweh's involvement in nature. Theirs is not a comprehensive consideration of classical Old Testament texts, such as Psalm 104, Psalm 119 and Proverbs 8 (McDonagh 1986:110; Wilkinson in De Witt 1991:32-5), from which their insights into God's immanence in pre-Christian Judaism is shaped. However, their fascination with Yahweh's dealings with his people and their interpretation of the implications for the local situation reveals an awareness 'that the Old Testament continually walked the line between an affirmation of God's holiness and transcendence and an assertion of his involvement and activity' (Wilkinson in De Witt 1991:35).

In the vision of God inside creation the earthkeeping mission obtains some definition.

First of all, it is God's mission, *missio Dei*, which had existed since the beginning of creation. The Independents have no hesitation in speaking about Mwari as a summoning, empowering deity, the origin and inspirer of all earthcare. Women,

particularly, are quick to remind their constituency that the driving force behind earthkeeping is not an institution or even the church, but the creator who guides their every act. Ms Raviro Mutonga, liaison officer of ZIRRCO's Women's Desk, commented to her fellow tree planters:

Nobody thought that this piece of land right here is a place where trees will be planted. I myself thought I'll plant monkey nuts here this season. But see what Mwari does. He said, 'No monkey-nuts! You will plant *my* trees!' ... People confuse each other by saying: 'ZIRRCO orders the planting of trees!' I tell you: 'This is the work which Mwari commands us to do.'

One senses here an element of reaction to male patriarchy which so easily dominates or manipulates institutional life. By implication, Raviro Mutonga is also underscoring the AAEC's move away from an introspective church-centred mission, as is evident in an ecumenical openness which – under the weight of God's earthkeeping commission – is seen to transcend both ecclesial self-interest and Christian bias in relation to non-Christian fellow fighters. In the *missio Dei* perceived here the role of the church as 'keeper of creation' is not belittled, but Mwari somehow breaks through the limitations of human institutions in the interest of an entire creation in crisis. As Messer (1992:71) says: 'To suggest that God's loving and liberating initiatives are not restricted to the church is not to downgrade the value or importance of the community of faith, but to summon the church to a new level of leadership for the sake of all life.'

Second, God's pervasive presence in creation qualifies his green mission as one of interwovenness of all creation. What was already anticipated in African holism obtains new meaning, as Mwari's love for all the earth finds expression in new forms of interaction and identification between human earthkeepers and the 'silent members' of the earth-community. In the encounter between tree planters and seedlings the earth-community witnesses to God's presence; the entire universe is virtually declared sacramental in the repetitious enactment of the presence of an indwelling creator. In the AAEC context the tree itself symbolises the *missio Dei*, the life provided by God and the ongoing process of realignment and reconciliation between creator, humans and all nature.

Note, for instance, the discourse between a policeman and the tree he was planting during an AAEC ceremony:

You, tree, are my true friend. Wherever I am I shall remember you and come and check on you to see if you are well. I cannot leave or forget you. *I ask God for your protection* so that you will not be eaten by the creatures of the bush, or be destroyed. Remember, I have felled many trees. Forgive me! That was before I was made to realise that you, tree, are my brother.

In his plea for forgiveness to brother tree, the policeman actually addresses God as he seeks a more fulfilling life. He also testifies to a new, if humble,

relationship with the ravaged earth as he publicly acknowledges his responsibility for environmental stewardship. In this deliberate change of attitude towards the tree there is a glimpse of the underlying corporate will of earthkeeping churches to be reconciled with Mwari and to establish wholesome, harmonious and healing ties with mother Earth.

In the mission of earthkeeping, tree-symbolism features prominently in ecological movements worldwide, especially in eco-feminism. Kyung (in Hallman 1994:178), for instance, in connection with the liberation of humans and nature, claims: 'We would share the symbol of a tree as the most inspiring symbol for the spirituality of eco-feminism ... The tree captures the life-giving thrust and power of the eco-feminist movement ... [The] cyclic, rhythmic process of creating, nurturing, healing and re-creating life [as described for the tree's life cycle] symbolises the aspirations of cosmic spirituality of eco-feminism.' Much like the AAEC's earthkeeping ministry, the theme of 'cosmic interwovenness' is focal in eco-feminist reflection. Kyung (ibid.:177) states: 'God energises the cosmos, and the cosmos in return moves with the creator in a cosmic dance of exquisite balance and beauty. In this cosmic unfolding of ongoing creation, human beings become co-creators with God and nature.'

In similar vein Sallie McFague (1987:13) – who, in her search for new metaphors to describe the relationship between God and universe, calls on us to envision the world as God's body – urges new patterns of stewardship based on sensitive cosmic interrelatedness. 'We can no longer see ourselves,' she says, 'as namers of and rulers over nature, but must think of ourselves as gardeners, caretakers, mothers and fathers, stewards, trustees, lovers, priests, co-creators and friends of a world that, while giving us life and sustenance, also depends increasingly on us in order to continue both for itself and for us.'

AAEC earthkeepers undoubtedly underscore these convictions. For, whatever the terminology used, the underlying sentiment or awareness of cosmic interwovenness/interrelatedness is the same. Whether we call ourselves 'co-creators' or 'co-workers', we share in God's mission to and in the world. Real understanding of our bondedness to creation, our responsibility for creation in God's mission, lies in sensing God's agony in the wounded earth, responding to his summons, and becoming engaged as earthkeeping missionaries. This at least is how the AAEC has come to interpret the implications of Mwari's immanence in this world. Herein lies the challenge of this movement to the global community of believers.

In the third place, divine immanence in an abused world spells suffering!²³ McFague (1987:72, 73) associates the image of the world as God's body with Christ's suffering on the cross. 'In both instances,' she says, 'God is at risk in human hands; just as once ... human beings killed their God in the body of a man, so now we once again have that power, but ... we would kill our God in

the body of the world ... [Because of the resurrection] God is not in our power to destroy, but the incarnate God is the God at risk: we have been given central responsibility to care for God's body, our world.'

Part of the motivation in the AAEC's tree-planting Eucharist is precisely this conviction, that in healing the land God's (Christ's) cosmic body is being restored. Both Bishop Farawo and Revd Chitapa, as quoted above, give expression to an understanding of God's agony in a wounded world. As the 'God of the trees' Mwari is at risk and he agonises in the process of tree-felling. His disappointment and withdrawal, as depicted by Farawo and Chitapa, imply not so much his total absence from creation but from those who greedily destroy his body in the trees felled. Mwari's absence in the barren plains symbolises the blindness and resultant lovelessness of the selfish *varoyi venyika*, the destroyers of the earth. Hence, in God's immanence, not only he himself but also his people, the earthkeepers, are at risk. In their carelessness about life on earth, their evasion of their mission as caretakers of nature, the light and joy in their own lives grow dim.

In Zimbabwe, being one with 'the God of the trees', being part of the brother and sisterhood of earthkeepers in the 'War of the Trees' spells hurting with/in Mwari at the sight and sound of chopping axes in receding woodlands. It means bonding with the 'all-embracing fellowship of suffering' (Moltmann 1985:39, with reference to Romans 8: 19-21). It means hours of backbreaking work in the scorching sun and the feel of powerlessness and futility when the rains fail and thousands of newly planted trees representing years of toil and nurture in nurseries wither and die. It means pain in the face of destructive opposition from those who hold salaried office in 'conservation', yet have not the heart for creation. It means being judged and rejected by those of the faith who seek God's kingdom only in otherworldly 'spiritual growth' and 'soul salvation.' It also means suffering and deprivation when at times there are no funds for the salaries of diligent and committed earthkeepers, when the entire future of an earthkeeping movement is made to hinge on the considerations of First World sponsors over which the earthkeepers in the field have no (or precariously little) control.

However, as the contours of a mission of suffering and sacrifice take shape, so does the shape of rejoicing and celebration. God's pervasive presence radiates hope for a better future. Well-watered trees grow to the rhythm of clapping hands and dancing feet. Even from a parched earth, the trees teach us the good news of God's life-giving promise unto a new heaven and new earth.

I asked the tree,
Speak to me about God,
And it blossomed.²⁴

Christ, the Compassionate Healer

Strong christological trends characterise the AAEC's ecological mission. Mention was already made of a band of iconic leaders mirroring the incarnation of Christ within a ministry of earthcare. I shall illustrate briefly how two of them, Bishop Marinda and Revd Zvanaka, the environmental course instructor and the director of ZIRRCOON respectively, contribute towards an enriched teaching and understanding of the lordship of Christ as cornerstone of our green outreach. As suggested above, the legacy of Bishop Mutendi's missionary work and that of other Spirit-type leaders' and *Fambidzano's* combination of ecumenism and mission have conditioned the AAEC to interpret its task both as Christocentric and as divinely inspired mission, particularly as Christ's healing mission. It was assumed that the divine charge to restore the earth pivoted on the fact that all power in heaven and on earth had been given unto Christ (Matthew 28:18).

Bishop Marinda embroiders on the christological focus in the liturgy of the tree-planting Eucharist whenever the opportunity arises. In February 1992 he preached thus at a tree-planting ceremony:

In Jesus Christ all things hold together, it says in Colossians 1:17. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning of all creation and *he* reigns supreme. God reconciled all things with himself through Christ in heaven and on earth Christ is Lord over all creation. He works salvation for human beings. Humans in turn have the responsibility to extend salvation to all of creation ... The sin-offerings of the Old Testament was a cruel practice because many animals and birds had to die for the iniquities of humankind. Trees were felled in great numbers to provide firewood for the burnt offerings. Christ came as the last offering to forgive the sins of the entire world. Through his death on the cross he saved the animals, the birds and the trees. *So he saves his entire creation!* In the plan of God's salvation of man [humans] through Jesus Christ was also the salvation of all creation.

Here the core of the AAEC's ecological Christology is spelt out. With reference to the movement's credo: 'in Christ all things hold together' (Colossians 1:17), Christ's lordship over creation is confessed. The salvation thus available to human beings is to be extended by them to all the earth. This, to Marinda, is an undisputed component of God's – and therefore the church's – mission. To him salvation experienced by believers in the church can only be real to the extent that it is lived to the benefit of all creation. *Via* the cross of Christ, which also liberates the birds, animals and trees, the liberation of creation from exploitation becomes an integral obligation of true discipleship.

Revd Solomon Zvanaka, in turn, interprets the reign of Christ to include a mission of reconciliation which extends well beyond the boundaries of the Christian church. To him the shoots of the vine (John 15), at least in the earthkeeping context, somehow involve, encompass *all* humanity. The following summons

to united action, as preached at a tree-planting ceremony in February 1994, characterises the ZIRRCO director's theological stance:

We recognise religious differences amongst us. But when we plant trees it does not matter who attends. Do you say the oxygen of this or that tree goes to a bishop or a spirit medium? Certainly not! Whoever you are you simply breathe the fresh air provided by that particular tree ... Remember the saying: *Rimwe, rimwe, harikombi chinhu* (literally One ... one [that is, single endeavour] does not achieve anything). To us this means that this task is not done by a single individual or the church on its own, but by many; *all of us!* We unite our efforts: the women, the nursery keepers, the chiefs, the churches ... Once the task is completed you of the churches can rest, go to heaven, knowing you have fulfilled your mission of guarding creation. And you, 'people of the world' [that is, traditionalists] will be seen as proper descendants of those ancestors who have left you the task of keeping the land.

This bold, if controversial, statement from within the ranks of the Spirit-type churches was made in the realisation that however important Christian identity and witness remain in Christ discipleship, the lordship of Christ in a mysterious way relativises man-made religious divisions, shattering the pretence and self-righteousness invariably inherent in the withdrawal of the so-called elect from fellow human beings. In an understanding of God's kingdom which includes all creation, environmental concern in a sense acts as a great equaliser of human beings. As dedicated Zionist Zvanaka intuitively grasps this truth. For his words are not merely empty gestures of an ecumenical tactician. At all AAEC ceremonies this iconic leader mirrors a Christ of compassion. He invites traditionalists to participate and rates their input as important as that of any Christian earthkeeper. During traditionalist tree-planting ceremonies he respectfully and attentively sits next to the chief or medium conducting the ancestral beer libation. Thus in combining constructive inter-faith dialogue with united ecological action Zvanaka is paving the way for an AIC reappraisal of its theology of religion. All humanity rather than a select group of Jesus' disciples, it seems, is challenged to be the shoots of Christ, the vine. For the earthkeeping good news is that Christ's lordship and limitless grace is open-ended unto *all* humans and creatures, and remains such without exception as long as consciousness or life itself enables response to the giver of life.

In addition to these variations on the theme of an earthkeeping Christology, there are others. Christ's suffering on the cross, for instance, is linked with his cosmic brokenness during the tree-planting Eucharist.²⁵ This, in combination with the immanence of Mwari, the Creator, strengthens Christ's image as 'wounded healer' and inspires acceptance in the green movement of a ministry of sacrifice. Referred to as *mukoma*, elder brother, and as 'guardian of the land', Christ is bonded into the kinship of earthkeepers,²⁶ one which encompasses and activates the entire global family. His guardianship of the earth in the

Shona context fulfils the task associated with the ancestors and qualifies the human family as including the living, the living dead and the as-yet unborn. In this understanding of Christ the earthkeeper a number of new possibilities for the interpretation of his relationship and interaction with the African ancestors arise.²⁷

Yet, it is pre-eminently as *healer* that Christ is present in the AAEC's tree-planting Eucharist. The traditional healer, the *nganga*, has provided the primary paradigm for an indigenous Christology since the inception of African Christianity.²⁸ According to Kibongi (in Dickson and Ellingworth 1969:54) '*nganga* [traditionally] is certainly the saviour or the liberator of *Muntu*'. In his view the *nganga*, as healer and religious leader, is Christ's precursor in Africa, and Christ, as the new *nganga*, is the fulfilment of the traditional one. '*Nganga* willed to save man, but did not succeed in doing so; Christ did so fully once for all. Christ has therefore accomplished the work of *Nganga*' (1969:55).

The prophetic AIC illustrates the paradigm of Christ as the '*healing nganga*' more vividly than any other church in Africa. The contextualisation and transformation of *nganga* practices is strikingly evident in the diagnostic and therapeutic work of healer-prophets, where they have honed faith healing as the most appealing attraction and recruitment device within their churches (Daneel 1974, chapter 3). In the AAEC's *maporesanyika* (heal the earth) Eucharist, Christ so to speak reaches beyond the original '*healing nganga*' paradigm, extends it to include the '*muridzi venyika*' (land guardian) dimension of the ancestors, and consequently emerges as the healer/saviour of all creation, the One who holds all things, all healing of both humans and the earth together. In the understanding of such comprehensive, sacramental healing Christ's blood is focal. Zionist Revd Machingura, for instance, preached on this subject as follows:

Our tree-planting Paseka is a holy occasion, ordained by Jesus Christ ... It must be seen that Jesus is drinking his cup amongst us. That is our covenant with him. We must make sure that there is nothing which prevents us from meeting the blood of Christ ... You believers, do not allow Christ's blood to be polluted. Remove the evildoers! I have told you: Remove the *varoyi* [wizards]! Will we look at one of the big trees and think of felling it? No! We leave it as it is ... We all have to confess our sins in order to be cleansed. *We confess because of the blood of Jesus Christ*. His blood is *mushonga* (medicine) inside the body of a human being, Jesus' blood therefore has great power to heal.

The cleansing and healing power of Christ's blood in this view constitutes the sacrament. Only to the extent that the earthkeepers are cleansed and empowered by Christ's blood can they partake meaningfully in the mission of earth healing. That apparently is the key to Machingura's message. In so far as Christ's salvific work is considered to be integral to healing, the preacher actually gives expression to convictions similar to those of Shorter (1988:51–8).

All healing, he contends, is directed towards eternal life and wholeness. 'In the church this is realised through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, which is the renewal of the mystery of Christ's cross and resurrection.' The sacraments are the works of the Holy Spirit, whom Shorter calls 'the medicine of life' since He continues Christ's healing mission (in Schreiter 1991:10). The Shona earthkeepers tend to interpret the tree-planting sacrament as extending Christ's 'medicine of life' both to the human communicants and to nature. A villager commented during a *maporesanyika* speech:

The protection of trees is a holy matter ... In its nakedness the land is ill. We, too, the people of Mupakwa, are ill. *We have come to be healed together with the land.* In Jesus' time you only needed to touch His garment to be healed. In clothing the land with trees, we, too, are being healed.

Here we find understanding of Christ's inclusive mission, aimed at healing the sickness of the entire world. In simple terms an African peasant corroborates Shorter's observations about an African healing Christology when he says that 'healing becomes a possibility to establish and maintain harmony with the natural environment. Environmental wholeness is fundamental to human wellbeing' (in Schreiter 1991:10). The villager understood the interwovenness of equilibrium in nature and in human life only too well. They shared a need for healing and salvation. Both were present at the tree-planting Eucharist to seek and share in the deliverance wrought by the 'wounded healer' of Nazareth.

Virtually every phase of the tree-planting Eucharist highlights the presence of Christ as healer and gives substance to our ecological program as a healing mission:

- The public confession of sins serves the cleansing and inner renewal of celebrants so that they can enter the presence of Christ in a worthy state of preparation. This apparently is a condition for the blood of Christ in the sacrament to heal the communicants and to enable them to act as environmental co-healers of Christ.
- Eucharistic sermons portray Christ in a rich variation of images, some of which I have referred to above. Throughout, however, he remains essentially the healer/saviour who fulfils the Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah 40–43 in that he brings new life, that is, water, trees and wildlife to the afflicted, barren wastelands.
- At the communion table there is healing through sacramental empowerment. Such healing breaks through ecclesiastic divisions and turns the celebrants into a united army of healers. As if touching the garment of the historical Christ each celebrant is being healed in Christ, and his/her healing motive or task – both for the land and for humans – acquires divine affirmation beyond the realm of self-seeking. Hope is rekindled as Christ's 'medicinal' blood signals cosmic harmony and wholeness.

- The soil itself is healed as the celebrants plant their seedlings. Through them the wounded Earthkeeper addresses the eroded soil. For, it is he who in the tree planters' dialogue with nature implores the seedlings to have strong roots so as to prevent soil erosion. It is his healing hands that plant the seedlings in the soil, and with them the promise of protection and a new cycle of life.
- Finally, as tired tree planters return to the meeting place, the healing cycle turns full circle; human beings kneel down to be healed. To the rhythm of drums and rattles, women and men start swaying in song and dance as the healers shake and speak in tongues to confirm the presence of the Holy Spirit. In the late afternoon the rays of the sun shining through the flimsy leaves of seedlings in the new woodlot and the eyes of expectation of afflicted people, tell their own story: Christ's healing of the land and his healing of people hold hands, in union!

Hands – black hands, white hands, still dust-laden from tree planting – now rest on bowed heads of the sick. Quiet hands speak their own message of compassion.

The Holy Spirit in creation

The trinitarian interpretation of creation in theological tradition has tended to emphasise God the Father as creator over against his creation in a monotheistic way. A doctrine of creation, according to Moltmann, should, instead, start with the third person: Creation in the Spirit! He argues that all divine activity is *pneumatic* in its manifestation. It is always the Spirit who brings the activity of the Son to its goal. Everything that exists does so through the inflow of the energy and potentiality of the cosmic Spirit. Moltmann (1985:11–2) notes a similar interpretation in Calvin's work. The Holy Spirit, the 'giver of life' of the Nicene Creed, is for Calvin the 'fountain of life' (*fons vitae*) which is present in everything that exists and lives.

Moltmann's and Calvin's reference to the cosmic Spirit bears no relation to Stoic pantheistic notions. God's Spirit acts in this world in the differentiated modes of creating, preserving, renewing and consummating life. Because of this distinction I agree with Moltmann's (1985:112) basic assertion:

Creation in the Spirit is the theological concept which corresponds best with the ecological doctrine of creation which we are looking for and need today. With this concept we are cutting loose the theological doctrine of creation from the age of subjectivity and the mechanistic domination of the world, and are leading it in the direction in which we have to look for the future of an ecological world community.

Moltmann explains the position of the Holy Spirit in creation in terms of the interpenetration (*perichoresis*) of the trinity – the social doctrine of the mutual

indwelling of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In this interactive principle (God in the world and the world in God; heaven and earth in the kingdom of God and vice versa; soul and body united in the life-giving Spirit into a human whole, etc.) there is no such thing as a solitary life. All living things, each in its own distinctive way, live in, with, and from one another. This trinitarian interpenetration correlates with African religious holism in which nothing is solitary or self-existing. Inasmuch as the cosmic Spirit is the organising principle of human consciousness, all people are bound together socially and culturally, in addition to be bound to the natural environment. This is a crucial distinction behind Moltmann's insistence that our only realistic alternative to annihilation in this world lies in the solidarity of a worldwide ecological community.

In some respects the AIC prophets of Africa understand and experience the life-giving power of the outpoured Spirit – the Spirit as *fons vitae* – better than either Calvin or Moltmann did. Their intuition was shaped by their non-Christian forebears who sensed as well as any Old Testament sage that the *mweya* (spirit) imparted by God the creator was the source of all life. This intuition ultimately blossomed into an all-pervading testimony to the life-giving and life-protecting power of the *Mweya Mutsvene* (Holy Spirit) in the Spirit-type churches, especially in their healing colonies.

One need only observe the numerous symbolic ceremonies of faith healing, the laying on of hands, sprinkling of holy water, the blessing of seeds to be planted and pegging of maize fields to secure good crops, and so forth, to realise that all these symbols and symbolic acts testify to the outpouring of the Spirit, the fountain of life in creation. All of it represents a massive surge in supplication. It takes place in the midst of need and suffering. But in the final analysis it is a celebration of faith to honour the true source of life, the Holy Spirit.

There are indeed flaws in this approach, as can happen in any church where the movement of the Spirit is open to human misinterpretation or manipulation.²⁹ On the whole, however, the *fons vitae* flows freely in the prophetic AICs, uninhibited by written dogma. Here no one speaks about 'trinitarian perichoresis'. It simply exists: God *in* the world and the world *in* God. In the AIC prophetic community there is no such thing as a solitary life, unless of course the presence of a *muroyi* (wizard), who represents the Destroyer, necessitates cleansing, sanctification and reconciliation unto wholeness. Through this holistic interpretation of God the Spirit has prepared fertile soil for an ecological theology.

The AAEC bears testimony to this. In the reflection of leading figures about the origins of their movement an awareness of the *pneumatic* action of Mwari in and since the creation of the universe is in evidence. Bishop Farawo, for example, stated: 'The Holy Spirit is the founder of this movement, because he first of all created Adam and Eve and gave them the task of keeping the trees and the animals. Today the AAEC is there to continue this tradition, this task of

keeping all created things.’ The AAEC earthkeepers associate the third person of the trinity directly with creation. In the same way as the Holy Spirit was active in the original and ongoing creation of all life he (or she) is the initiator of all earthkeeping endeavour, including our movement. It is only the divine source of life which can inspire the kind of concern for creation in human beings which leads to genuine, altruistic earth-stewardship. Thus any lasting environmental contribution of the AAEC is attributable to the inspiration and promptings of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit initiates the *missio Dei* to which we are party.

Prior to the ‘War of the Trees’ one seldom heard AIC prophets refer to the Holy Spirit as *murapi venyika*, healer of the land. *Mweya Mutsvene* was primarily seen as the healer of humankind. Yet, we have noticed the blending of healing – of humans and of the land – during the *maporesanyika* Eucharist. In such blending the interpenetration between Son and Holy Spirit is evident. Ritually, therefore, Christology and pneumatology become one, as Africa enacts the conviction that ‘the Spirit always brings the activity of the Son to its goal’ (Moltmann). In the promptings of the Spirit, Christ as king (*mambo*), elder brother (*mukoma*), guardian (*muridzi*), saviour (*muponesi*) and healer (*murapi*) of all creation, keeps entering the here and now as incarnate being. Having said this, it would be repetitive to reconsider all the pneumatic features of healing already referred to above. Nevertheless, one needs to remember that however rich and real the images of an immanent creator-god or a healing Christ in the earthkeeping movement, the existential reality of the churches involved is first and foremost qualified by the all-absorbing experience of and belief in the comprehensive and powerful involvement of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, the Holy Spirit as originator of a global earthkeeping mission gives definition to that mission in numerous ways. One of the most striking illustrations of this in AAEC experience is the emergent awareness among earthkeepers of ecological sinfulness, evolving particularly in the practice of confession at the start of *maporesanyika* Eucharists. At this juncture the Holy Spirit is considered the primary conscientising agent, addressing the communal conscience of humanity and persuading humans of guilt in the deterioration of nature. Couched in terms of fighting *uroyi* – that is, evil, perceived in Africa in its vilest and most ruthless form – the struggle between the Spirit and the Destroyer is drawn concretely into the world of participant earthkeepers. Both AAEC preachers and prophets are consistently aware of this struggle. In their sermons and probing revelations in the name of the Spirit the call for repentance and ecological repair predominates. Nobody escapes the struggle.

‘Come, let us confess our sins today,’ Revd Chitapa preached on occasion, ‘our destruction of the land. Some of us have already bought matches to burn the grass. See what Bishop Marinda does here. His prophets expose the sins we commit, that of burning grass. *It is the uroyi of heat, of the burnt soil!* Let us all get rid of this wizardry; the type which strikes at you

with *zvidoma* [psychic animals, as in traditional witchcraft] and the type which burns the veld and fells the trees ...'

Bishop Marinda followed this up with an equally urgent call for confession prior to tree planting:

All of us must confess our sins as we submit to the scrutiny of the Holy Spirit. Thus the sins of tree-felling will be revealed ... I have never seen such wizards! This differs from the *uroyi* which kills a single person at home, for an entire tribe [*rudzi*] is wiped out ... So we queue to be searched by the Spirit. Who gets caught, gets caught! ... Stand at the gates, you prophets! Stand and prophecy! Reveal to us the wizards who still pull their sledges [causing erosion gullies].

In sermons of this nature the disquiet about the *wrong relationship* between humans and their environment comes to the fore. The critical awareness of rebellion against God in the destruction of ecosystems which sustain life is attributed to the Spirit. It reflects a keen understanding of the holistic nature of sin as depicted in the Bible, in that it 'not only distorts inter-human relations and human Divine relations, it also affects the life-sustaining harmony between human beings and the Earth' (McDonagh 1985:125). What the earthkeepers are saying is that humans in the local setting are setting themselves up as 'God' in a false dominion over the earth, thereby achieving the opposite of God's intentions with creation. Like Satan, they become earth-destroyers and in their exploitation of the earth their hubris prevents them from seeing and admitting the life-destroying implications of their actions.

No idiom of destruction in Africa epitomises human disrespect for nature better than the one here employed: that is, *uroyi*. Any wizard in his/her persistence in anti-social, anti-ecological behaviour is the personification of evil, is the destroyer him/herself. Environmental *uroyi*, in the words of Chitapa, is the ultimate rebellion against God. It is the 'heat of the burnt soil,' the heat of mass destruction which heedlessly seeks to obliterate the harmony and wholeness provided by the life-giving coolness [*tonhodzo*] of Mwari's Spirit; the heat which in African Christian terms already anticipates the apocalyptic 'pit of fire'.

The pneumatology of the AICs may be flawed in some respects. Magical connotations are sometimes attributed to symbols of Spirit power. An overriding preoccupation with the struggle between Holy Spirit and the evil of *uroyi* at times obscures rather than illuminates a clear perception of the grace and peace worked by the triune God in the face of environmental crisis in this world. However, the centrality of Scriptures functions as a corrective and contributes towards the safeguards in prophetic dealings with environmental *uroyi* which exclude the excesses of wizardry accusations of the past. On the whole, therefore, the AAEC preoccupation with environmental wizardry is a positive sign of contextualising in Shona culture the evil that has to be confronted and fought in the earthkeeping mission. Thereby sin, confession and conversion

obtain new meaning and a compelling, Spirit-induced *ethical code* takes shape. Whether this code is called 'Mwari's law' – originating in the Genesis story of creation – 'Christ's healing commission', or the 'green laws of the church', its clarification and implementation in context is the domain of the Spirit.

Does it matter that the pneumatological doctrine of the AICs remains incomplete if the belief is firm that the Spirit inspires holistic mission, casts out environmental evil, sensitises the conscience of all humans in earth-stewardship, and mobilises the ultimate liberation struggle of all the earth? Do any of us fully comprehend the work of the Holy Spirit anyway? Maybe it is better to feel inspired by the Spirit and engage in earth-healing praxis, however limited or incomplete, than to formulate a 'perfect' pneumatological doctrine and then to keep shouting the odds from the sidelines of stagnated environmental praxis. Herein lies the challenge of the African earthkeeping churches: Respond to the movement of the Spirit! Be free to plant the trees, clear the water and air and protect all life in nature, even as the theories and definitions of environmental mission are as yet incomplete. The Holy Spirit moves where he/she wills!

I WILL RAISE UP FOR THEM A PROPHET

In Deuteronomy 18:18, Yahweh tells Israel that He will raise up another prophet to lead Israel after Moses. This citation is appropriate for this section because of the degree to which leaders of Independent Churches style themselves as prophets, following the model of the ancient prophets of Israel. The following three chapters each emphasise a different dimension of prophetic leadership among the AICs of Zimbabwe. Chapter 4, 'Fission Dynamics', considers the reasons for the fissiparous nature of the Independents. According to Daneel, Western influences such as missionary denominationalism and marginalisation of black leadership have contributed to the propensity for Independent Churches to split. However, even more important are African traditions relating to leadership: when local practices of hereditary leadership enter the church, strife often ensues. A prophet desires to see his son lead the church after his death, but other leaders in the church may also claim a prophetic call to supremacy; the succession crisis that ensues often results in the spurned leaders starting a new church. Further, family groups within a village frequently split off to form their own new village nearby, and this pattern also finds its way into the church.

The next chapter, 'Black Messianism', evaluates Western theological claims that Independent interpretations of their leaders as 'black messiahs' disastrously usurp the role of Christ. In response to these critiques, Daneel wrote this chapter in 1981 for his inaugural lecture as professor of missiology at the University of South Africa (Unisa). In a watershed contribution towards balanced and responsible interpretation of AICs, he finds that in two of the largest AICs in Zimbabwe, the founder-prophets consistently warned their followers against deifying them. They emphasised that the initiative for healing rests with the Holy Spirit, and is not 'magically' controlled by them. Daneel suggests that most AIC members see their prophets roughly as Catholics might view the Pope, not as taking the place of Christ.

Finally, chapter 6 is taken from Daneel's novel *Guerilla Snuff*. It narrates the exigencies of Zionist prophetic leadership during *chimurenga*, Zimbabwe's independence struggle, in the 1960s and 1970s. Its imaginative yet accurate retelling of this history fills out the *Weltanschauung* of AIC prophetic leadership in a way that standard academic genres could not. The 'story' of Musariri Dhliwayo is based on extensive research on the role of religion during the liberation struggle and faithfully reflects the experiences of a variety of participants – spirit

mediums, prophetic church leaders, and guerrilla fighters. In the preface to *Guerrilla Snuff* Daneel comments on the relation between fact and myth:

If you ask whether what I have written is true, I must answer 'yes, with a touch of fantasy!' What then is the truth? *Guerrilla Snuff* is not a textbook; it has no footnotes, no source references to bolster the concept of objectivity. But this book represents the truth, as I saw it and heard it; the merger of historical fact with myth – the myths people create about themselves and the 'facts' they use to convey this truth. The truth, in this case meaning, as I understand it, what people believe about themselves, perceived and projected through the subjective grid of my own experience.

Soon after its publication *Guerrilla Snuff* was awarded a literary prize at the annual All-African Book Fair in Harare; it was recently voted 'a Zimbabwean classic: one of Zimbabwe's 75 best books of the 20th century'.

Fission Dynamics in African Independent Churches*

In addition to its constructive role of creating the kind of religious circumstance in which Africans can feel at home, Independency, with its inbuilt fissiparous tendencies, will continue to be a living testimony, not only of the mistakes and inconsistencies of Mission Churches, but also of Christians' inability to realise that elusive unity which the church, as the one and undivided Body of Christ, is supposed to represent. The endless and seemingly casual multiplication of new church groups, balanced out to some extent by the extinction of others, has baffled observers and led to numerous theories on the causes of fission. It should be stated at the outset that in so far as this chapter is an attempt to analyse and define some of the main features of the ongoing schismatic process in the churches concerned, an attempt will not be made to deal exhaustively with theories on causation. Instead of dealing at length with the background influences that contribute towards the supposed 'classic schism' – that of an identifiable group of believers breaking away from the parental body after a period of strife and tension – and instead of interpreting schismatic trends predominantly in terms of a 'reaction to Missions', as quite a number of observers have done, I shall attempt an analysis from within the Independent Church context as I have observed it while living among the Shona Independents. This inevitably leads to a special focus on the Shona Independent Churches. Nevertheless, the insights achieved in this manner apply to a greater or lesser degree to Independent Churches elsewhere in Africa, even if in some instances it should only serve comparative purposes. I shall endeavour, in particular, to illustrate the important conditioning influence of such non-theological factors as traditional kraal-splitting practices and traditional leadership notions (for example the inheritance of religious authority) in creating a climate in the Independent Churches conducive to fission.

First of all, a brief survey will be attempted of the theological and non-theological factors determining the dynamics of fission. The schismatic process itself and its impact on church and society will then be discussed. Finally, some suggestions are advanced as to measures that could possibly curb the continued fragmentation of this fascinating yet complex movement.

4* An earlier version of this chapter appeared in *Denominationalism, Its Sources and Implications: Proceedings of the 6th Symposium of the Institute of Theological Research*, edited by W. S. Vorster. Pretoria: Unisa Press, 1982.

The causes of fission

Investigators have, on the whole, tried to reduce the complexity of causative factors of Independency to a few background influences. Sundkler, Balandier and Andersson, for instance, lay great stress on the socio-political situation within which these movements arise. The fundamental causes are sought in social injustice arising from a policy of segregation, alienation of tribal lands, and racial tensions generally. According to Sundkler (1961:37), 'Separatism in South Africa has been the result to a very large extent, of the presence of the colour bar within the Christian Church.' The tightening squeeze on the Africans through land legislation is seen as a direct cause of the increase of the numbers and membership of Independent Churches. Considering the massive concentration of Independent Churches in South Africa in contrast with other African countries, Sundkler's observation appears to be valid. Yet it should be kept in mind that in some African countries the emergence and growth of Independent Churches have increased after political independence had been achieved and restrictive legislation abolished. This seems to indicate that adverse socio-political factors do not necessarily feature prominently in the formation of these churches. Andersson (1958) relates the Messianic movements in the Congo to the need for political expression and Balandier (1953:41-65) reminds us that this phenomenon originated in a 'colonial situation', where the colonised are subjected and discriminated against by the colonisers. Lucy Mair (1963:181) even calls the Independent Churches 'a simple correlation between the appearance of the cults and the absence of political representation'. Hence the churches are characterised primarily as movements of political protest against the background of colonial paternalism and the rise of African nationalism.

Theological factors

The distinction 'theological factors' in this field is used in a wide sense as an indicator of specifically church issues, as opposed to the socio-political, ethnic and cultural factors that constitute the kind of environment in which the church is functioning. A complete compartmentalisation is obviously impossible because of the continuous interaction between internally institutionalised and external influences. Nevertheless, internal ecclesiastic features such as the strategy of Missions, concepts of the church, and doctrinal disputes should be isolated for descriptive purposes if some clarity is to be achieved over the impulses generating Independentism from within the church.

Reaction to Missions?

Quite a number of observers have related the emergence of Independent Churches directly to the mistakes and failures of Mission Churches. 'At the heart of this whole movement,' suggested Stephen Neill (1964:164), 'directly or

indirectly will be found the sin of the white man against the black. It is because of the failure of the white man to make the Church a home for the black man that the latter has been fain to have a Church of his own.' The very title of Ogot's treatment of this subject – in a book called *A Place to Feel at Home* – is indicative of a similar approach (Welbourn and Ogot 1966). In his broad study of this phenomenon over the entire continent of Africa, and in an effort to postulate a representative theory for the rise of religious independency, Barrett (1968:156; his italics) reduces the complexity of causative factors to the basic reaction of Africans to Missions. He defines the root cause of Independency as

...a failure in sensitivity, the failure of missions at one small point to demonstrate consistently the fullness of the biblical concept of love as sensitive understanding towards others as equals, the failure to study or understand African society, religion and psychology in any depth, together with a dawning African perception from the vernacular scriptures of the catastrophic nature of this failure and of the urgent necessity to remedy it in order that Christianity might survive on African soil.

Barrett then elaborates on the threefold failure of Missions in the themes of *philadelphia*, Africanism and biblicalism. In the first place there was a lack of love (biblical concept of *philadelphia*) and a distinctly paternalistic attitude towards converts; the lack of sympathetic contact led to an incomplete understanding of the whole traditional complex (Africanism); and third, the missionaries generally failed to discern the many parallels between African society and biblical faith as the exceptional few, such as Bruno Gutmann of Tanganyika, had done. Instead of Christianising traditional customs, these were deprecated or proscribed for converts (Barrett 1968:157).

One does not want to detract from the relevance of this theory or its obvious bearing on the origins of Independency. It should be placed in proper perspective, however, if a balanced appraisal of the on-going schismatic process and growth within the movements concerned is to be achieved. An inherent weakness of the 'reaction to Mission' theory lies in the apparent assumption that the phenomenon of Independency originates from within the Mission Churches in Africa. The very title of Barrett's book, *Schism and Renewal*, and his emphasis on the failure of Missions create the impression that we are dealing with groups of people of whom most have, at some stage or other, actually belonged to one or more of the numerous Mission Churches. Sundkler's use of the term 'Separatism' and his description of schisms in South Africa leaves one with a similar impression. The initial schism is mostly preceded by a period of expectation, followed by the deliberate preparation of the schism from within, which in turn leads to a brief or prolonged secession crisis, during which the seceding leader and his or her followers leave the parental body (Sundkler 1961:168–79). In the event of such classic schisms taking place from within the Mission Church context, it seems that the schismatic leader indeed exploits the reactionary

factor to acquire a following. Turner's findings in West Africa also point in this direction. He reports that the Church of the Lord (Aladura) drew approximately 75 per cent of its members from the 'older churches' and only 14 per cent from paganism or Islam (Turner 1967, 2;10).

Among the Shona tribes, however, the situation is essentially different. The life histories of the principal prophetic and Ethiopian type leaders do reflect a certain degree of reaction. Bishop Mutendi of the Zion Christian Church, for instance, resented that his spells of spirit-possession were negatively appraised by missionaries as traditional *shavi* possession and not as a sign of inspiration by the Holy Spirit. Johane Maranke, leader of the African Apostolic Church – the largest prophetic movement in Zimbabwe – accused the white missionaries of withholding the essential Gospel message of the Holy Spirit from Africans, while President Sengwayo of the African Congregational Church (*Chibarirwe*) reacted sharply to what he regarded as discriminatory measures of the missionaries in charge of the theological training centre where he was studying. In spite of these reactions, the initial growth of the Shona Independent Churches did not involve any significant exodus from the Mission Churches. Classic schisms, as described by Sundkler, simply did not take place. None of the first *Ndaza* (holy cord) Zionist leaders nor Mutendi actually prepared a schism from within a Mission Church and then broke away with a whole faction of Mission Church members during a conceivable secession crisis. Nor did Reverend Sengwayo of the African Congregational Church or Bishop Chidembo of the First Ethiopian Church. Johane Maranke's Apostolic movement did expand quite rapidly, but its growth followed the same pattern as most of the other Shona Independent Churches in that the leading figures had to travel far and wide on protracted campaigns, recruiting individuals and families from a wide variety of ecclesiastic backgrounds and particularly from strictly paganistic circles, rather than drawing great numbers from any single denomination during a relatively short period.

The important point to be made at this juncture is that an overemphasis on the reaction to Missions obscures the missionary outreach of the Shona Independents and minimises the creative response of these churches to the Gospel. It creates the impression that the movement exists and grows by virtue of a justified but negative reaction to Missions, as if it could only thrive in terms of a parasitic and 'sheep-stealing' existence. This is entirely misleading! As I have pointed out elsewhere, some of the Independent Churches have become missionary institutions in their own rights (Daneel 1980) and they attract numerous people through adapted religious practices (Daneel 1974:101–353) that form part of an authentically African response to the Gospel, a response that in many respects is free of the compulsive urge generated by reaction. A statistical analysis of a representative number of members in the major Shona movements bears out this point convincingly. Well over 60 per cent of all the Shona Independents (interviewed in rural and urban areas and at church headquarters) had never

paid full allegiance to any Mission Church! (Daneel 1974:18). Although the element of reaction and separatism undeniably remains, this figure provides us with sufficient grounds to qualify the Shona Independent Churches, at least, in the first place as missionary movements and not primarily as 'separatist' or 'proselytising' groups. It appears therefore that the 'reaction to Missions' theory, valid as it is when it comes to the early origins of Independency and obvious cases of secession from Mission Churches, pales somewhat in significance when the continued growth of Independent Churches is considered. Moreover, this theory does not provide us with a viable interpretation of the fissiparous tendencies within these movements.

Western denominationalism and a limited ecclesiology

What Africans were confronted with from the earliest introduction of Christianity was a confusing diversity of churches. The example that was set from the outset was that of a divided church. In addition, the impression was given that churches belonged to nations. Africans concluded that if it was possible to have an 'English', a 'Dutch', 'German' or 'Swiss' church, an all-African church was fully justified. It was not so much a matter of the diversity of Western denominationalism triggering schisms, but of it certainly providing the type of ecclesiastical setting that in the eyes of Africans provided the justification for separatism and the development of their own churches.

Aggressive recruitment techniques and competition between mission agencies aggravated matters. In areas where there was an obvious lack of cooperation and comity arrangements among Mission Churches, the image of the church was most certainly distorted. Bearing in mind the high incidence of Independency in South Africa and that this country has one of the most over-denominationalised mission fields in the world, it appears that there is some correlation between intensified interchurch competition and the rise of Independent Churches. One can agree with Martin's (1964:165) observation. 'It is perhaps not accidental,' she says, 'that African prophetism and messianism developed so strongly in countries where missionary endeavour became, for many Churches and societies, a matter of winning adherents for their particular denomination rather than calling Africans to become disciples of Christ.' Martin also contends that the importation of a divided church in Africa created the impression that everyone could interpret the Bible according to his or her own ideas, without reference to a specific creed or tradition. As a result, people felt encouraged to establish their own 'churches' in the same way that one establishes societies. Protestant theology, moreover, has not provided a sound theological basis with regard to the doctrine of the church as the undivided Body of Christ on earth which transcends tribal, national and racial barriers (Martin 1964:166). There was therefore insufficient backing, by way of missionary practice and theological entrenchment, to stave off the emergence and proliferation of African 'family' and 'tribal' church groups.

Once again it should be emphasised that the Mission Churches cannot be held responsible in all respects for the limited and invariably distorted ecclesiology (in the sense of concept or doctrine of the church) that is to be found at the core of Independency. The vast majority of secessionist leaders who head the thousands of splinter groups in Africa have never had the educational opportunities or the theological influence of Mission Churches exerted over them to such an extent that a sound ecclesiology in its Western or Protestant configuration could be expected. Whatever the reasons for an incomplete understanding of the nature of the church in the Independent Churches, its conditioning influence on the process of fission is fairly obvious.

To many Shona people, for instance, a *kereke* means primarily an association of people 'belonging' to one or other leader. Owing to the lack of an in-depth perspective of the church as the Body of Christ, caused sometimes by a weakened Christology, a concern for unity and cooperation is lacking or overridden by other considerations. The formation of a new *kereke* or the changing of allegiance from one group to another is therefore *not* experienced primarily as a retrogressive act, damaging the Body of Christ, but as progressive, because it means the improvement of the previous group's rules and it is, by implication, pleasing to God. Add to this the general lack of historical perspective concerning the development of Christianity through the ages and it becomes understandable that many Africans distinguish between churches primarily as those groups that allow or prohibit beer-drinking, those who worship with eyes opened or eyes closed, those who 'have' or 'do not have' the Spirit, and so on. This preoccupation with the external features and with the rules of the church causes many people to regard the process of hiving off and forming a new church merely as the legitimate introduction of yet another set of regulations by yet another leader.

However important the secessionists themselves may consider their own new codes to be, few disputes that trigger schisms touch upon significant theological issues of great depth, such as the triune nature of God, the mediation of Christ and the nature of salvation. It is not the subtleties of complex doctrinal statements and distinctions so common in Western Christendom that are really at stake in the widespread process of Independent Church proliferation. For the criterion for success in the splinter church is not a comprehensive doctrinal statement, systematically presented and convincingly debated. Nor is it in the first place the improved spiritual state of the participating dissidents. It is sought in the ability of the schismatic leader to establish and consolidate his authority in the new group. If he can maintain his following and inspire expansion of his *kereke*, God is considered to be blessing the newly founded movement.

Disputes concerning church doctrine and/or law

Many Shona secessionist leaders refer to doctrinal disputes as the major cause of group disintegration and of their own formation of new churches. In the Zionist movement, the prohibition of beer drinking and worship on the Sabbath or Sunday have proved crucial issues in the debates preceding schisms. In the African Congregational Church (*Chibarirwe*) the allowance of polygamy gave rise to serious objections from men such as Revd Sibambo and Zvobgo, who eventually broke away to organise a 'reformed' faith based on stricter moral codes (Daneel 1971:365f).

Bishop Peter Mutema gave an account of the dispute that led to a breakaway from Bishop Masuka's Zionist Apostolic Church and the formation of his Zion Sabbath Church:

When I studied the Bible, I found that the true day of rest was the one the Lord had rested upon after He had created everything. I took my Bible to Bishop Masuka and discussed with him the difference between the Sabbath and the Sunday. He explained that the Sabbath day belonged to the Israelites and the Sunday to the Christians, because on that day the Lord Jesus had arisen from the dead. *I told David that he was following the law of the Mission Churches!* We counted the days from the Sunday and found the Sabbath to be the seventh day. The Bible tells me not to work on this day ... Bishop David and I parted in a friendly fashion. He said that if it (the formation of a new Church) was God's work it would grow, if not it would come to an end ... The main differences between Masuka's and my Church is that he worships on Sundays and prohibits beer-drinking while we worship on the Sabbath-day and allow beer-drinking.

Peter Mutema's account reflects some typical features of the strife, defection and regrouping taking place in the Independent Churches. In the first place, there is a genuine desire to follow God's Word correctly. The objection to one or other church practice is considered biblically valid and sufficient justification for a new church. This attitude is related to a somewhat legalistic approach to religion that seeks salvation in the strict observance of biblically defined codes, even if these are arbitrarily chosen and based on an incomplete understanding of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Although a number of other factors may be at stake, the schismatic leader and his followers concentrate on the doctrinal issue in dispute to such an extent that their own interpretation virtually becomes an absolute standard for proper Christian conduct. Such preoccupation becomes a rallying point and a group-consolidating force in the new group, even when it is deliberately introduced to obscure other, less honourable motivations for schisms.

Second, Mutema's accusation that Masuka was following a Mission Church law illustrates the tendency to capitalise on anti-European sentiments. The schismatic leader's success in winning a large following therefore hinges to

some extent on the persuasion of potential followers that the new church is going to be 'more biblical' and 'more African' than the parental body. Third, Mutema's comment in itself is an indication that other motivating factors may have been at work. His characterisation of his own church as 'beer-drinking' versus Masuka's 'non beer-drinking' group suggests that this issue may have played a more significant role than he was prepared to admit. As stated above, doctrinal disputes are often the much disputed, but least significant causes of schism. It is possible that Mutema, like many other office-bearers in beer-prohibiting churches, finds his prospects of leadership promotion diminished as a result of his own use of beer. Consequently a doctrinal dispute is deliberately introduced as an excuse for the formation of a new movement with less stringent rules.

Fourth, it is clear from Mutema's comment that secession does not always lead to strained relations between the principal and defecting leader. It is known that Mutema remained on a good footing with Masuka and at times even made contributions to the latter's church. Bishop Masuka's philosophical remark that Mutema's church will grow if it is from God points to his recognition that his control over subordinate office-bearers has its limitations. Mutema himself volunteered that Bishop Masuka consecrated him as bishop for his task in the Zion Sabbath Church.

The process of individualisation

Protestantism has always emphasised the importance of the individual's decision in accepting God and distinguishing between good and evil. Theologically correct as this emphasis was, and still is, in the God-human relationship, it became an aggravating factor in the undermining of religious authority once it was drawn into and misunderstood in the wider context of Western-African acculturation and the breakdown of tribal authority. The individual's right and duty to decide for him- or herself on the basis of biblical evidence, for some at least, became sufficient justification for questioning and opposing drastically the codes and sanctions of the group concerned. On the one hand, the prophetic or Ethiopian-type leader indeed replaced traditional values with Christian ones in the 'new tribe'. But on the other hand the very essence of the new message he was propagating had fostered a critical attitude in his followers that was likely to cause divisiveness if provoked. In the context of the 'new tribe', the tendency to think and act individually had certainly become much stronger than it had been in the old.

Closely linked to and stimulating the process of individualisation was the availability of the Bible in the vernacular, an independent source that individuals could appeal to as a basis for their group's accommodating or divergent convictions. Barrett has indicated the direct correlation between an increased demand for spiritual independence in African communities and the publication

of the Scriptures in the local language. At first the Missions had absolute control over the Scriptures and their interpretation was final. But unrestricted access to the Bible provided the African with an independent standard of reference, and one (especially the Old Testament) that seemed closer to his own society than that of the white man. A statistical analysis of 724 African tribes leads Barrett (1968:131) to the conclusion that 'in tribes with portions (of scripture) only, the probability of separatism being present is 56 per cent; with New Testaments, it is 67 per cent; and with complete Bibles it is 81 per cent'.

In any given schismatic situation it is difficult to determine the extent to which these theological factors condition the splintering process. It can be safely assumed, however, that behind the obvious facade of a 'doctrinal dispute', the more subtle influences of individualisation, independent Bible interpretation and a limited understanding of ecclesiology create a fertile soil for Independentism.

Non-theological factors

Independent Church and African community

Important as the theological factors are as contributing causes of schism, they are usually outweighed by non-theological influences. Mention has already been made of a partially conceptualised ecclesiology, caused by the physical presence of a vast number of Western denominations and inherent weaknesses in Mission Churches. An even greater force in determining a particular concept of the church is the nature of African society itself. The continuous secession of Independent Churches reflects characteristics of the traditional tribal structure, which indicates a strong tendency to graft traditional notions onto church life. In the same way as a kin-group breaks away and attains independence after the death of the head of an extended family unit, a junior bishop breaks away with a number of followers after the death of his principal church leader. Although such a move may be criticised and disputed by others of the same movement, the sanction of customary law is subtly transferred to the ecclesiastic context and the creation of an autonomous or semi-autonomous church group, as yet another member of the wide-reaching 'family of churches' is philosophically accepted. Because of the resemblance between the traditional extended family group and the Independent Church congregation – which invariably comprises a number of closely related individuals – the anticipation of the customary hiving-off process applies to one as well as the other. Thus the traditional justification for secession tends to overshadow an awareness of the Christian imperative of church unity.

There are also distinct parallels between the average Shona village and Independent Church congregations. Shona villages are usually composed of a nuclear group of male family heads agnatically related to the kraalhead. The

rest of the males are his other cognatic kin, affines or 'foreigners' (*vatorwa*). According to a survey of the villages in the Gutu district, only 21 per cent of the homestead-heads were *vatorwa*, that is, not related, to their kraalheads (Daneel 1971:33). With at least 45 per cent of the homestead heads being the agnatic kin (that is, sons or younger brothers) of their kraalheads, the composition of the village community tends to support the kraalhead's authority. The non-related homestead heads sometimes form separate village sections, but they remain under the control of the headman. In the Independent Church congregation the leader or senior office-bearer also has a core of agnatic relatives in key-positions. In the church's leadership hierarchy the distribution and support of authority therefore run along similar lines to the village. It is therefore not surprising that village segmentation will leave an imprint on Independent Church life.

Village segmentation is a common feature in Shona society. It usually occurs after the death of a kraalhead, when some of the younger married sons prefer to start a new village of their own, instead of living under the control of their eldest brother, who succeeds to the position of the deceased father. Segmentation or kraal-splitting also takes place when a married male with an exceptionally large household, or with sufficient related and non-related followers, wishes to establish a new village. Permission must be obtained from both the ward headman and the kraalhead. The ward headman allocates the new site, usually in close proximity to the parental village. It is particularly to the ward headman, called *sadunhu*, the 'owner of the ward', that loyalty is shown by the elder and new kraalheads. Thus friction and conflict in village communities can be solved through segmentation without impairing that cohesion of the wider ward community that is personified in the *sadunhu*. In this connection it should be remembered that to the Shona it is *not* the village that constitutes home, but the ward (*dunhu*) with its large cluster of villages. The village was too often moved from one site to another to represent permanency. The chiefdom was not home because it was too wide and vague for a man to grasp. But the *dunhu* was home!

It was big enough for a man's children and his children's children to settle in; it was small enough to know everyone who lived in it. Within the *dunhu* boundaries a man could make use of the land for the purposes of his family unit ... Within the *dunhu* the people felt they belonged so closely together that they would help each other to cultivate their fields and build up their villages as a matter of course. They thought of themselves as one big, old family ... The *dunhu*, the land and its people, and the invisible spiritual bonds with the ancestors who lived and died there for generations, all these together made the intimacy of home' (Holleman: unpublished Mangwende report).

Village segmentation, seen in the context of the ward, was therefore an effective device to bring in-group conflicts to a head and to virtually revise the

distribution of authority in a constantly changing situation, whereby the stability and cohesion of that sector of society which constituted home could be maintained.

Situations of conflict or frustrated leadership, invariably caused by overstaffing in the leadership ranks of the Independent Churches and the subsequent blocking of promotion for junior officebearers, are solved in similar fashion. As Bishop Gavure of the First Ethiopian Church stated, 'If one of our congregations becomes too large and the office-bearers start bickering, we split it up in two congregations. It always helps! In this respect we resemble the kraalheads who cut up (*gura-gura*) their kraals.' In other words the church bishop plays the role of a *sadunhu* by allowing segmentation, that is, a redistribution of authority in a process of multiplying congregations within the wider framework of the entire church. The latter, like the *dunhu*, constitutes the dimension of intimacy, a spiritual home, the stability of which requires continual protection. Such segmentation of congregations often inspires church growth. For a bishop may require that the prospective leader of a congregation that is still to be formed should prove himself by recruiting sufficient numbers of followers to justify the existence of the envisaged church group. The segmentation principle is also applied by some Independent Church leaders to district circuits. In the African Apostolic Church of Johane Maranke the divisioning of circuits is a common practice, particularly when senior officials start pressing for new 'Pentecost' centres in areas where large concentrations of congregations call for new regional meeting places. In such cases the incentive for expansion is exploited by the principal leaders of the movement. During extensive meetings at church headquarters, those district officials who request greater autonomy at their district levels are challenged to 'prove themselves' over a period of one or more years through expanded congregations and the ability to cater financially for mass meetings. This is a condition for recognition of district circuits in their own rights.

Although this 'congregation' or 'circuit splitting' practice at times proves to be a realistic solution, it is not always bound to the biblical concept of reconciliation. Animosity between officials often continues to exist and may lead to a gradual severance of ties between the two remnants of a former single congregation and eventually towards a radical breakaway of the dissatisfied group from the parental body. When the village segmentation principle is insufficiently linked to biblical notions of church unity and ecumenicity, a climate is easily generated in which a proliferation of congregations, and by implication a multiplication of churches, is taken for granted.

In short, the traditional pattern of village segmentation has a twofold conditioning influence on Independent Churches. In the positive sense, it provides the wise leader with a means of solving conflicts and stimulating church growth, with group consolidation as a result. In the negative sense, this

custom is perverted into a justification for the secessionist leader's severance of ties from the parental church. Yet it is interesting to note that even in radical breakaways, the traditional notion of a continued belonging to the wider family group – as the new village continues to belong to the ward (*dunhu*) – keeps on manifesting itself in interchurch relations. Over the years the Zion Apostolic Church of Bishop Masuka, for instance, has suffered numerous schisms, which led to the founding of Mutema's Zion Sabbath Church, Zacheo's Zion Protestant Church, Mtisi's Zion City, Kuudzerema's Zion Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ, Komboni's African Zion Church of Jesus and a host of others (Daneel 1971:300). All these groups are fully autonomous with their own headquarters and internal organisations. Nevertheless, there is still generally a sense of belonging to the same spiritual home, originally founded by Bishop Masuka. Secessionist leaders still refer to this bishop as their 'father'; they send him contributions as signs of loyalty; and they attend the large church festivals with some of their followers. During such joint meetings the casual observer will be entirely unaware of the wide representation of 'churches' and of the long history of strife and fission in the background. Such demonstrations of solidarity and brotherhood derive both from Christian impulses and from the traditional sense of belonging to the *dunhu* (ward) that represents 'home'. In a sense, one can say that the traditional African society, with its drive towards belonging in the intimately known group – be it extended family or a cluster of villages – contains the seeds of ecumenism, which sporadically comes to light in the Independent Churches in spite of all the divisions and diversity.

Leadership strife

Purely human considerations such as the urge to lead, to gain power, to acquire prestige and status and to widen one's influence, contribute towards continuous leadership strife, which is the root cause of schisms or individual defection. Virtually all principal church leaders who have experienced a loss of membership through schisms complain about the inability of their *vaduku* ('young ones'; that is, subordinate office-bearers) to accept authority and the ambition of such people themselves to rise to *ukuru* (leadership). They usually fail to concede that their own mistakes and failures aggravate the situations of tension and strife that often precede schisms. On the other hand, secessionist leaders tend to play down their deeper motives by referring to a doctrinal dispute or the shortcomings of the principal leader as the main cause of their dissent. In reality, however, the prospective secessionist leader deliberately raises a doctrinal issue or searches for a weakness in the make-up of the main leader to justify the course of action he intends to take. The evidence of many of the Shona Zionist schisms shows that a struggle for power and a certain degree of disassociation of the secessionist faction from the main body was already under way by the time the doctrinal dispute or objection to the main leader's conduct was raised.

Both external and internal factors aggravate and perpetuate the Independent Church leadership struggle. Externally, there is the influence of Western culture, which stimulates leadership on the basis of competence and merit, but which, through a colonial-type setting, fails to provide sufficient opportunity for the fulfilment of leadership ambition. This is the kind of socio-political situation, as Sundkler and others have pointed out, that stimulates Independentism. The tribal political system with its emphasis on inherited leadership and limited jurisdiction does not provide the scope required either. With its numerous and widely differentiated leadership hierarchies, the Independent Church to some extent creates an outlet for those frustrated individuals who react to these circumstances. Some of the African schoolteachers, for example, who over the years were dismissed from the educational system because of poor qualifications found their way into the Independent Churches. Yet, not all of them fitted in well. Those in particular who felt themselves superior to their less educated and tradition-oriented superiors caused friction which in some cases led to defection. This is a clear case of external circumstance leading to the inclusion of people in the Independent Churches leadership hierarchies whose ambitions and expectations are not properly attuned to the scope of religious activities or the conditions for promotion in these hierarchies, as a result of which leadership conflicts arise.

Internally, a basic cause of perpetual strife is the combination of virtually irreconcilable norms for leadership, both biblical and traditional, without the inclusion of clear-cut policies according to which conflicting leadership demands can be solved. This is best illustrated in the appointment of office-bearers, the nature of leadership hierarchies and leadership succession.

Office-bearers and leadership hierarchies

Kinship plays such an important role in the appointment of office-bearers that most Independent Churches, at congregational level at least, can be called 'family churches'. It is not uncommon to find a small Zionist Church, consisting of only a few congregations, each of which is led by a younger blood brother, son or sister's son (*muzukura*) of the bishop. In Bishop Forridge's Zion Christian Church – an offshoot of Mutendi's Zion Christian Church – virtually all the congregations are led by close relatives of the bishop. In the home congregation, the key positions of evangelist and prophet are held by the bishop's sons, while his daughters and wives act as choir members, drum beaters and dancers during services.

Even in the larger movements this pattern perpetuates itself. At Mutendi's Zion City, the leader's sons hold high-ranking offices in the central and surrounding congregations. The senior officials of outlying congregations are not necessarily related to Bishop Mutendi, but in their own circuits these officials in turn appoint relatives – usually those subordinated to them in the kinship structure – in key



Plate 12: Leadership succession after founder leader's death, as major cause of AIC schisms. After ZCC Bishop Mutendi's death two of his sons claimed leadership. Nehemiah (top) was accepted by the

positions. Thus the natural and traditional pattern of authority tends to reassert itself in the context of Independent Churches. Church matters are family affairs, and as such, subject to the tensions generated in family circles.

The predominance of the kinship factor already starts with the nature of church expansion, which is the predilection for mass conversion and the baptism of family units. The decision of the family head is more or less binding on family members, many of whom will participate in baptism on his orders, regardless of their individual spiritual convictions. In the process roles are created for relatives, for which they may or may not be spiritually equipped at the time. It should be stated in all fairness that numerous office-bearers appointed in this way gradually develop the qualities, spiritual and otherwise, required for the positions they hold. But the kinship factor invariably obscures the importance of spiritual growth and maturity as a condition for church leadership, as a result of which a clear perception of the biblical norms for such leadership is retarded. Thus it easily happens that a substantial number of officials in a given church, holding positions of authority by virtue of kinship ties, have but a scant knowledge of biblical truth and of the nature of Christ's church. To them, no doubt, separatism and group divisioning in the ecclesiastic sphere hold the same connotation as village segmentation, and will be effected without much reserve if considered necessary.

An analysis of the leadership hierarchies of 28 Independent Church congregations in the Gutu district highlighted the importance of kinship ties. Only in 31 (19 per cent) out of 166 office-bearers was there no agnatic or affinal relationship with one or more of the other senior or junior officials in the same leadership hierarchy. In the 19 father-son relationships, the 44 blood brother relationships, 25 maternal uncle-sister's son and 16 paternal uncle-nephew relationships, the pattern generally was that seniority and subordination in the ranks of church leadership coincided with that of the traditional kinship system. In each category of relationships there was, significantly enough, also a reversal of the traditional seniority principle – for example, that of a son holding a higher position than his father or elder brother, or of a son-in-law leading members of his wife-providing lineage. This illustrates that Independent Church leadership not only adapts itself to the old order, but also transforms it in the creation of new patterns of authority.

Nevertheless, the high incidence of kinship ties in leadership hierarchies stimulates another tradition-oriented practice, that is, the appointment of office-bearers for life. This in turn tends to block or retard leadership promotion based on spiritual growth and experience in church work. Frustration is therefore generated through a leadership system that keeps people in office on the basis of blood ties, but seeks progress according to the biblical norms of exemplary moral conduct and spiritual maturity. As mentioned above, the solution to this problem is often sought in the splitting up of congregations. Yet individual

office-bearers who find themselves hemmed in permanently by seniors, and whose prospects for promotion virtually hinge on the death of a person holding higher office in the hierarchy concerned, easily defect to form new groups or to join other churches with better leadership prospects.

Another development that facilitates the chances of secession is the emergence of charismatic and legal authority in the leadership hierarchy of some prophetic movements. At first the prophetic leader moves around a great deal, but as his following grows, his attention is increasingly directed at organisational issues. As his church becomes institutionalised, he fashions himself as a bishop and relegates his prophetic task to subordinate officials. These prophets have their own rank system, which seldom allows scope for promotion to the office of bishop. Yet they represent the church's charismatic authority and once they have attained positions of influence in the church through faith healing and other prophetic activities, they are in a position to bring pressure to bear on the bishop, ministers and preachers with reference to the same source of inspiration, that is, the Holy Spirit, on which the bishop initially based his own prophetic activities. From this vantage point, prophets exercise considerable influence over the group's activities and at times they challenge those officials vested with legal authority. Where such action places them on a collision course with their bishop, the kind of conflict arises that, if handled incorrectly, leads to expulsion or secession.

Leadership succession

Succession to leadership by way of inheritance reflects one of the most characteristic ways in which the Independent Church adapts itself to African tradition. The customary ideal for chieftainship succession, which is bound to the leading house or houses of the politically dominant lineage, finds expression in the tendency of founder leaders of Independent Churches to reserve the future leadership of their followers for their close relatives, preferably their sons. At church headquarters and in the nucleus of each congregation, the Independent Church resembles the lineage or family unit that accepts and confirms inherited religious authority. As the senior son of a deceased family head in the traditional context inherits both property and religious authority during the *kugadzira* (literally 'settle the spirit') ceremony – which elevates the deceased's spirit into ancestorhood – the Independent Church bishop's son inherits the estate and spiritual leadership of his father during the post-burial ceremonies conducted on behalf of the latter. Just as the senior son traditionally is instated as ritual officiant, on behalf of the family group, for life, the succeeding son of a deceased bishop is expected to hold his inherited ecclesiastical office for life.

The leadership succession ceremonies in the Independent Churches resemble the traditional *kugova nhaka* (distribution of inheritance) and name-giving rituals that form part of the multi-purpose *kugadzira* procedures. This was

clearly illustrated in the African Apostolic Church after Johane Maranke's death. Despite the efforts of the senior prophet, Simon Mushati (Johane's sister's son: *muzukuru*), to divorce Johane's leadership from family and estate affairs, elements of the traditional *kugadzira* and related rituals were introduced by Anrod, Johane's brother, to resolve family and ecclesiastic matters simultaneously. As in the traditional name-giving ceremony, the elder sons, Abero, Makebo and Judah, were required to sit on a sleeping-mat (*rupasa*) to receive the holy staves, robes and other symbols of religious authority of their deceased father. The integral relationship between church and family was furthermore illustrated in the handling of church property – for example the Landrovers used for church work – as part of Johane's inheritable estate.

Traditional notions persist in that the inheritance of the deceased leader's name, robes and staves is conceived of as conveying to the succeeding son or sons some inherent quality, be it the spirit presence of the deceased leader, an outstanding talent or charisma, or just his experience and power generally, whereby the son will be enabled to proceed with his father's work. This is probably one of the most important, if somewhat obscure, reasons that there is often such a marked lack of concern with the qualifications and experience of the inheriting leader. I was always struck by the inclination of Independent Church members to discuss what they saw as biblical justification for inherited church leadership, rather than show interest in the spiritual stature, organisational competence and leadership potential of the senior son or sons actually inheriting church leadership. The overt reaction of people in the prophetic churches regarding the question of competence of the inheriting son was usually that the Holy Spirit, having directed such a type of succession, which literally 'follows the blood' (*kutevera ropa*) of the first leader, will enable the new leader to act competently.

Inherited leadership is usually sanctioned with reference to the Jewish kingship and/or the succession of Eleazer to the position of his deceased father, Aaron. Such references seldom distinguish between the royal and priestly leadership of the Old Testament or between the religious leadership of the Old Testament temple and New Testament ecclesia. It is rather a matter of selecting Bible verses that seem to uphold a tradition-oriented and therefore acceptable pattern of leadership. In connection with Abero inheriting Johane's leadership, the senior healer, Torera, for instance, argued as follows,

If the Church appointed anybody other than Abero as Johane's successor, it would simply have been a matter of going astray. Who else but my eldest son should inherit my possessions (including church leadership)? ... We find this truth in the Bible. When Aaron died God instructed Moses to put his garments on his son, Eleazer. His children therefore had to continue with his work. The son of Aaron was of Aaron's blood.

Evangelist Haire argued the same point along different lines, 'According to the Bible, there are thousands of angels. And yet God sent His Son to teach the people of this world. So the Bible really teaches inheritance. If a minister dies his son will succeed him. In Luke 2:44 it says, 'Let me do my father's work at all times!' So the child *must* take up the ministry of his father.'

Whatever the justification for inherited leadership, the practice is the Achilles heel of the Independent Churches! For in virtually *all* the major churches a serious crisis arises soon after the principal leader's death. It was after Bishop David Masuka's death that the Zion Apostolic Church, the largest of the *Ndaza* movements in Zimbabwe, virtually fell apart. Bishop Mutendi's death was followed by the most serious secession in the Zion Christian Church when Revd Ruben Mutendi refused to accept his elder brother, Nehemiah, as successor of their deceased father. This schism in many ways resembles the rupture of the Zion Christian Church in South Africa after the death of its founder leader, Enginasi Lekhanyane. It was also Johane Maranke's death that triggered the first major schism in the ranks of the African Apostolic Church.

In the latter case, Simon Mushati, senior prophet and Johane's maternal cousin, openly disputed the right of Johane's sons to succeed their father. During the installation ceremony he claimed that the inheritance of the Word of God is not to be inherited by children. But similar to biblically based arguments for inherited leadership, those against it were based on a convenient selection of verses rather than from theological insights of great depth. Prophet Munyuwechando, a staunch supporter of Mushati, for instance, based his argument that a church cannot be inherited (*kereke haigarwi nhaka*) on Joshua 1:1, which refers to Joshua's succession to the position of Moses. This 'biblical' argument was augmented with the interpretation of various directive visions. It is virtually standard procedure during such schismatic crises that claims and counter-claims are based on Scriptures and supported by visions and dreams that supposedly sanction the course of events.

What usually happens during a succession crisis, as was evidenced in Bishop Masuka's Zion Apostolic Church, is that brooding tensions, which may have existed for a long time, are brought into the open. Senior leaders of outlying church circuits, who may have been largely responsible for the expansion of the church in their home districts and who all along felt a certain 'ownership' of the members they have converted, feel less bound by loyalty to the son than they had to the founder leader himself. They too feel the need to have their names attached to a group of followers, so that their religious accomplishments will continue to receive due recognition in the generations to come. If local support for such a regional leader is strong enough, he may well break away with all or a number of congregations under his jurisdiction and form a new church. Such schismatic leaders condemn inherited leadership and insist on the appointment of the deceased leader's successor through voting in the church

council, or they simply oppose the procedure adopted during the inheriting son's installation ceremony, as Mushati did. It was under such circumstances that Bishop Makamba and Willi Sharara seceded soon after Peresu was officially instated in his father's (David Masuka's) position. Ironically, such schismatic leaders, once they have consolidated their own leadership positions in their own church groups, will expect the same principle they had disputed to be applied after their death. Having established their own autonomy, they maintain a certain allegiance with the parental group which, as I have already mentioned, is reminiscent of a new village community establishing itself in the tribal word.

Succession through inheritance does not apply only to the top position or the senior offices in Independent Churches. In the prophetic movements in particular, the continued influence of this traditional practice is manifest throughout the entire leadership hierarchy. This is because at stake are not merely chieftain succession patterns, but the much more general principles of inherited religious authority, applicable to *all* traditional family units. It is therefore anticipated that if any office-bearer who is also a family head should die, his senior son will inherit his estate, official attire and religious obligations, even if he has held a relatively junior office in the church concerned. If the inheriting son of a deceased office-bearer is young and inexperienced in church affairs, his leadership is reserved for the future. But instead of a paternal uncle acting on his behalf, as traditionally would have happened in the family unit, his deceased father's junior in the church's leadership hierarchy is promoted to the vacant office.

Lazaro Mahere, an Apostle Evangelist, gave the following account:

Joshua and I worked together as evangelists. He was the senior and in charge of evangelistic campaigns. When he died his firstborn son, Elijah, was given his name while sitting on a mat (*rupasa*). The people addressed him, saying: 'You have come being you, Joshua!' So the son of Joshua inherited his father's property, including his garments with the APE (monogram indicating 'Apostolic Evangelist') on it. This boy, clad in his father's garments, will sit amongst us when we are gathered in the wind-shields (*misasa*). We greatly honour him as we did his father. He is present at the meetings of the evangelists because he must still be taught... I myself have succeeded his father. When he is grown up the two of us will co-operate as his father and I have done. Yet, I will be the senior after he has become an adult.

This practice of what in reality means a double succession can lead to fruitful cooperation between promoted church official and inheriting son. But it also carries the seeds of fission. If tact and common sense do not prevail, internal strife and minor schisms or defections can be the result of a power struggle in which both of the opposing parties claim to be the rightful leader. Quite clearly, the fusion of old and new leadership norms, which involves leadership promotion

according to divergent standards, implies the incorporation of conflict patterns in the church's leadership structure, which is a continuous source of potential or manifest disharmony. As long as an inheriting son can muster the support of fellow believers on the basis of traditional sentiments when he virtually claims religious authority in the church as part of his *nhaka* (inheritance), and as long as this practice is not superseded by a more consistent application of strictly Christian standards for leadership, the cohesion of Independent Church congregations will continue to be fragile, and fission will continue to be an inherent, disruptive force.

Here, then, we have one of the most potent sources of fission in the Independent Churches. Understandable as it is, in terms of the African heritage, at its roots one finds the hubris of man, the need for prestige and recognition, something tangible that is to be perpetuated in the future generations of the family unit, even if this forging of a link between ecclesiastic performance and inheritance is achieved at the expense of unity in Christ. It is, draped in African guise, the attitude that Paul criticised in Corinthians when he said, 'Each one of you says something different. One says, "I follow Paul"; another "I follow Apollos"; another "I follow Peter"; and another "I follow Christ". Christ has been divided into groups ...' (1 Corinthians 1:12-13).

The schismatic process

Sundkler analyses the dynamics of fission in the Independent Churches in three stages:

- The initial secession, which involves the breaking away from a Mission, Ethiopian or Zionist Church
- the integration of the new church, characterised by a process of centripetal rigidity and even social separation to consolidate the main group
- the new crisis and new secession.

By his own admission an analysis along these lines has limitations. It represents an over-simplification of the process taking place, because the various 'stages' are not necessarily distinguishable as complete phases. Neither is the third stage a *terminus ad quem*, but a transition point for development towards further possibilities' (Sundkler 1961:170).

For the initial secession, Sundkler distinguishes between the non-deliberate and the deliberate preparation for secession. The non-deliberate preparation concerns the conditioning of expectations through such factors as the African kraal-splitting practice, the unrest caused by the impact of Western civilisation, the Protestant tradition of denominationalism and a misunderstanding of missionary policy on self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating churches. The deliberate preparation takes place when the schismatic leader,

exploiting the climate that has been created by these factors, builds up a following within the parent church and instructs his followers according to his own convictions.

The crisis of secession leads to a new organisation around the segment that had broken away from the parental church. It also produces after-effects on the parent church, such as a negative reaction to some forms of *interpretatio Africana*, for example the use of drums, which may resemble practices in the secessionist group, and an increased rigidity caused by the heightened expectations and apprehension of future crises.

For the new church the period of integration and growth – Sundkler's second stage – is one of modelling the secessionist group according to type. The main leader exerts control with increasing rigidity and radicalism. To this, the conformative followers respond by imitating the leader's characteristic actions, and the non-conformative individuals again break away to form new groups or to return to the parent church. Sundkler rightly points out that time and convention act as conservative forces whereby, after the initial period of consolidation, the leader modifies his radicalism. Moderation and a reappraisal of policies and ideologies are usually necessary if the leader is to retain his position after the novelty of forming a new church has worn off.

With the new crisis and new secession of stage 3, the fundamental, non-deliberate factors at work are still the same. A new set of rationalisations for the intended schism is introduced by the leading figure, whether the demands are for greater radicalism or for a 'return to the good old ways'. Sundkler (1961:177) contends that for the majority of Independent Churches, 'stage 3 is also the period of decline, atrophy and apathy'.

Valuable as Sundkler's three-stage model of schisms is for an understanding of the classic-type of breakaway – that is where the splinter church emerges as a segment from within the parental group – it has obvious limitations. As I have already pointed out, the original formation of most of the major movements in Zimbabwe, especially those of the prophetic type, did not take place along these lines. The three principal leaders of Zionism among the Shona, for instance, were not in a position to organise a schism from within a Mission or other church. Bishop Masuka did not belong to a Mission Church before becoming a Zionist. Bishop Mutendi and Andreas Shoko were Dutch Reformed Church members, but they seceded as migrant labourers and therefore in a state of relative isolation from their parent church; as individuals without taking noticeable numbers of fellow church members with them into the new movement; and as people fascinated by Africanised forms of worship and therefore only indirectly reacting to their Mission Church. The subsequent growth of the Zionist movement took the form of a gradual increase in numbers of individuals from a great diversity of religious backgrounds, as a response to what I prefer to call

'missionary endeavour'. This pattern of secession appears to be a predominant feature in the fission dynamics of Shona Independency. For it repeats itself in the Independent Church context when individuals break away from the parent church to establish new groups, composed of people drawn from numerous churches or traditional religion, rather than one group. Massive or classic schisms occasionally do take place, but then mainly as the result of leadership strife surrounding the death of a principal leader, as I have mentioned above.

In view of the far-reaching influence of African custom and tradition on Independent Church leadership, it follows that the commonest feature of the endless splintering process in the Independent Churches, among the Shona at least, is the change in congregations caused by defecting office-bearers. One can more or less speak of a 'fluidity of leadership'. In their quest for greater influence, more effective service or more appealing forms of worship, some office-bearers keep changing from one church group to another or they will make one or several attempts to form a new church. Bishop Hazael Mudyadzozo, who has played a leading role in at least six churches during his adult life, is no exception to the rule. He said,

After leaving the Mission Church in 1932 I became a Zionist by joining Pirato's Church. They said one should not drink beer. So I broke away and joined Makamba's (Zionist Apostolic) Church, which allowed the use of sweet beer. After a short while I left and became a member of Kuudzerema's (Zionist) Church. By this time I realised I was very fond of beer-drinking. So I moved on to Peter Mutema's (Zion Sabbath) Church where one can drink openly without stealing (that is, without being stigmatised). Right now I am in Bishop Nehemiah Gotore's (Zion Sabbath) Church.

Mudyadzozo's account illustrates a limited concept of the nature of the Christian Church. It appears that to him joining another church amounted to a move to the next club or society, its prohibition or allowance of beer-drinking being one of the decisive priorities. If it is considered that in each case Mudyadzozo was followed into the new church by at least a few of those he had led in the previous fold, and that he had probably left others behind in a state of dissatisfaction or uncertainty, then it follows that this continuous manoeuvring and resultant flux of office-bearers in the local congregations must create a certain degree of spiritual confusion and instability among the ordinary church members. This in turn can result in leaderless congregations if the remaining office-bearers are incapable of reorganising the remnants of the disintegrating unit concerned. On the other hand it is also true that at times these changes can lead to a process of renewed spiritual fervour, a constructive regrouping of congregations that were previously in a state of disarray and a positive evangelistic outreach to outsiders in an effort to improve church growth. Much depends on the motives of the leader who joins another church or sets out to form a new one.

In 1965 and 1966 I was in a position to study the activities of two defecting office-bearers in the Gutu district. A brief review of the sequence of events should contribute to our understanding of the nature and impact of the schismatic process. The two figures concerned were Sauro Garanuako, a prominent baptiser of Maranke's African Apostolic Church and Alison Mutingwende, a prophetic healer of Johane Masowe's Apostolic movement. These two men were friends and lived near each other in Kono's village in the Chingombe chiefdom.

The preparatory stage

The non-deliberate preparatory factors were definitely, though not very obviously, at work. Both Sauro and Alison were familiar with the tradition of kraal-splitting and both of them had a sufficiently scant knowledge of the nature of the Christian Church that they were not unduly perturbed with the prospects of breaking away from their parental churches. They had been exposed to the phenomenon of fission ever since they had joined their respective Independent Church groups, and it can be assumed that they had always, if only latently, reckoned with the possibility of ecclesiastic change.

Leadership ambition in both cases led to the deliberate preparation for secession. Alison was frustrated because Masowe's movement was on the wane, and as a result, his prophetic healing activities were not leading to leadership promotion or an accumulated following. Sauro was already a senior *muPostori*, but his promotion was retarded by overstaffing. To achieve a position of real stature, he was virtually dependent on the death of one of his senior baptisers or the formation of a new regional centre, which in 1965 did not seem likely. In addition, both men found it difficult to adhere to the beer-prohibiting strictures of their churches.

After initial discussions Sauro and Alison started attending Zionist services in the surrounding villages. They were propagating that they were considering a change in church affiliation, before they had actually severed ties with their parental churches. Significantly, they were *not* organising schisms within their parental churches, but 'shopping around' to determine the leadership prospects in other groups. This move led to a chain reaction in the Independent Churches' congregations within Chingombe and surrounding chiefdoms. Invitations were directed to the two men, and they in turn invited Zionist bishops to come and conduct church meetings at their village. The process of 'wooing' the two men consisted of joint services in which all interested parties were given a chance to preach and negotiate the conditions for joining the group concerned. Thus it transpired that the mere anticipation of secession of two fairly prominent individuals led to a wide-ranging ecumenical interaction of Independent Churches. To individual church members it meant travelling long distances, together with their bishops, and participating in joint and colourful church ceremonies in a new environment.

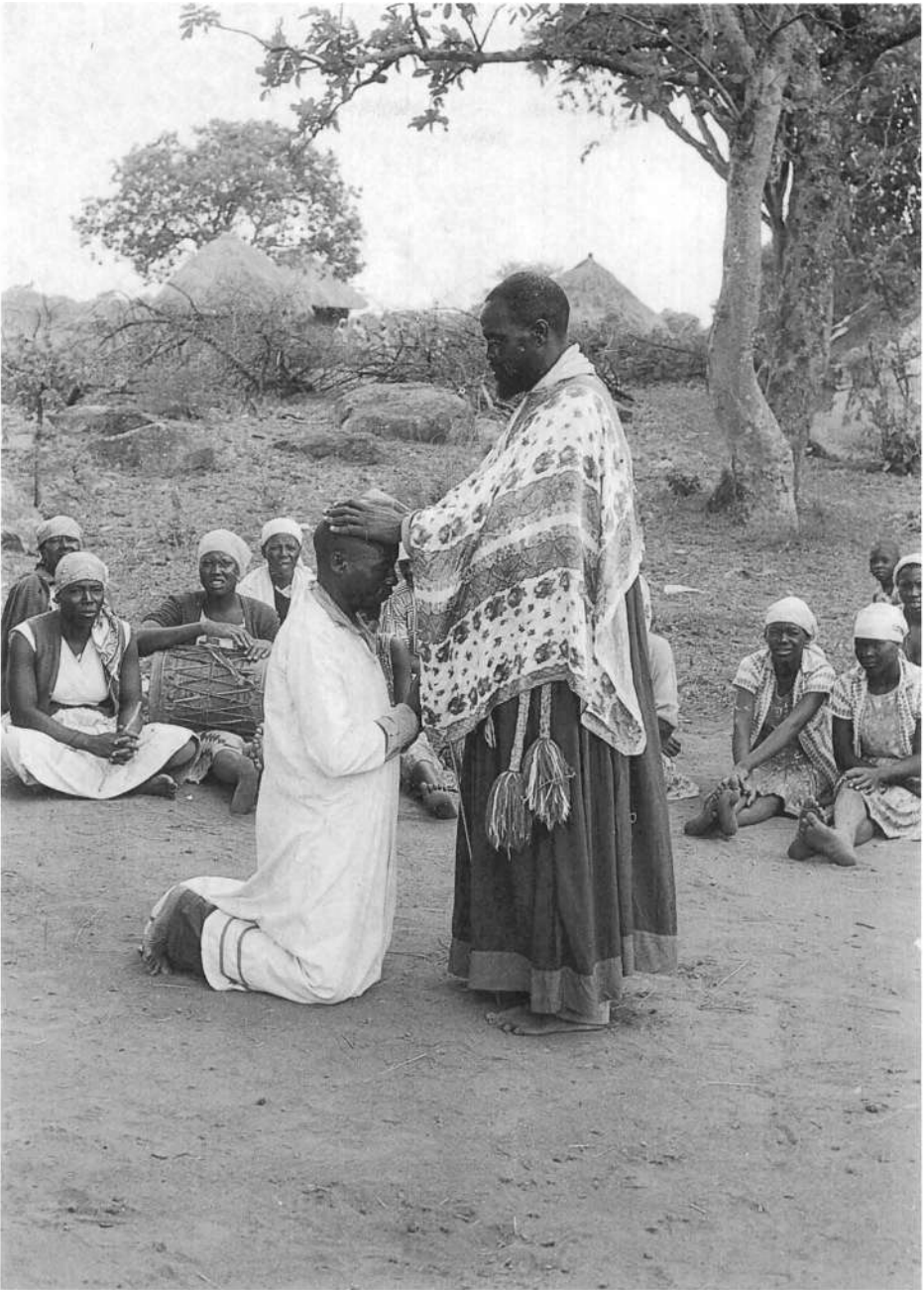


Plate 13: 'Fluidity of AIC leadership.' Apostle Sauro Garanuako is instated by Zionist Bishop Nehemiah Gotore as senior office-bearer in the leadership hierarchy of the Zion Sabbath Church



Plate 14: Elison Mutingwende, the prophetic campaigner against wizardry, who defected from the Masowe Apostles and founded the Kushinga Postora (Courageous Apostles) church – leaning against tree with Bible in hand – recruits new members at Kraalhead Rutsate's village

On 14 August 1965, Bishop Mubango, of Peter Mutema's Zion Sabbath Church, conducted a large-scale ceremony at Kono's village in an all-out drive to win over Elison Mutingwende. An excerpt of Mubango's sermon reads as follows,

Our Zion honours the Sabbath-day. It allows many wives and the drinking of beer. We find the allowance of beer-drinking in Jeremiah 31:5 and 6. As it is, people of this district stand up and go to Mt Ephraim. Let us stand on its top and shout to all our people in Gutu that we are with our God at Zion. Then the people will come flowing like water, to see the good things of Zion. They will receive the new wine only in Zion. He who is in Zion will be given porridge and beer. This beer is not to be drunk by all the people but only by the Zionists. There will be no sorrow because there will be beer, porridge and sheep's meat ...

If you, Elison, should die, who will be your leader? Who will lead you to God if you do not follow me? Since Gandanzara (John Masowe) is no longer coming here, who will guide you to God? It will be wise of you to follow me because I was your leader in the past and you received the prophetic spirit from my hands.

This excerpt reflects the tendency under such circumstances to concentrate on those features of the church which may attract the office-bearer under consideration. Beer-drinking and a state of wellbeing in Zion were deliberately linked to provide Elison with a solution to an embarrassing problem in the Apostolic Church. Bishop Mubango also harped on the decline of Masowe's movement. He knew that Elison, as a result of Masowe's absence, was no longer participating regularly in Holy Communion services. By raising the closely related issue of the church leader's involvement in the salvation of his followers, he was shrewdly putting pressure on Elison to join his church. The implication of this kind of manoeuvring is that liturgical procedure is adapted to circumstance. An entire church service is moulded into a recruiting device whereby 'preaching' obtains the character of dialogue between church officials and prospective candidate. Worship is replaced by debate.

Towards the end of that year of intensified religious activity, both Sauro and Elison had decided to join Bishop Nehemiah Gotore's Zion Sabbath Church in the Munyikwa chiefdom. Having virtually negotiated their immediate appointment in high office, they undertook to establish and expand a new Zion Sabbath Church congregation in their ward in the Chingombe chiefdom.

Secession and the formation of new church groups

In neither case (of Sauro and Elison) was there any large-scale conflict leading to schism, but rather a gradual severance of ties in the parental church, which culminated in the defection of only a small number of people. Some of their fellow office-bearers tried to dissuade them from defecting, but philosophically

accepted the inevitable when the two of them pursued the course they had taken. Here then we find two important features of what I have referred to as the 'fluidity of leadership'. First, this phenomenon is more or less accepted as inevitable, and in traditional (kraal-splitting) terms as justifiable. Second, the absence of an explosive secession crisis causes this type of defection to be highly deceptive as regards its long-term disintegrating implications for the parental body. Whereas Sauro's somewhat inconspicuous switch of church affiliation at first caused hardly a ripple in the ranks of the Maranke Apostles, it eventually triggered quite a number of similar defections of prominent *vaPostori*. Thus the loss of Apostolic membership over a long period of time was more serious than was originally anticipated by the *vaPostori* themselves.

The overriding concern with status and authority manifested itself again on 29 January 1966 when Bishop Gotore and some followers arrived at Kono's village to officially install the new leaders. Sauro was to be consecrated as bishop and Elison in the subordinate position of minister. This was not acceptable to Elison, who then opted out at the last moment and announced the formation of his own church. Nobody seemed unduly perturbed with this move, which indicated the near-fatalistic acceptance of office-bearers joining and 'shedding' churches in their search for real *ukuru* (leadership).

At Sauro's consecration as Zionist bishop, Kraalhead Kono and some villagers attended. They all seemed to approve, and several gave encouraging addresses to the new bishop after the main sermon by Gotore. At this point the new bishop's sphere of influence was limited to one or two families, but he gave clear indication that he intended recruiting many new members. There is little doubt that Bishop Gotore fitted Sauro's ordination into his own expansionist strategy and that he was counting on the development of new initiatives in the Chingombe chiefdom. An analysis of the sermons and speeches indicates that in their drive for church expansion both Bishop Gotore and Sauro had a pervading sense of dependence on God. In his sermon Gotore placed his own task and Sauro's in line with the outstanding leaders in the Old and New Testament. They had to act in unison under God's guidance like a Moses and Aaron. Steadfast leadership depended on the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the priestly task could be fulfilled only if done after the example of Melchisedek and Christ. Gotore's encouragement of Sauro to remain steadfast in faith and Sauro's public request for spiritual support reflected an acute awareness of human imperfection. Nevertheless, both men were convinced that they were in the process of making a constructive contribution towards God's work in this world. Much more was therefore at stake than the seemingly convenient switch from a 'beer-prohibiting' to a 'beer-allowing' church.

A month after Sauro's ordination, Elison and a few friends conducted the first official service of the *Kushinga Postora* (Courageous Apostles) – as he called his new church – at Kraalhead Rutsate's village (Daneel 1974:268f). The service

was directed mainly at dealing 'courageously' (hence the term 'Courageous Apostles') with the forces of wizardry which, it was believed, had caused the death of two of Kraalhead Rutsate's grandchildren. Elison's prophetic duty under the circumstances consisted of detecting and destroying the evil force. In doing so, Elison had set the stamp of witchcraft eradication on the future proceedings of his *Kushinga Postora* Church. The main focus was to be on serving the community through combating demonstratively, in the name of the Christian God, the threat of wizardry, a concern which proved to be an effective recruitment device. For those who were convinced of the prophet's miraculous performance were eventually led to 'Jordan' to be baptised and initiated into the new movement. Although Elison was assisted by two former Masowe Apostles, his efforts were not directed at the recruitment of members of the parental church or at reviving the old movement.

Thus, early in 1966, the two defecting office-bearers had set the stage for church expansion, one through the development of a new congregation in an existing church, and the other through the introduction of a new movement.

Expansion and consolidation

Sundkler's second phase in the schismatic process concerns the integration of the new group, directed by the radicalism of the secessionist leader. As no schismatic faction of followers emerges from the parental body on which the defecting officebearer can concentrate, his objectives are first of all to recruit a following and then to consolidate his leadership in the expanding group. This is precisely what Elison and Sauro were doing, once they had embarked on a new course. When the leader is more concerned with the attraction of new members than with the projection of an identity essentially different from that of the parental body – as happens with the classic schism – his radicalism is seldom as pronounced as in the context described by Sundkler. Both Sauro and Elison, for instance, allowed for beer drinking in their new groups, without giving this issue the prominence it had prior to their defection.

This does not exclude, however, the moulding of the new group to type, a process characterised by what Sundkler calls 'centripetal rigidity'. In Elison's case the new movement revolved around the issue of witchcraft eradication. The belief that this prophet was endowed by God with special powers to detect and combat wizardry (*uroyi*) was of overriding importance. It was fostered through testimony sermons during which staunch supporters witnessed about the way in which Elison had liberated them from evil. Thus the 'centripetal rigidity' rested in the non-acceptance within the group of a critical attitude of Elison's activities.

The stereotyped pattern of activities leading to the expansion and consolidation of the *Shinga Postora* can be summarised as follows. Misfortune or death in a

village leads to the summons of the prophet, who then investigates the matter in detail. Through discussions and sermons, Elison familiarises his followers with the details. In this manner the group is mobilised to fight a particular evil in a particular village. This setting of short-term objectives, placing the group at the service of their fellow-men and the anticipation of adding new members to the group, provided purpose and cohesion in the new church's ranks. The climactic service at the complainant's village is usually attended by a large audience and consists of testimonies by church members of liberation from *uroyi* threats or actual bewitchment; 'prophecies' hinting at or directly diagnosing the causes of the complainant's misfortune; calls for conversion and for a rejection of magical practices; an exposition of the new church's codes of conduct for the benefit of those intending to obtain membership; and Elison's detection and destruction of the malignant medicine in or near the house of the afflicted – an activity accompanied by dramatic manifestations of the professed presence of the Holy Spirit.

A few days later a baptismal ceremony will be conducted to initiate those villagers who have benefited from or were persuaded by the prophet's witchcraft-eradicating activities. Where one recruitment cycle ends with the addition of new members, the next one starts. For Elison will be called to other villages by those who were impressed by what they have witnessed. Elison, in turn, will call upon the recently baptised novices to attend the next village service. There they are challenged to witness about their own experience, an involvement that soon leads to their full integration into the group or to withdrawal.

Elison's preoccupation with wizardry caused him to remain a roving prophet. The dependence of his subordinate office-bearers on his popular activities contributed to the neglect of organisational and pastoral work. Nevertheless, it was no mean accomplishment to establish eight new congregations in the course of one year (February 1966 to February 1967). Elison's work, moreover, had considerable impact on the villages he tried to serve. His was not a negative image of a defector who had disrupted church life, but that of a prophet who helped people in distress and who introduced a liberating message into situations of crisis. Although he carefully avoided direct imputations of wizardry, his prophecies during village baptisms tended to expose individuals guilty of anti-social behaviour. The induction of these suspects into the church, with the suggestion that such action would curb or eliminate their destructive activities, had the salutary effect of easing tensions in the village community. It also provided prospects of rehabilitation to the self-confessed witch or the suspect *muroyi*. For, instead of urging the traditional practice of ostracism, Elison preached a message of hope and reconciliation. In this respect his church became a haven for the misfits and outcasts of society.

Unlike Elison, who was moving far and wide as his fame spread, Sauro concentrated on an evangelistic outreach in the villages in Chingombe

surrounding his own. In contrast to Elison's concern with witchcraft eradication, Sauro preached individual conversion and the necessity of active involvement in joint working programmes as soon as church membership was achieved. As a result, his budding new congregation from an early stage started operating as a closely knit unit with clearly specified goals. Group-integration hinged on the identification of new members with the short-term objectives Sauro set them. A major objective during the first six months of the new congregation's existence was the preparation for a large-scale conference of the Zion Sabbath Church, which was scheduled for August 1966 at Kraalhead Kono's village. Knowing full well that the conference was a test of his leadership in Chingombe, Sauro organised working parties to earn the required funds. Virtually the entire village community was mobilised after Kraalhead Kono and several of his kinsmen had joined the Zion Sabbath Church. The success of Sauro's strategy was borne out because after six months of intense activity a large congregation with a strong sense of achievement and pride had emerged. Sauro himself had established his authority in Zionist circles; he had created new roles and responsibility for people, which brought new commitment and purpose to their lives.

To the newly formed Zion Sabbath Church congregation, the August conference was a majorevent. It meant the official initiation of the new group into the church, the appointment of office-bearers and a test for Bishop Sauro's leadership. One of the most outstanding features of the conference was its ecumenical nature. The Mission Churches of the neighbourhood were well represented, with the Dutch Reformed Church teachers and deacons receiving honorary seats. A few First Ethiopian Church and African Congregational Church members represented the Ethiopian-type churches and all the Spirit-type churches of the district attended in large numbers. Bishops, preachers and prophets of virtually all the various churches were allowed to preach or prophecy during a weekend filled with festive ceremonies and an abundance of sermons. Ecumenical cordiality and brotherhood did not mean a glossing over of the differences between the participating churches. The Popes of Rome and the Dutch Reformed Church were taken to task for changing the day of rest from the Sabbath to the Sunday. Heated debates took place between Sabbath and Sunday-oriented Zionists. At times emotions were running high and arguments were flung around with such abandon that the occasion appeared to be that of a chaotic debating society rather than a church service.

In spite of these emotional outbursts, however, the significant point is that positive contributions were made by the leaders of the various churches towards the recognition and mobilisation of Bishop Sauro's newly founded congregation. Group interests were transcended as *vaPostori* prophets of Sauro's previous church and *Shinga Postora* prophets, the followers of Sauro's friend and rival, worked together towards witchcraft detection, confession of sins and the purification of the conference participants. Numerous gestures

of encouragement were directed at the members of the new congregation. The *MuPostori* prophet Amos, for instance, exhorted the Zion Sabbath Church members of Chingombe to accept the leadership and kin group of Bishop Gotore, their most senior bishop. When emotions were running high, it was the *Shinga Postora* evangelist, Jerry Kono, who delivered a challenging message of love, based on 1 Corinthians 13. He rebuked those who quarrelled over the day of worship and pointed out that their calls for repentance sounded hollow and ineffective in view of their heated arguments. Moreover, it was Bishop Murambatsvete of Kuudzerema's Zion Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ who supported the Zion Sabbath Church preachers in propagating the uniqueness of Zion and the importance of revelations through the Holy Spirit in the process of creating sound relations in God's Church.

What one should bear in mind is that such an event is a total festive happening! It included expositions in sermons of church laws as a projection of group identity. Calls for repentance led to baptisms in the dam nearby. Prophetic consultations were conducted non-stop. Prophecies also occurred during services and participants responded with confessions. Office-bearers were consecrated and faith healing concluded all services. Ironically, the aftermath of secession did not stand in the sign of disintegration and faction fighting, but of ecumenical interaction and spiritual revival.

Towards the end of the conference, the most moving scene, which underscored dependence on Christ, was that of Bishop Gotore in the rays of the setting sun carefully pressing his Bible against the body of a pregnant woman and praying,

You are Jesus who was there yesterday. You are the One about whom we preached today, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. You are the One who changes everything. We, who are in trouble cry to You for help, to You, the Shepherd, the Keeper of flesh and spirit. You said that the pregnant maiden who is in trouble will give birth normally and be happy with her child. She will forget all her agonies. Now, Lord Jesus, bless this maiden. We give her to you with this sunset, so that You may keep her all her life. We ask You to help her remember the things of heaven. Cure her womb, in the name of Jesus Christ, for ever and ever, Amen.

Gone is the impression of Christ as a 'marginal figure' or as a presupposed Saviour relegated to the background by an overriding preoccupation with the work of the Holy Spirit. Instead, we find Christ here, right at the heartbeat of Zionism, fully recognised as Healer and Saviour. Handing over into his care both a young woman with the promise of life in her womb and the setting sun is one of the most poignant ways of expressing in Africa a complete dependence on him as the beginning and end of all things.

The August conference not only brought the first phase of Bishop Sauro's church-expanding activities to a successful conclusion, it also provided impetus for further growth. Six months later Sauro was still operating from the Kono village

as base, but his congregation had expanded well beyond the neighbouring villages into the surrounding chiefdoms. The time had already arrived for the reorganisation and sub-divisioning of congregations – and with it, of course, the possibility of defections triggering new cycles of regrouping and change.

A comparison of the contexts in which Alison Mutingwende and Sauro Garanuako recruited followers and built new church groups brings to light the diversity and flexibility in the Independent Churches. The schismatic process for Alison culminated in a situation of rendering service to the wider community, but then not in an open approach to other churches. People of other churches also attended the witchcraft-eradicating ceremonies, but more as observers in an exclusively in-group and prophetically specialised setting than as participants with a relevant spiritual contribution for the occasion. In contrast to this pattern, Sauro's recruitment activities widened into an ecumenically open situation, in which the initiative was shared by the representatives of a wide variety of Spirit-type Churches, not only in demonstrating a remarkable solidarity, but in assisting with the emergence and moulding of a new congregation. Instead of the *vaPostori* reacting negatively to the defection of one of their former office-bearers, they attended in a spirit of identification with the formation of the new Zionist congregation. Thus the Zion Sabbath Church congregation had its official send-off, not in the comfortable privacy of the in-group, but in a multi-denominational setting with a large degree of exposure to related and rival groups.

Future prospects

In conclusion, how should one evaluate the dynamics of fission in the Independent Churches and what measures could be taken to enhance church unity as a deterrent to fragmentation? In the first place, it can safely be assumed that the schismatic process in the future will continue to be an inherent feature of the Independent Churches. The case studies of Alison and Sauro represent a process of fission and fusion which over the years takes place in these movements with the regularity of the tides of the sea. As long as the aggravating socio-political and religious factors that intensify the need for security and leadership continue to create the correct climate, and as long as the Independent Churches remain rooted in the African heritage, which includes village-segmentation and inherited authority, the process of fermentation, of grouping and re-grouping, and of shedding old affiliations in favour of new ones will continue.

Second, it is of great importance to evaluate the process in terms of its negative and positive implications. Theologically speaking, the disruptive element that stands in opposition to the ideal of the Church as the united Body of Christ cannot be denied. Fission facilitates a limited conception of the church. The multiplication of groups and the deceptive ease with which it takes place, no doubt, contributes to the popular notion, noticed among the Shona, that a *kereke* (church) and *chikoro* (school) are virtually identical. Many people use

these terms alternately for the church, which seems to indicate that to them the formation of yet another 'church' has a similar connotation to the addition of a school to the educational system. Mention has also been made of the 'spiritual vagrancy' caused by the defection of office-bearers. Because of the relative absence of classic schisms, the destabilising impact of individual defections is not always immediately apparent. In the case of Sauro Garanuako, it was only after a year that a degree of disintegration in the ranks of the Apostolic congregation he had left, became noticeable.

On the other hand, I have illustrated the decidedly positive features of fission and fusion in the Independent Churches. Although the motives of secessionist leaders are not always altruistic or free from egotistic ambition, the intensification of recruitment activities stimulates church growth and leads to experiences of conversion and spiritual revival. There is no doubt that to many individuals who became the followers of Sauro or Elison the experience of conversion and identification with fellow-believers was genuinely Christian, liberating in many respects and spiritually uplifting. Elison emerged from a stagnant and lethargic movement to specialise in the highly complex field of wizardry beliefs. His attempts may not have implied a complete breakthrough in a magically oriented thought-world. Yet he introduced the Christian message on a vitally important existential level to dramatically represent Christ's victory over evil. Sauro's activities, in turn, enhanced interaction between churches. For the ecumenical ties that were evident during the August conference were deliberately perpetuated. Regular ecumenical services were conducted that included the participation of Sauro's Zion Sabbath Church, Elison's Shinga Postora and Maranke's Apostolic Church. In this way, a general 'prophetic service' came into being among the three groups. Elison was called upon by vaPostori or Zion Sabbath Church members to remove evil medicines if a threat of witchcraft was considered to exist. Noted for his knowledge of the Bible, Sauro again was called upon by the others to preach or explain Bible portions in their congregations. Thus, the regrouping of congregations did not bring about isolationist or exclusivistic attitudes, at least not in the wider context of the Spirit-type Churches. This ecumenical dimension highlights my suggestion that we find the 'seeds of ecumenism' in the traditional conception of the tribal ward as home. In spite of village segmentation, the basic loyalty to the ward headman, the ward itself and the dominant lineage remain the same. Likewise, in Independent Church terms, in spite of fission and the regrouping of Church groups, the basic loyalty to the spiritual home, the 'Church family', or more specifically the prophetic movement, remains unchanged. Once the secessionist leader's authority has been established and his position consolidated in relation to his followers, he tends to seek meaningful cooperation in the familiar, wider ecclesiastical framework. Such 'natural ecumenicity' provides a basis on which more comprehensive and institutionalised attempts at ecumenical cooperation should be undertaken.³⁰

Black 'Messianism': Corruption or Contextualisation?*

One of the most important tasks confronting missiology today is to ponder over the Independent Churches in Africa and evaluate them. The Independent Churches afford a unique opportunity for observing how the black person deals with his or her own traditional religion when he or she is outside the sphere of influence exerted by the missionary of Western orientation. Here we can see clearly how Christian salvation is proclaimed and experienced within the existential need and worldview of the black person, how the gospel message is adapted to non-Christian customs and values, and how it is raised up in confrontation with these. The process is dynamic and follows a highly varied course between two extreme poles of syncretistic corruption, where the essential features of the gospel are obscured, and legitimate indigenisation or contextualisation, where Christian communication occurs by means of an intelligible adaptation that preserves the central truths. No matter what judgement is passed on this process in specific groups, here the established churches have a mirror image of the values, errors and limitations of the mission policy that they themselves espoused in the past. The often unconventional scriptural exposition, the emotional forms of expression, the holistic approach, the pragmatic, materialistic emphasis and other distinguishing features of the Independent Churches throw into stark relief the incongruous character of the sober, rationalistic and often spiritualised approach of Western Christendom in an African context. These striking and pivotal reactions and contrasts within the Independent Churches present extremely valuable insights for those individuals whose duty is to set the course for a future mission strategy in Africa.

Interchurch relations make the theological evaluation of the Independent Churches a pressing necessity. No matter how delicate and complex a task this might be, it is decisive as far as the determination by the established churches of a policy either of repudiation of the Independent Churches, or perhaps of ecumenical collaboration with them is concerned. Any meticulous evaluation immediately raises the problems of subjectivity and prejudice, and above all the question of the availability of adequate empirical data on which to base a just and responsible evaluation. The literature on this particular topic abounds in examples of categorical pronouncements and summary denunciations, grounded on impressionistic data, with seldom any awareness of the dubious

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merit of deductions or generalisations of tendencies that have already been condemned within the groups concerned. Consequently some movements are blithely written off as unchristian on the grounds of certain tendencies judged to be theologically faulty, with never a thought for the rich texture of the total phenomenon. This is particularly true of the group of Independent Churches typified as 'Messianic'.

The purpose of this critical examination is to set out the manner in which a number of influential missiologists have judged this phenomenon of so-called Black Messianism, particularly as it occurs in South Africa. What yardsticks have been employed and on the basis of what data have the groups involved been judged? Is there really adequate empirical evidence for the radical propositions that are advanced? What are the implications of the theological reflection that has already taken place? These and other questions are germane to any such discussion. My criticism of the conspicuously negative and sometimes biased approach to this phenomenon is grounded chiefly on facts and insights gleaned during a stay of many years among members of the Shona Independent Churches and 'Messianic' communities in Zimbabwe. It will be apparent that I am not essentially involved in questioning the scriptural norms against which this 'Messianism' is to be gauged, but much rather the issue of a correct and fair interpretation of the empirical phenomenon as such.

With the aid of several perspectives from the Shona context I hope eventually to establish a convincing argument for the total reinterpretation of the now-traditional standpoints, leading to what from the interchurch vista would be a far more positive approach to the putative 'black Messiah' and his followers.

Theological judgement from within missiology

Bengt Sundkler's classification of the Independent Churches in South Africa has gained a reasonably general acceptance. He distinguishes between the non-prophetic 'Ethiopian' Churches, whose doctrines and liturgies do not differ from the Protestant Mission Churches, the prophetic Zionists, with a heavy emphasis on the working of the Holy Spirit leading above all to faith healing, and the Messianic groups in which a prophetic leader partially or entirely supersedes the position of Christ (Sundkler 1961:38f, 323f). While Sundkler allows space for positive elements, even in Messianic groups, a far less accommodating approach is to be discerned in the works of Oosthuizen, Martin and Beyerhaus. Oosthuizen works comfortably with the concept of 'post-Christian' in the majority of Independent Churches. For him, these movements are neither Christian nor traditional. Their ethnocentric features make them forfeit any claim to be the Church of Christ (Oosthuizen 1968:xiv). Over against Christian sects, all black prophetic and so-called messianic movements are typified as 'nativistic'. The chief characteristic of these post-Christian groups is the maintenance of the

traditional religion rather than the Word of God as normative (1968:73–5). Martin arrives at the theological conclusion that what is chiefly at issue here is a faulty eschatology as well as a false Christology, pneumatology and ecclesiology (1964:161). These observers refer in particular to the 'Nazarene Baptist Church' of Shembe, the 'Zion Christian Church' of Lekhanyane (both in South Africa) and to Kimbanguism in Central Africa as outstanding examples of 'Messianism'.

This type of evaluation of 'Messianism' leaves the impression that a radical degeneration of prophetically oriented Christianity occurs, causing the black Messiah to replace the Christ of the Bible. The question of legitimate indigenisation is no longer posed at this juncture, since the true church of Christ has vanished, the Holy Spirit has been degraded into an impersonal power, and the message of salvation has been pared down one-sidedly to the needs of this existence. This indicates that discussion of this topic must to a great extent turn on Christology, pneumatology and eschatology. Consequently we now direct our attention to these three themes.

Christology

According to Sundkler, the distinction between Zionist and 'Messianic' groups rests on the key question: 'Who stands at the gates of heaven? Is it the Jesus of Scripture or a Bantu Messiah in the person of Shembe, Lekganyane, Khambule or Masowe' (1961:323)? While the Zionists choose Jesus Christ as redeemer, black Messianic movements opt for a Black Christ. The clear implication is that, particularly as far as life after death is concerned, the mediatory function of Christ is entirely assumed by a black messianic figure. Sundkler outlines Shembe as the mediator, the one who disposes over the keys to heaven. This function of the Black Christ is exclusive in character. Among other things it is related to Zulu reaction to colour discrimination, with the result that Shembe turns whites away from the portals of heaven and admits only his own followers. Whites, indeed, have received their good things in this life (1961:290f).

Martin also refers to the role of the Black Messiah as 'custodian of the keys' of the gates of heaven: by which means his own followers alone gain access to heaven (Martin 1964:127). As the 'Black Christ of Africa' moves increasingly into the foreground and supplants the 'white Christ of the Europeans', he becomes the mediator of salvation who dispenses the gift of redemption and power. Martin draws attention to the connection between the old kingship of the Zulu and the ideology of Black Messianism. In the same way that the Zulu king traditionally served as mediator between his people and God, the Black Christ now becomes the mediator who accomplishes the salvation of his people. The powerful desire of the black person for a tangible divine revelation here and now, a visible God who is yours, constitutes a major cause of this development. The result is that leaders such as Shembe and Lekganyane are elevated to 'kings' in their colonies, becoming 'mediators' in their own new Jerusalem,

while Jesus Christ disappears as head of the Church (Martin 1964:122–7). In the same strain, Oosthuizen describes the charismatic black prophet who acts as mediator between God and man and, as a Moses-like figure, executes a historical task in respect of his people in a time of crisis (1968:93).

Other facets of Christology besides mediatorship are at risk. According to Oosthuizen, the authority and kingship of Jesus are denied in these 'nativistic' movements, because the accent falls one-sidedly on what elevates man himself to power (1968:165–6). Man gains control of God, and God comes to be regarded as the personification of man's desires. The traditional emphasis on the use of magic to obtain and enhance vital force is very much in evidence. This in turn makes it possible to control and monopolise Christ's authority. As a result, Christ is even manipulated (1968:101). Such a pragmatic religion oriented towards magic, in Oosthuizen's opinion, allows no space for individual self-abnegation for the sake of Christ. In the final reckoning it amounts to a self-indulgent morality in which vital force is sought for one's self and one's own gain (1968:89).

Martin in particular has heavily underlined the way in which the cross of Christ is superseded by Messianism. She traces this tendency to the traditional magical apprehension of life in which attention is so fixed on the realisation of God's kingdom here and now, on the successful wonders performed by the Black Messiah, and on liberation from those powers that menace life force, that all revolves around faith-healing and the gratification of material needs in place of the biblical concept of salvation. The Messianic leader, in accordance with the expectations of his followers, desires a *teologia gloriae* in the place of a *theologia crucis* (Martin 1964:158). The Black Messiah is a Messiah without a cross, a false Christ incapable of effecting atonement for man's rebellion against God and the curse that it entailed. As evidence for the Messiah's avoidance of the cross, the following declaration by a Zulu clergyman is cited: 'These sects are South Africa's attempt to dodge the cross' (1964:160). The report of a missionary concerning the absence of reference to Christ's suffering in Zionist Easter preaching, as well as a remark by a ZCC member that Lekganyane rejects the cross because the Son of God died on it, are also advanced as evidence.

Beyerhaus, like Martin, points out that the cross is rejected, not simply because of the alien character of the Western preaching of the Gospel, but because of a negative reaction to the proclamation of the Christian message of salvation. Messianic movements circumvent the challenge of the cross because it is the Divine No to the old self and its cravings. Beyerhaus (1969:78) asserts: 'Man is too proud to accept humiliation, man is too much of a coward to accept the cross.' In his inaugural lecture at Tübingen, Beyerhaus poses some penetrating questions to Messianism: Has the cross of Christ here become a stumbling-block because of the self-glorification and self-deification of the Messiah figure? Do we not here encounter the grievance of natural religion when confronted

with the *theologia crucis* (1967:516)? If Oosthuizen's assertion that the Gospel call is distorted into a summons to the 'force vital' is correct, then Beyerhaus's questions cannot but receive an affirmative answer, and we would have to concede to Oosthuizen that a true Theology of the Cross is entirely wanting (Oosthuizen 1968:89).

Among the observers we are currently discussing there is ultimately no doubt about the total supplanting of the Christ of the Gospels by the Black Messiah. Sundkler quotes a number of selections from Shembe's hymnbook to illustrate the absence of 'Jesu Kristu'. Hymn 154 runs as follows:

I believe in the Father,
And in the Holy Spirit,
And in the communion of the saints
of the Nazarenes.

From this Sundkler concludes that there is no longer any place for Jesus Christ in the doctrine and lives of Shembe and his disciples. Just as Jesus once effected the salvation of the Jews, so now Shembe does for the Zulu (1961:283-4). Beyerhaus makes a more sweeping rejection. In neither the Zionist nor the Messianic movements can he detect much that has anything to do with so-called authentic Christianity. Christ is a mere pseudonym for the Messianic leader. 'This complete substitution,' he alleges, 'is especially notorious in the messianic movements' (1969:74-5). The entire Christian concept of God is nowhere to be recognised. Christ is superseded; the Holy Spirit makes way for a traditional spirit manifestation, and God the Father is equated with the traditional divinity (1969:74-5; 1967:503-4). Oosthuizen has a similarly radical repudiation of Shembe, because as far as the leader is concerned in his relationships with Christ, the distinction between representation and identification is not maintained with sufficient clarity. As regards the ZCC, he asserts that activities revolve chiefly around Lekhanyane and not Christ. In all instances the Black Messiah is the hub around which everything revolves (1968:37-8, 75).

Two parallel developments occur along with the supplanting of Christ. These are the deification of the Black Messiah and the replacing of Scripture with other norms. As touching the first of these tendencies, Sundkler points to Shembe's omnipresence, his mediation, which is decisive for eternal life, his work with God the Father in creation, and his identification with *uMvelingqangi*, the traditional Zulu divinity (1961:283-6). Certain disciples also refer definitively to their leader as God himself. That such a development is neither obvious nor inevitable is clear from Martin's reference to Eduard Lekganyane's conscious and deliberate denial of any claim to Messiahship or divinisation. She nevertheless is of the opinion that some of his disciples regard him as 'God the Saviour'. It is worth noting, however, that she does not cite any utterances of ZCC members, confining her sources to the opinions of members of other churches (Martin 1964:131). Beyerhaus is less cautious and summarily affirms that the Black Messiah is

pretentious in inciting his disciples to glorify and divinise him, thereby creating a misleading danger for Christians of the traditional churches (1969:131). This Messianic corruption, in his opinion results in the God of the Bible being no more than the 'unknown God' to the people of these movements (1969:79). Oosthuizen in his turn claims that the deification of the prophetic leader is not exclusively a reaction to the so-called white Christ of the white man, but also an attempt at maintaining direct contact with the supernatural world as this was traditionally conceptualised. Hence the Black Messiah's preaching 'includes a subjugation to the old supernatural powers' (1968:78). Here we pick up the basic tone of Oosthuizen's approach, namely that the Zionist and Messianic movements of Africa are radical, syncretistic deflections of Christianity into the traditional religions in which the old powers and the ancestral spirits gain the ultimate and decisive value.

There is evidently just as little doubt concerning the elimination of the Word of God. With almost monotonous regularity, Oosthuizen writes 'The Bible has (in the ZCC) lost its value' (1968:37); 'in the "nativistic" groups it is not Scripture, but the traditional religion, which constitutes the basis' (1968:73); 'the Bible as well as Jesus Christ are pushed into the background' (1968:91); 'the prophet's or Messiah's word replaces the Bible because this satisfies the black person's craving for a concrete revelation. The only authority of the prophet is his own inspiration' (1968:126-7). Martin and Beyerhaus, echoing this theme, refer to the Bible as a 'shelved' (Martin 1964:158) and a closed book (Beyerhaus 1969:79) for Black Messianism. Martin claims that the need for indigenisation leads to the deformation of the Gospel message and the figure of Christ after the patterns of the pre-Christian worldview. In this way the traditional culture becomes normative for the interpretation of the Bible (1964:35, 158). Beyerhaus generalises energetically about Zionism, and by implication about Messianism, as he unravels syncretism that still acknowledges Christian terminology, but evacuates it of all biblical concepts that underlie the terms and substitutes pagan ones (1969:75). If all these propositions are valid, which is to say that if the only thing that can be affirmed of the groups around Shembe, Lekhanyane, Kimbangu and other similar Zionist groups is that they offer a distorted or corrupt Christology, a denial of the cross, a divinised Black Messiah, and a gospel so radically modified that in some instances it disappears entirely, we would have to concede to Oosthuizen and Beyerhaus that all that was under discussion was a 'post-Christian' phenomenon.

Pneumatology

After their distorted Christology, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the actions ascribed by the so-called Zionist and Messianic movements to his influence are most questioned. Oosthuizen even devotes an entire chapter to the 'misunderstanding of the Holy Spirit' in Independent Churches (1968:119-42).

His major objection is that the Holy Spirit is confused with the forefathers. This, in his opinion, is one of the greatest theological problems in Africa, and it is directly connected to the belief that the departed prophet or messianic leader returns to influence his followers, just as ancestral spirits remain involved in the ups and downs of their living descendants. With the supplanting of Christ and the central accent on *uMoya* (the Spirit) the 'Black Messiah' leads his disciples back to the ancestors, to the 'blood and soil' of the tribe (1968:120). Here Oosthuizen leans mainly on the findings of Pauw and Sundkler for support. Pauw claims that belief in the Holy Spirit in Zulu Zionist Churches has not entirely supplanted belief in the ancestors and that in certain churches it is even employed to reinforce and legitimise ancestor veneration (1968:122). Sundkler in turn points out that there is lack of clarity about the concepts of *uMoya* and *Angel* (1961:249). *uMoya* is often regarded as a 'general state of divine Spirit-filling', while the *Angel* serves *uMoya* as the channel of revelation. While the Spirit is the latent state of being Spirit-filled, the Angel is the active version that becomes manifest above all during times of prayer or in dreams. The Angel explains to the prophet what is wrong with his patients and how they should be healed. Sundkler offers examples of infertility in women that the prophets, guided by the Angel, ascribe to the interference of ancestor spirits. The prescription given by the prophet in such cases involves reconciliation with the spirits by means of sacrifice. In these instances the Holy Spirit becomes the authority that confirms the ancestor cult. Sundkler puts it as follows: 'The Angel's main reproach in churches of Zionist type is that the ancestral spirits have been neglected' (1961:250). Because the prophet prescribes ancestor veneration as a precondition for healing, the identification of the Spirit with spirits becomes complete. Sundkler concludes: 'The Angel not only brings a message from the ancestral Spirit: The Angel is the spirit, the ancestral spirit' (1961:250).

Many additional qualifications are made by the observers we are discussing, all based on this central theme of the confusion of the Holy Spirit with the ancestral spirits, or their identification of one with the other. Beyerhaus, for example, without hesitation proclaims that the use of Christian symbols by the so-called Messianic movements has little to do with Christianity, because the manner of receiving the Holy Spirit is a direct continuation of the old *idozi* possession and because the true fruits of the Holy Spirit are lacking and are not even desired (1969:74–5). A sharp criticism thus descends on Messianism from the vantage point of pneumatology; a judgement that even pretends to generalise the intentions of a vast group of people into a single item. Martin portrays a process of indigenisation in Messianism, in which the transformation of the Gospel is strongly conditioned by pre-Christian expectations and viewpoints with a resultant syncretism characterised by, among other things, a 'blending' of the Holy Spirit with the ancestral spirits (1964:158). Because this process precludes an essential conversion, the new message is fitted into the 'natural', or in other

words, traditional experience of religion, with the necessary consequence that the 'Holy Spirit' and the ancestral are equated.

Oosthuizen's work illustrates how conceptual confusion can occur not only in the so-called Messianic movements, but also in the judgements of the observers. For example, he quotes Sundkler approvingly on the connection between the Spirit, the Angel and the ancestors and their direct involvement in the disciplining of erring church members, but in the same paragraph proceeds to the somewhat contradictory proposition that 'the Spirit's activity is not related to moral guidance but rather to vital force' (Oosthuizen 1968:122). We are left with the impression that consistency in what he is attempting to demonstrate has been buried under a random piling up of facts gleaned from the literature. Oosthuizen is more convincing when he attempts to explain the centrality of the Holy Spirit in indigenous movements from the perspective of the black person's concept of authority. The hierarchical ordering of the traditional spirit world in which authority is transmitted structurally in the family or tribe finds its reflection in an understanding of the Holy Spirit who acts as the supreme authority over or in collaboration with the ancestral spirits. The consequence is that God himself is positioned hierarchically, not spatially, in the background (1968:123).

A description such as this fits the proposition that in post-Christian religion the 'Spirit' assumes the position of Christ. With both God the Father and Christ in the background, the doctrine of the 'Spirit' becomes the breach through which the traditional orientation towards the forefathers gains entrance. The result, in Oosthuizen's opinion, is 'a resurgence of the old in a new form,' 'a world ruled through and through by the ancestors' and 'calling upon the ancestors' (1968:102-3, 123). Because this return to ancestor veneration is so prominent, and because the functions of the ancestors are transferred to the Holy Spirit, or merely the 'Spirit', the connection between Scripture and the Holy Spirit is entirely eliminated (1968:126, 129, 132).

Apart from this confusion of the Holy Spirit with the ancestral spirits, our particular observers mention another form of conceptual degeneration in prophetic movements, namely the syncretistic warping of the personhood of the Spirit of God into an impersonal power which can be manipulated. Beyerhaus alleges that the primal urge of man towards syncretism – that is to say, the equation and identification of all supernatural powers and revelations – leads to the depersonalising of God and the alteration of the Spirit of lordship to a non-personal 'thing-like' power which falls within the control of man (1969:75). In her description of a false pneumatology, Martin states: 'In prophetic and messianic movements the prophets and messiahs 'possess' the 'Spirit' like an impersonal power, they get hold of it in their own way, and the 'Spirit' must give utterance in a visible and audible way (*glossolalia*, trembling, leaps), and not in the hidden manner of the new life in Christ which is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.

5:22f' (1964:161). Oosthuizen associates with this idea when he states that as far as the Ngunza-Khaki 'Church' is concerned, the Spirit is the monopoly of the chief leader (1968:124). In the extension of traditional magic and fetishism it is the task of the prophetic leader to 'give' the 'Spirit' to his followers (1968:133). It is naturally inevitable that where the Holy Spirit is deformed into a power that people can manipulate and handle in the interests of themselves or their group, the biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit has become unrecognisable. A development of this type would be a further indication that Messianism stresses a *theologia gloriae* at the cost of a *theologia crucis*.

Eschatology

There are various reasons for the one-sided 'realised eschatology' that these observers ascribed to the Messianic movements. Martin notes the deep desire for an understandable revelation here and now, a yearning for deliverance from evil and for a new community in which peace and joy reign (1964:135). These longings can be appreciated in perspective only against the background of the black person's traditional view of time which, as expounded by John Mbiti, is focused on the present and the past (Sasa and Zamani in Swahili terminology) (1969:15–28). The future of Western lineal thinking was virtually an entirely missing dimension. In this thought-world Western missionary preaching arrived with a salvation history message and an apocalyptic accent that projected salvation into what was, for black persons, a missing facet of time. To the extent that salvation was not seen and experienced in the present, it was meaningless. The disappointment consequent upon unfulfilled future promises, as for instance in the postponed second advent, and the apparent absence of salvation in acculturative and political dilemmas that beset the black person, would only intensify his yearnings. Attachment to the so-called Messianic movements therefore represents, even if sometimes unconsciously, the urge to experience the realisation of unfulfilled eschatological expectations in the present.

With this background in mind, we can more readily appreciate why the black Messiah, responding to the needs of his people, establishes a colony that is known as 'City of Zion', 'Moriah' or 'Jerusalem' and which implies the realisation of liberation and salvation in this present existence. In the midst of the disintegration of tribal customs, in times of social change which entail frustrations and uncertainties, the great leader stands in the new community as prophet, as king, as Messiah, even as god (Martin 1964:131). This finds expression in the preaching of John Galilee Shembe, the successor to Isaiah Shembe: 'You, my people, were once told of a God who has neither arms nor legs, who can not see, who has neither love nor pity. But Isaiah Shembe showed you a God who walks on feet and who heals with his hands and who can be known by men, a God who loves and who has compassion.' Sundkler claims

that the 'God' who is spoken of here is the Messiah Isaiah Shembe himself (1961:278f, also Martin 1964:127). According to Martin, Edward Lekganyane of the ZCC is venerated in a similar manner. He is invoked in prayer as 'Our God, Lekganyane'. He is also a Moses figure, supreme judge and healing Nazarene. His disciples do on occasion mention Jesus Christ and his second coming. 'But this teaching seems for many to be of little importance, because they believe that in Edward Lekganyane their messiah is present. For them eschatology is realised' (1964:131-2).

Among the characteristics of what Martin typifies as a 'faulty eschatology', one encounters either a materialistic or a secularistic distortion of eschatology. Oosthuizen finds that the eschatology of all 'nativistic' religious movements is secularised, because it is interpreted from within the black person's existential situation. In these movements, he states, there is the explicit proposition that all opponents will be conquered, so that the black person will live in plenty in the new world that will arise out of the old. The accent falls on material wellbeing – an Africanised utopia – in which Christ plays no role and the Black Messiah effects health, fertility and material progress for his disciples (Oosthuizen 1968:83-4, 96). Beyerhaus poses the pertinent question whether what has happened in the Messianic movements is not an instance of the coincidence of a dawning awareness of the attainable advantages flowing from Western civilisation with the Gospel message of the coming Kingdom of God in peace, leading to an excessive eschatological tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet' of God's kingdom, resulting in a 'secularistic short-circuit' (1967:516).

In a realised kingdom, which is not only in the world, but also of it, Christian salvation and redemption are whittled down to healing, success, security and prosperity in the present existence. The profoundly felt need for liberation from bodily and social suffering and tension results in the message of a future salvation becoming a stumbling block. Full salvation must already be available. Consequently the quest is for healing rather than redemption. As a consequence of this Africanised salvation, the eschatological tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet' lapses (Martin 1964:158; see also Oosthuizen 1968:97). Because the future kingdom is to be taken by force, because, as Martin and Oosthuizen put it, there is a 'seizing' and a 'snatching' of the future (Martin 1964:160; Oosthuizen 1968:97), the perspective of eternal life and the hope of Christ's second advent are lost. Oosthuizen (1968:97) suggests:

In all their visions this snatching of the future is apparent. There is no idea of the tension between the present and the 'not yet', the Christian hope plays no part, here is the old natural man, freed from the cyclic concept of his religion to which he was not inexorably bound; but he has not found his feet in the new freedom. He has no central point on which these expectations are built ...

Martin (1964:160) underlines the loss of true hope that goes hand in hand with the grasping of the future when she states: 'Whenever man takes it upon himself to stretch out his hand to seize the future (that is, the kingdom) and to take it by force, he has no real hope. What he has seized upon is always a hope of his own making, a messiah who is a false Christ, and sooner or later disappointment follows.'

The impression created here is that the so-called Messianic eschatology eventually means the complete elimination of biblical eschatology. This effects a stagnation in the cyclical thought world that excludes any real future perspective and Christian hope.

One of the reasons for this is an inadequate ecclesiology. Bosch indicates how an alignment on the present leads to a 'de-historising' of salvation history. In this way the church is not viewed as the 'holy apostolic church' of all ages, but merely as a realisable reality in the present, concrete, religious community. In a context such as this, the Bible is wrenched out of its salvation history setting and favourite texts are applied literally at the whim of any given group. One logical consequence is the remoulding of the missionary's apocalyptic into a 'realised eschatology' (Bosch 1973:79). According to Martin, the defective ecclesiology is to be blamed on the denominationalism that missionaries imported, and on a deliberate attempt at indigenisation. This has resulted in the church being taken to be a new tribal community and church discipline being equated with tribal sanctions. Particularly in the Messianic groups of Shembe and Lekganyane, the church becomes a new tribe and a new kingdom. As paramount chief or king, the main leader represents the vitality of the new tribe. All blessings that come his way reflect the power and life of the tribe (Martin 1964:165). Oosthuizen also refers to the very general tendency in Africa to interpret the church as a new community that is expected to function like a traditional kinship group (1968:82). Since the forefathers are incorporated in it, the church community is ethnically determined. This leads Oosthuizen to the radical conclusion that 'the whole tribe is the Church without any idea of personal decision. Its basis is purely ethnic, that is, based on blood relationship' (1968:84). If a pronouncement such as this has general validity, there can be no question of a Christian eschatology or ecclesiology in Zionism or Messianism which could have degenerated into a modern version of tribal religion.

Radical criticism and an altered approach

A non-Christian phenomenon?

The overall impression created by these theological evaluations is that the degenerative process has penetrated so far in many prophetic and in particular so-called Messianic movements that we are indeed dealing with non-Christian or post-Christian phenomena. As far back as 1948, Sundkler indicated in his

classical work *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* that a 'nativistic-syncretistic' interpretation of the Christian message in certain Zionist movements led to a return to paganism. He claimed: 'The syncretistic sect becomes the bridge over which Africans are brought back to heathenism – a viewpoint which stresses the seriousness of the whole situation' (1961:297). Particularly in the case of Shembe, Sundkler was able to point out the virtually complete replacement of Christ by the Black Messiah. Martin goes one step further to the generalised allegation that as far as Messianism goes, no genuine conversion has taken place (1964:162), and that these movements are the result of a deliberate rejection of the Gospel message in favour of the choice of a visible kingdom and a self-selected Messiah. In her opinion, the black person's cultural heritage has become normative (1964:159). In a syncretistic degeneration, all revolves around an 'African Christianity' and no longer Christ. 'This African Christianity and African Christ are utterly opposed to the revelation of the unique Messiah Jesus of David's house, who is the Saviour of all races and nations ...' (1964:135).

It is Oosthuizen and Beyerhaus who follow the most remorselessly consistent line of rejection in a criticism that ultimately comes down to the point that there is no possibility of a path back to authentic Christianity from within Messianism. Oosthuizen's work is shot through with summary pronouncements about the so-called post-Christian movements (which include Zionism and Messianism) and which boil down to the accusations that they have their own 'redeemers' (Oosthuizen 1968:96), that salvation is sought in the traditional religion (1968:132), that the ancestors still reign (1968:103) and that the Black Messiah supplants both Christ and the Bible (1968:37–8, 73, 75, 91). The absence of the Church of Christ is propounded with the greatest conviction: 'Christian sects have often developed into churches, but where nativism is basic, this will not happen because contact has been lost with the World and with Christ's work on the cross' (1968:142). Beyerhaus reckons that no return to the Christian church is possible for messianic movements, because the group as such regards itself as the true Christian church for its own tribe or people, and because their false reactions do not rest on mere misunderstanding, but on a deliberate existential denial (*Widerspruch*) (1967:510). Beyerhaus easily points out the self-deception of the Zionists, who fail to perceive that their concept of God is limited to merely human dimensions and is unrelated to the holy and mighty God (1969:75). All biblical concepts, in his opinion, have been surrendered and replaced with pagan ones. No Zionist rites can be regarded as a faithful reflection of Christian worship. All they contain are elements that are susceptible to conversion (1969:77).

The implication of this drastic criticism is that the Zionist and Messianic movements are reduced to objects of mission. Here is no talk of churches with which collaboration or discussion could be entertained. What is at issue is confusion and degeneration, not to mention syncretism. There is certainly no

legitimate contextualisation from which lessons could be gleaned. Beyerhaus expressly affirms that a possible service to these groups in terms of theological education and development from within remains beyond question, because of the absence of a spiritual basis on which to build. Since according to him the sole 'spiritual basis' in Messianism is an avoidance of the cross, any theological development would only lead to further confusion and syncretism (1969:78). The one theologically responsible approach, in Beyerhaus's opinion, is the confrontation of Messianism with a fresh offering of the gospel of salvation.

In nativistic groups this gospel is not preached. Thus God himself is still unknown to them. The Bible, as we have literally seen on our visit to a worshipping Shembe group, is a closed book, even to the leaders. Let us go to them with the open Bible ... It will shatter the fog of their dim impression of the 'unknown God' which is sensed only by way of legalistic prescriptions and as an impersonal life force (1969:79).

Beyerhaus believes himself to be truly Pauline in judging the so-called black prophets as a protraction of paganism bound in demonic captivity. Exorcism is recommended in order to break the demonic powers (1969:79). Thus the builder of theological systems spans his line consistently from the supposed process of degeneration through to its apparently logical final phase of demonic possession.

The methods of these theologians

The theologians we are considering leave the distinct impression of the Western categorical method of working, in which the ideal of logical consistency in the sequence of thought in the erection of a coherent system for accounting for so-called Messianism has obstructed the path to a balanced reflection on a richly grained phenomenon that includes a number of apparently contradictory elements. Specific tendencies that they have either observed for themselves or that other research workers have mentioned are frequently highlighted and then generalised and even absolutised in application, with hardly a thought for any adequate proof being advanced for the claim that the tendency in question is valid for the religious group as a whole.

It is unconvincing and unacceptable for an author to make radical pronouncements of the order, for example, that Christ has been entirely supplanted, or that the chief leader has been divinised and that the Bible is a closed book, simply on the grounds of isolated observations and sporadic contact with 'Messianic' congregations. When, for instance, Martin cites pronouncements of black leaders from Mission Churches to prop up her standpoint that the Independent Churches circumvent the cross, or that Lekganyane is prayed to as God himself, the question at once arises whether she ever really studied this particular movement. Anybody familiar with the mutual relationships of Mission and Independent Churches would be aware of the conflicts and rivalries

emerging from polarised group loyalties. An objective assessment therefore cannot be expected if it is based on the pronouncements stemming from the probably hostile attitudes of members of competing groups. Anyone with a reasonably sound knowledge of the ZCC will know that Lekganyane is not addressed as God, but that ZCC prayers are usually introduced as addressing the 'God of Lekganyane'. This does not posit a sort of sole right to God, but invokes the universal Christian God whom Lekganyane initially proclaimed. What Martin achieves in her dissertation of Messianism is therefore not an objective account of the groups which she judges, but the highlighting of a number of facets that are built into a pre-constructed scheme. This scheme is then subjected to critical theological judgement, while the impression is created that some responsible theological reflection is taking place. In my estimation, the theological judgement, however, is only partially applicable to the groups taken as examples – as Martin's later work among the Kimbanguists – which I refer to further on – itself makes clear.

Oosthuizen in his turn employs an overwhelming number of quotations from the literature, frequently without the necessary indications of their relevance or applicability to the subject under discussion. This leaves the impression of a selection from the literature made in such a way as to over-expose the negative aspects at the cost of the positive and produce a caricature to fulfil the preconceived characterisation of the prophetic and Messianic movements as 'post-Christian'. It should be patent to any Western Christian who has maintained protracted contact with the Independent Churches and observed and experienced their halting, but also authentically Christian characteristics that there cannot be any talk here of a complete process of degeneration. To mention but one example, in the majority of the Zionist churches, condemned by Oosthuizen as nativistic-syncretistic, the Bible is precisely not a closed book! It would be far more accurate to call it a well-worn book, because of its centrality and incessant use. Granted that the scriptural interpretation is sometimes compromising and fragmented – as, let us admit, occurs in the Mission Churches – there remains a penetration of central scriptural truths to be noted, and this makes any simplistic and convenient judgement impossible.

Beyerhaus's emphasis on a central Christological yardstick for the evaluation of Messianism is theologically correct. But his almost arrogant condemnation of Zionism, as if Zionism has no true knowledge of the Christian God, and as if everything that takes place in these churches is nothing more than a relapse into the traditional religion, has no connection with the facts. Ironically enough, on one side Beyerhaus launches an appeal for more research into the Independent Churches, while on the other he makes a series of negative generalisations about so-called nativistic movements – which include Messianism – without facing the question of whether it is at all true that the prophetic inspiration by the Holy Spirit is simply, as he puts it, a continuation of the traditional *idlozi* possession. Neither

does he enquire after the degree to which the Person of Christ is superseded in the Messianic movements, but summarily posits a total supplanting from the first. Here too the result is a theological evaluation of a caricature, which implies that it is no even-handed judgement of empirical reality.

My implicit criticism of the observers we are discussing is that, with the exception of Sundkler who was himself responsible for a good deal of fieldwork, the empirical substructure in no way justifies the far-ranging and sharp theological judgements. It is in fact true that, despite the excess of literature on the Independent Churches, the paucity of monographic depth-studies can do no more than provide the interested theologian with a fragmented picture of the whole. Precisely because of this dilemma, we are entitled to expect more caution in theological judgements. Indeed, in the cases of Shembe and Lekganyane representative depth-studies would have to be undertaken with, among other things, an analysis of preaching in various contexts by different leaders, in order to determine theological tendencies; persevering observation of ceremonies over a long period rather than incidental reconnaissance; the interviewing of a representative number of leaders and members in order to determine more precisely the process of Christian concept-forming – all before a reasonable theological exposition becomes a real possibility. Without such a thorough and firm empirical substructure, any theological judgement cannot be regarded as other than provisional and tentative in character, provided, of course, it is concerned with the question of truth rather than a dogmatised Western assumption of positions in a piece of misplaced 'witness theology' which pays no regard to the prejudged phenomenon.

Furthermore attention must be paid to the handling of such data on the Independent Churches as is already available. The Western manner of approaching facts emerges in, among other things, the literal interpretation of statements that this or that leader is God himself, and in the analysis of church songs as if they were credal statements rather than poetic expressions (Sundkler 1976:190f). What is more, it is easily forgotten that a subtle and ambiguous manner of speaking, together with the use of analogy, makes a literal translation in the Western sense impossible. When, for example, a Zionist says 'Lekganyane is God', this does not necessarily mean an identification springing from a misunderstanding of the Christian concept of God. It might carry precisely the same implication as a statement such as 'a car is *ngozi*' (a vengeful spirit) which does not mean that the two are identical, but that a car can be the cause of death and therefore, like the *ngozi* spirit, is dangerous. The statement 'Lekganyane is God' need not therefore imply any deification of the chief leader, but could be intended in an analogical sense as the reflection of the intimate relationship between God and the one whom he has sent.

Once we have established a lack of knowledge about the Independent Churches, we cannot avoid emphasising the need for empirical research in

service of the church and theology. Because it is involved in the interchange between the Christian message and the non-Christian religions, missiology has a definitive commission at this juncture. It is simply inadequate to rely on sociology, anthropology and studies in phenomenology or religion, with an appeal for interdisciplinary cooperation, however important this may be, as if these disciplines have the sole rights to empirical field studies. The concerns and the questions of those described are not adequate for a meaningful theological reflection. It is therefore the task of theology, and specifically of missiology to establish the facilities for empirical research and itself to make responsible use of sociological and anthropological techniques of fieldwork in order to assemble such data from living reality as is necessary for a continuing reflection. If one takes into account nothing more than the rich variety of black churches in South Africa, it becomes self-evident that the processing of empirical research material will have to be tackled on the principle of cooperation among all the theological disciplines. The Theological Faculty of the University of South Africa with its interdenominational basis and its Research Institute (which for the moment still focuses on the study of literary sources) should regard the extensions of empirical research as the highest priority and an absolute necessity for intelligible alignment on practical ecclesiastical realities.

That empirical studies of our subject are meaningful for theology may be illustrated in many ways, including the varying approaches of persistent contact and involvement with 'Messianic' groups which Sundkler and Martin eventually adopted after their initial sharp criticisms.

Alteration of course

It is noteworthy that an intimate involvement in practice with people in the so-called Messianic groups continues to lead the investigator to caution and re-assessment. Sundkler, who evidently is aware that his initial distinctions in his pioneer work *Bantu Prophets* prompted some authors to radical and one-sided opinions, arrives at important alterations of course in a later follow-up study *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists*, which appeared in 1976. On grounds of contacts long maintained with Independent Churches, leading to modified insights, he objects to the manner in which Oosthuizen, referring to Shembe's songs, categorises this leader as a Messiah in an absolute sense (Sundkler 1976:190f). In his view, Oosthuizen has never plumbed the subtlety and ambivalence in Shembe's statements. Shembe maintained the distinction between God and his Zulu servant in all its profundity (1976:196). Sundkler admits that it was misleading to regard the so-called nativistic Zionism as a bridge that conveyed the black person back to the traditional religion. To those in the movement, Zion meant newness of life, health, wholeness, a new identity. 'If it was a bridge, it appeared to them as a bridge to the future' (1976:305).

Sundkler himself now cautions against misconceptions which might arise from the use of the term 'Messiah'. He admits that his initial deductions from the facts about Shembe were 'too Western and too dogmatic' (1976:309) and proposes the concept of *iconic* leadership of the church as being more correct than 'Messiah'. In the biblical concept of Christ as (the image of God) the idea of a reflection is prominent. The iconic leader therefore mirrors and concretises Christ for his disciples, without any supplanting of Christ necessarily taking place (1976:193, 310). This entirely different climate of thought finds expression in Sundkler's views concerning Shembe and Khambule – whom he initially classified as Messiah figures – as he concludes: 'There is no conscious attempt to minimise the revelation of Jesus. Sermons and testimonies underline that Jesus is the Ultimate Authority and Final Judge' (1976:310).

Martin's alteration of course is even more striking. Whereas in her dissertation, she was negative and spoke of Kimbanguism in tones of repudiation (1964:163), as we have already shown, fieldwork and ultimately participation in the church itself brought her to entirely different insights. She acknowledges the limitations of her original approach, based as it was on the study of literary sources (1975: VII–XI) and in an enthusiastic first article after her research proposed that the Kimbanguist Church is an authentic Christian Church that represents the full Christian life as it is presented by Luke (1968:12). She now rejects the allegation that Kimbangu as 'Messiah' supplants the biblical Christ and asserts that through this leader, Jesus Christ became for the first time an existential reality for the Congo (1968:10). Martin finds sufficient evidence among Kimbanguists that Kimbangu is generally acknowledged as the outstanding example of true Christian discipleship (1975:145). Kimbangu obstructs the path to the traditional ancestor cult and leads people to Christ and God the Father (1975:147). 'Simon leads them to Christ (he is the instrument of Christ) and is not a new Messiah, not the Saviour, but the chosen servant through whom Christ has revealed himself to the Africans' (1975:146).

In both Martin and Sundkler therefore we encounter an implicit change of emphasis in which the theological judgement of what was initially branded 'Black Messianism' acquires a far more positive connotation in the direction of a legitimate Christianised process of effectual indigenisation rather than the rigorist dogmatic approach that placed the emphasis on degeneration.

Supplementary perspectives from the Shona context

Among the Shona Independent Churches there are two in particular which, if we employ the early form of classification accepted by Sundkler and various other researchers, could be typified as Messianic. These are the Zion Christian Church of Bishop Samuel Mutendi and the African Apostolic Church of Johane Maranke, which is referred to by the Shona term *uaPostori* (that is, Apostles).

Mutendi's ZCC was originally a branch of Lekganyane's church, but it became ever more autonomous and ultimately independent of the Transvaal branch. I studied this group when the chief leader was still living, while my study of the *vaPostori* took place some time after the death of Johane. This made it possible to gain some impression of the influence on their followers of the 'Messiah type' leaders before and after their demise. As prophetic leaders Mutendi and Maranke were both exceptionally charismatic personalities. They founded communities in which subordinate prophets and other officials were occupied with the organisation of the church, faith healing, agricultural activities and so forth – in other words, a sort of holy city in which an Africanised and a present Christian salvation finds expression – and both leaders had a powerful central position among their followers from the exceptional spiritual power and miracles with which they were associated. As with Shembe and Lekganyane, Mutendi and Maranke as leaders had a mediatory function at the heavenly gates ascribed to them, and this at once raises a Christological question. If to this is added the central role played by both leaders in the thought world and preaching of their followers, the casual observer would find this enough evidence to signal 'Messianism' and 'syncretistic degeneration' resultant in the supplanting of Christ and pneumatological confusion. But what actually does live in the thought world and field of experience of these Shona Zionists and Apostles? I will mention only a few of the most important characteristics:

Christology

There is no doubt that the mediatorship of Christ is sometimes incorrectly understood or that it functions to only a limited extent in the religious experience of individuals. The pervasive influence of Mutendi during his lifetime meant that some of his followers had an unclear picture of the exclusive nature of Christ's redemptive work. For some, Mutendi was a 'mediator' of sorts 'because of his mystical gifts, through which he controlled all faith-healing activities in his church. He was the 'man of God' in Zion City who listened to the problems of his disciples and who was expected to present all these matters before the God of heaven. His control over subordinate officials was at times so effective that they interpreted their dreams about him as part of his system of control through which he made known his approval or disapproval of their mode of conduct. A clear misunderstanding of the accessibility of God apart from the dominant role of the leader Mutendi is reflected in a comment by deacon Ammon Norumedzo: 'Mutendi is the one who addresses Mwari directly. We do not speak directly to Mwari Wokudenga (God in heaven), but the God of Enginasi (Lekganyane) and Moyo (Mutendi). The small problems are solved by our officials and not referred to God. The big problems we bring here to Moriah and these are presented to God by our leader. We cannot ourselves lift up matters to heaven (*Hatigoni kukwidza chinhu kudenga*).'

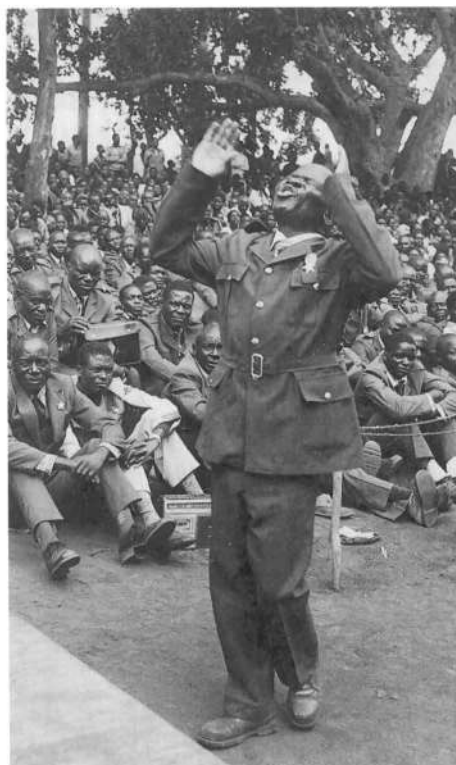
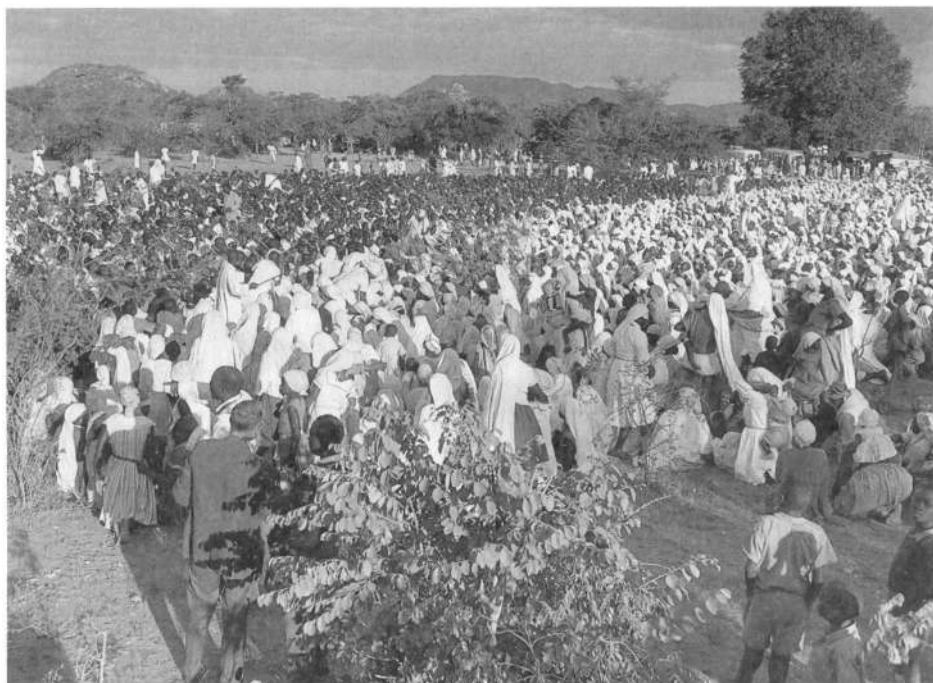


Plate 15: Through laying on of hands Bishop Mutendi maintained the image of a Christ-like healer among his followers (top) The senior ZCC minister, Revd Champion, regularly preached about Mutendi as the 'man of God' whose Zion City witnessed to the presence of the biblical God in Africa (bottom)



Plate 16: Priest Abero Maranke, senior successor to the iconic-type leadership of his deceased father, Johane Maranke, founder of the African Apostolic movement of the *vaPostori* (top) Thousands of apostles congregate for the main 'pentecostal' event of the year on the Apostolic calendar (bottom)



In an attempt to describe Mutendi's mediation, Norumedzo goes as far as to distinguish between the accessible God of the Zionists, the One of Lekganyane and Mutendi, who is always mentioned in Zionist prayers, and the more remote God of the heavens. Here the traditional thought of a Supreme Being who deals only indirectly with the individual clearly emerges. For Norumedzo, Mutendi in a certain sense plays the role of a paramount chief who would in any case act after death as an important ancestral spirit and mediator between God and living descendants.

This example, however, is unrepresentative of all ZCC members and in no way proves an absolute exclusion of Christ's mediatorship. For many, Mutendi is the 'one sent by God, or his messenger' who teaches and leads them and who acts as an intercessor on behalf of his people.

Then what of Mutendi's function at the gates of heaven? The Revd Matevure's statement represents the general view that prevailed in the ZCC during Mutendi's lifetime:

When the judgement takes place Mutendi will stand at the gates of heaven and point out to God those people who were his followers here on earth. This will occur before the final judgement.

Numerous interviews with ZCC officials and ordinary members on this topic revealed that this is in no sense an exclusive function of Mutendi, as if only ZCC members would be granted admission to heaven or as if this would replace the mediatorship of Christ. Only isolated persons were of the opinion that Mutendi would pronounce judgement with Christ on people on the day of judgement. There was general clarity on the distinction between Mutendi and Jesus Christ, and no mention was made of a Black Messiah or Black Christ.

The stereotypical answers to questions concerning the relationship between Mutendi and Christ were similar to these examples:

- 'Mutendi is like Jesus, but cannot take His place. Mutendi is our 'foreman' but Jesus is above him.'
- 'Mutendi is for us like the Pope for Catholics and the Revd Louw (the pioneer missionary of Mashonaland) is for the Dutch Reformed Church. He is subordinate to Jesus but in him we see the image of Jesus.'
- 'We honour Mutendi because he is like Jesus, but he himself warns us not to compare him with Christ.'

From a strictly theological angle we can indeed speak of misconceptions among Zionist ranks. There are no biblical grounds for the leader's function at the gates of heaven that implies a measure of mediation. There is nevertheless sufficient proof that the Bible continues to stand and function as a powerful corrective. Mutendi himself persistently warned against any divinisation and he never questioned the Trinitarian nature of God, which he proclaimed. He no doubt exploited his fame as a 'thaumaturge' in terms of church expansion and

stringent control over his disciples, but neither he nor his followers interpreted his leadership as a form of 'Black Messianism'. The function at heaven's gates must therefore not be viewed as an attempt to replace Christ. It is much rather a projection of a general social custom into the unknown field of the hereafter: this custom decrees that no ordinary person ever approaches a highly placed person without the good offices of an officially recognised go-between. In other words, an attempt is made from within the context of a representation of the world fixed by tradition to render understandable a confessed but unknown reality. Mutendi was sent by God. Therefore it was self-evident that, within a thought-world not profoundly steeped in Western theology, Mutendi would be the one who ultimately would introduce his followers to the 'Great One' in heaven. Mutendi's role at the gates of heaven is thus mainly an introductory one that obstructs neither the exclusivity of Christ's mediatorship nor the judgement of God. The important distinction here is that Mutendi's role as go-between at heaven's gates does not guarantee admission to heaven for his followers. Zionists are one in affirming that the sentence of acceptance or rejection finally rests with God and that it is not church membership, but the individual's life of faith issuing in a direct relationship with God that is decisive.

When viewed in this light, the charismatic leader's 'gatekeeper' function is far too slender a basis for Sundkler's initial distinction of Black Messianism. At the very most, one could note a Messianic tendency. The concept 'iconic leadership' is much more apt. The above quotations indicate that in Mutendi's case the leader is regarded as the image or reflection of Christ.

It is also important to remember that the 'gatekeeper function' is much more general in the Shona Independent Churches than one might expect. Even with many far less prominent Zionist leaders there is quite a general expectation that the leader will be waiting for his disciples at the gates of heaven. Bishop Forridge, who ministered to a few small congregations, for instance, was convinced that after his death, every church leader, whoever he might be, had the responsibility to appear at the gates of heaven and await his disciples. As he put it: 'At dawn when the sun rises we will stand at the gates. As our people arrive we will show them where to stay ... at sunset we will go to our appointed places ...' This representation of what would happen in heaven did no violence to Forridge's preaching, which was strongly Christocentric and which insisted on personal faith in the biblical Christ as prerequisite for conversion and baptism. It therefore appears that Sundkler's key question: 'Who stand at the gates of heaven?' cannot be the criterion for Messianic classification among the Shona churches. At the same time, the interpretation of the gate-keeper function is of such a character that one can speak only of a theological unevenness and not of radical degeneration.

There is a danger that outstanding prophetic leaders might well undergo a measure of deification in the period following their death. In contradiction

to Beyerhaus' allegation that the so-called Black Messiahs encourage self-deification, both Mutendi and Maranke regularly warned against this. Nonetheless, there were indications that among some *vaPostori* an additional dimension was attached to the leadership of Johane after his death. They regarded him as omniscient, at least as far as events in his church were concerned, and he was held to continue to exercise control over his church through dreams.

In the most extreme instance, an Apostle, Amos Haire, claimed: 'On judgement day Johane will place me in heaven. You people of the Reformed Church and the Catholic Church will be judged by Moses. Those individuals who have been taught by John and Jesus will be placed in heaven by John. But we black people are represented by Johane.'

Here Johane's mediatorship exceeds a merely introductory function. Christ's redemptive work is disturbed, if not entirely supplanted, by the role of Johane. For the black man, the leader is equal and not subordinate to Christ. This line of thought, however, is not representative of the *vaPostori*. Nor does it represent the interpretation of an existing church doctrine. What it indeed reflects is a climate of thought that is more obviously nationalistic, militant and anti-white than that of the Zionist groups. The *vaPostori* regularly proclaim that for whites, the time of grace is past because they killed Jesus and suppressed the biblical message of the Holy Spirit. Now is the time for Africa to be blessed! The house of Ham, long trampled underfoot, is now summoned to carry forward the task of Jesus Christ. The banner that the descendants of Shem and Japheth trampled has been picked up by Johane, who marches triumphantly at the head of the once-oppressed race, the house of Ham.

In such an instance we may speak of nationalistically inspired partial deification, but the more representative trend emerges in the statements of Apostle officials, such as those of Onias Muchinge and Muteiwa. Onias Muchinge affirms: 'Johane is not the Christ of the black man, but a messenger who taught the black man a great deal about God's Word.' Muteiwa was of the opinion that Johane did not have the power to incorporate his followers into heaven. 'Johane hands his people over to Jesus and in that sense he is a mediator. But he himself is judged by God according to his sins', is how he put it. Thus what is characteristic is a reasonably balanced view of the relationship between prophetic leader and Jesus Christ. By this, we naturally do not claim that the doctrinal patterns in these prophetic churches have been stabilised in respect of the biblical Christ. Dynamic processes resulting from political pressure or group conflicts keep open the possibility of change in the direction of deterioration or spiritual deepening. This makes caution necessary in theological evaluation and calls for a continuing evaluation.

How does the leadership of a Mutendi and a Maranke impinge on the authority and kingship of Christ? Is it really the truth that the authority, kingship and cross

of Christ are repudiated from within a so-called egoistic morality? Once again we must acknowledge that here there is no talk of a Christology that has been fully worked out. It is nonetheless noteworthy that Mutendi in particular frequently preached about the authority of the healing Christ and about his redeeming power over the evil spirits. Furthermore it was Mutendi who, three times a year after the so-called Easter feasts in Zion City, mobilised his church in a country-wide missionary campaign flowing precisely from an acknowledgement of the kingship of Christ. This acknowledgement found expression in his preaching on the classical mission command of Christ as it stands in Matthew 28:19. On this he based his vision of repentance and church expansion. That there would be misinterpretations among the ZCC ranks is certain. The extension of God's Kingdom has been indiscriminately identified with the expansion of a Black Zion by many a Zionist. Across the entire sweep of church history, however, we find numerous examples of a similarly emaciated interpretation of God's Kingdom, as if its boundaries coincided at all points with those of some specific church group. However, who would judge that the missionary activist Zionist, who spent a considerable number of months in a year in strange villages working to convert people and engaged in pastoral ministrations, was motivated by purely pragmatic and egoistic considerations?

I personally travelled around with these Zionist preachers on their campaigns in order to study their methods and preaching. With the Revd Ezekiah the centrality of Mutendi was striking, but Mutendi was never described as a Black Messiah with exclusive mediating or redeeming power in respect of his disciples. On the contrary, he was regularly commended as an exceptional example of Christian discipleship (Daneel 1980:111). Ezekiah's central themes in preaching were Mutendi as the 'messenger of God', the working of the Holy Spirit as manifested in prophecy and faith healing, the Kingdom of God, a coming judgement, and the necessity of conversion (Daneel 1980:110-6). In all these themes regular reference was made to the life and work of Christ.

As far as the Trinity is concerned, Ezekiah's preaching revealed a tendency that is common in the prophetic Independent Churches, which is to speak more often about God the Father than about his Son. Mwari, the Father, is readily understood as Judge, Protector and Lawgiver. Jesus the Son, following the traditional kinship structure, occupies a subordinate position. After God the Father, the line of sight remains in the direction of the working of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean a complete exclusion of Christ's work. On the contrary, the working of the Holy Spirit presupposes at all times a recognition of the work of Christ as Mediator and Redeemer. In my opinion, we ought to speak here of an incomplete or low-key Christology as one possible description, or simply acknowledge that it is a presupposed Christology, in which there is no intention to deny Christ or his cross. This notion of a presupposed Christology links up with Sundkler's proposed concept of 'iconic leadership'. The ministry

of Mutendi, as well as that of Johane and other prophetic leaders, was aimed at a translation and interpretation of the work of Christ in a concrete manner that would render it intelligible within their own indigenous context. Concepts such as a 'presupposed Christology' or even a 'contextualised Christology' in no way imply completeness or absolute correctness, but certainly do better justice to the empirical reality than the categorical and judgemental pronouncements we mentioned earlier.

Pneumatology

The activities of the Shona prophets in Zionist and Apostle circles actually stand in the sign of confrontation and change rather than creating, as is alleged, a confusion between the Spirit and the ancestral spirits which may be traced back to a domination by the departed, since the Spirit and the Angel supposedly prescribe ancestor veneration. Nowhere is this more manifest than in prophetic faith healing activities in which the prophet, guided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, diagnoses the ailments and problems of his patients and prescribes or applies therapy. I have attended literally hundreds of these prophetic sessions in both private circumstances and during or after church services, and arrived at the certain conclusions.

The diagnosis (Daneel 1970:36-49; Daneel 1974:214f) by the prophet exhibits distinct parallels with that of the traditional doctor (*nganga*) inasmuch as the cause of the patient's problems is still sought among ancestral, hostile or vengeful spirits or sorcery. This alignment with the traditional worldview could certainly give the impression that the motive of the prophet is aimed at the conservation of the old patterns of thought. This, however, is not so, since whatever spirit is involved, be it forefather or hostile spirit, is invariably branded as a demon which must be exorcised. The motive of the prophet is chiefly to take seriously the existential reality of the patient's thought world and confront it with the Christian message. We are dealing here with a far more realistic approach than that of the Western missionary who frequently dismisses the traditional spirit world and consequently can never penetrate to the core of the problem as the black patient experiences it. In the therapy of the prophet among the Zionists or Apostles, the hard distinction between the Holy Spirit and other spirits is regularly manifest. The claim laid to the patient by the troublesome spirit, which frequently includes ancestral veneration, is repudiated, and the spirit is exorcised in the name of the Christian Trinity. Here the Holy Spirit and the spirit of the forefather stand diametrically opposed to each other and confrontation, rather than identification, is what takes place. In exceptional cases a compromise solution is prescribed by the prophets, not primarily in an attempt to satisfy the demands of the troublesome spirit, but to cool off conflicts involving non-Christians within ties of kinship. In such circumstances the patient may be permitted to supply the necessary sacrificial animal for his

non-Christian kinsmen, but she or he is expressly forbidden by the prophet from participating in the traditional ceremony. There is thus no mention of an *uMoya* or *Mweya* at this point, serving as a prolongation of traditional spirit possession, as Beyerhaus claims in respect of Messianism, and neither is there a Spirit which, as elsewhere suggested by Sundkler and Oosthuizen, sanctions or prescribes the demands of ancestral spirits. The Spirit's activities are rather an extension of Scripture which, although not always correctly interpreted, nevertheless is constantly regarded as the yardstick. Consequently prophets who prescribe traditional religious rites are placed under discipline by senior officials. In extreme situations they might even be relieved of their posts. That the Shona traditionalists, and the *nganga* in particular, react far more sharply to the prophetic activities of Zionists and Apostles than to medical and evangelistic work by Mission Churches in my opinion is an indication that what we have here a Spirit-inspired confrontation which is far more radical and profound in its penetration of the traditional thought world than has been possible from within the Mission Church with its theological moulding and doctrinal impeccability.

The proposition that the Holy Spirit is regarded as an impersonal power (Daneel 1974:347f) at the disposal of the Messianic figure to be 'given' at his whim to his followers is inapplicable to the prophetic Shona churches. Interviews with prophetic office-bearers disclose quite clearly that inspiration or revelation by the Holy Spirit is ascribed to God's initiative and not to man. Prophets often explain that it is only after fasts, prayer and isolation that they receive guidance from the Holy Spirit. What is more, they regularly acknowledge that these religious exercises do not have a causative effect, but that the initiative always rests with God. The ceremonial laying on of hands indeed means that spiritual blessing is conveyed to the persons concerned, but not that the Spirit in his fullness is 'given' by a prophet to a subordinate member. What matters here is an act of faith to which must be added a consideration of the spiritual condition of the novice and the choice of the Spirit which itself is decisive for extraordinary gifts such as speaking in tongues or faith healing. Many Zionists and Apostles testify to the gifts of growth in their spiritual lives or in successful church leadership which the Spirit bestows, but lay no claim to gifts of prophecy or speaking in tongues. Other prophets again speak in tongues, but acknowledge that they do not have the gift of interpretation or a prophetic vision of the future. This they usually explain by saying that the Holy Spirit wishes to use them only in a limited sense, or that a full breakthrough Spirit-filling has simply never happened. In attitudes such as these the presupposition is that the initiative rests with God, who lies beyond the range of human control.

Neither Mutendi nor Johane pretended to convey the Spirit to their disciples as they saw fit. In the various Zionist and Apostle congregations, those individuals whose lives reveal a spiritual depth and fellowship with God are accepted as reliable channels through whom the Holy Spirit might transmit

authentic messages to his people. Thus a person is confirmed in the prophetic office at the church headquarters only after it has been realised in his own congregation that there is evidence of a Spirit-inspired way of life in the service of the congregation.

It is noteworthy therefore that in the official appointment of prophets and other office bearers it is the biblical norms of God's fruits, and readiness to serve and love that are of account, and not some whimsical decision of a Messiah figure. Here we find an expression of the intimate connection between the working of the Holy Spirit and 'moral accompaniment' – which Oosthuizen says is lacking in nativistic movements. If, in addition, we take note of the intensity of the Zionist or Apostle prophets' involvement in the moral standards of the group, in the confession of sins by church members before participating in the sacraments, and in the exercise of church discipline – all of it a prophetic ministry supposed to rest exclusively on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – then the allegation that there is no moral involvement with the Spirit is a theological fiction.

It cannot be denied that the manifold use of symbolic objects of divine healing power in Mutendi's and Johane's churches leads to misconceptions. Among some members there is certainly a magical interpretation of holy water, and strips of linen or holy staves which, for example, were blessed by Mutendi's hands. In the place of the intended symbolism, the power of God is so united with the object that it becomes an impersonal force capable of being manipulated. We must frankly admit that the self-same problem occurs in the Shona Mission Churches, where some members interpret the reception of the sacraments in a magical way. The important point, however, is that the influence of a worldview oriented towards magic within the Shona churches in no way inevitably results in a misunderstanding of the Holy Spirit as an impersonal force. In the prophetic movements there is every indication that the Holy Spirit is experienced as a personal divine being and not as an impersonal force that can be manipulated.

Eschatology

The judgement of Martin and Oosthuizen concerning a 'realised eschatology' as it occurs in so-called Messianism is to some extent valid for the churches of Mutendi and Maranke. The realisation of salvation and redemption in this existence is extremely important. It finds expression in all prophetic activities that protect against sickness or any destructive powers. It finds expression in the chief leader's struggle with the white administration. Mutendi's founding of a 'Zion City' for example meant a partial rupture of government policy for village structure. His being taken into custody and subsequent release confirmed to his followers the importance of the authorities to dominate in any absolute sense. His founding of a school of his own symbolised for his followers a breakthrough of the monopoly whites had over education. Further

the successful attempt at modern agricultural techniques was a sign of God's blessing on Zion. Mutendi therefore was a reminder of the departed glory of the Rozvi kings of the Mwenemutapa dynasty, but also acted as a type of liberating Moses figure in dealings with the administration.

It would, however, be erroneous to judge that because of his heavy emphasis on God's kingdom here and now, the future perspective had been entirely lost, and that no hope of a coming salvation and return of Christ remained, implying the complete twisting of eschatology into a materialistic-secularistic dimension. In neither Shona Zionism nor the Apostle Church is there any 'snatching of the future', as these observers suggest. The eschatological tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet' of the Kingdom of God is no missing dimension, but clearly visible in preaching and church practice. An analysis of a whole series of sermons of the Revd Ezekiah of the ZCC reveals, among other items, an aspect of witness that repeatedly depicts Mutendi as 'Man of God' and presents a foreshow of the blessings of Zionist Jerusalem, but alongside this is proclaimed the central theme of the yet-to-come judgment of God. New Testament texts are regularly cited to emphasise the necessity of conversation in the light of the coming judgment. Recourse is frequently made to the Old Testament prophets illuminate the urgency of a change in the life of the individual. To clarify the destructive power of God's judgment, reference is made to the deluge, to disobedience to Noah's instructions, to the sword of Ezekiel 33, or to the pit of fire (*gomba romwoto*). The only escape from this judgment is to seek shelter in God's Kingdom. Zionist mission campaigns are explained as the ingathering of people into God's 'granary' (*dura raMwari*) where they will be safe. Ezekiah's concept of a 'granary' represented the incomplete and provisional character of God's Kingdom in the present dispensation. By seeking shelter in the granary of 'Zion City' one would find protection against racial discrimination, sickness, sorcery and uncertainty. However, repeated reference was made to suffering – as for example the persecution of Zionism – which constitutes part of this existence, as shown in Hebrews 13:14. 'For here we have no permanent home, but we are seekers after the city which is to come.' Ezekiah's consistent references to this particular text gave a strongly futurist character to God's Kingdom. His preaching stood under the sign of the future, with a preponderance of the 'not yet' of the Kingdom of God, and this was done in a manner which effected an important balance in the Zionist alignment on the already-realised salvation (Daneel 1980:112–3).

If the process of indigenisation meant no more than an embodiment in the old culture, or if it was no more than a bridge back to paganism in the syncretistic sense of the word, there would be talk of stagnation in a cyclical concept of time. If the forefathers still dominated, as the writers we have discussed have claimed, it would be obvious that Sasa and Zamani (the past and present) ruled life. The most arresting characteristic in the adapted church rites, however, is

the reframing of the old rites through the incorporation of a strongly futurist element. This is especially apparent in the *Runyaradzo* (consoling) ceremonies brought in by Zionists and Apostles as a substitute for the traditional *kugadzira* (settling of the spirit), which used to be the key rite for all ancestor veneration. The attention that is invited to the departed person in the consolation ceremony does include something of the past, inasmuch as examples from his or her life are quoted in order to fortify the congregation in its work for the faith. In the place of incorporating the departed in the hierarchy of forefathers – as would be done in the *kugadzira* – the departed is related to heaven, and the trust is that the living dead is with Christ or with God. The new community in heaven is already there and also holds a promise for the near and the remote past to be no longer mentioned. On the contrary, preaching during the *runyaradzo* ceremonies often includes warnings against traditional rites. Some of the prophetic leaders are of the opinion that if non-Christian relatives of the departed were to perform their rites for the deceased, it would be a hindrance to that person getting to heaven. It is thus of the utmost importance to establish that in the midst of the adaptive process of contextualisation of the 'living dead', a Christianising process of remoulding takes place. The operation is not complete or perfect in all respects, but an honest evaluation cannot afford to ignore such a positive breakthrough.

Camps, a Dutch missiologist, has suggested that the black person's cyclical notion of time – in other words his alignment with the past and his persistent involvement with his forefathers – is what obstructs the Western concept of progress. 'What Africans need,' he says, 'is a new theology of time and the ancestors so that they can wholeheartedly and from within accept progress' (Camps 1971:145). The Shona Zionists and Apostles make a positive contribution in this field. By acknowledging the link between the living and the deceased by means of a rite, they meet the needs of the black person to 'live with the ancestors' and at the same time set the 'living dead' in a new light, namely that they have a part in the afterlife in heaven for the future, and this has the effect of implanting new concepts of time and progress at the very heartbeat of religion. This does not clear all traditional notions out of the way without further ado, but the process of *possessio* (taking possession) in Christ's name is advancing, causing new and positive Christian perspectives to develop out of the traditional way of thinking.

To sum up, we can affirm that the empirical reality as far as the Shona prophetic churches are concerned makes the classification 'Black Messianism' undesirable. At the very most, the leadership of Mutendi and Johane can be said to have Messianic tendencies. The change of course that is to be observed in Sundkler and Martin suggests that a similar verdict might be appropriate in the cases of Shembe, Lekganyane and Kimbangu. A cavalier theological judgment that presents this phenomenon in the light of syncretistic degeneration,

drawing with ease a line of repudiation from a non-existent Christology, a faulty pneumatology and a one-sided eschatology through to the domain of demons simply takes no account of the variegated richness, the profound and amazing subtleties of the churches involved. There are enough positive factors to indicate the inspiration and working of God's Spirit. Both Mutendi and Johane have carried the Good News into the indigenous setting and there contextualised it in a legitimate manner. The process of confrontation that this initiated has worked intuitively rather than in the systematic theological style of the West. It has nevertheless permeated as Good News, in which we should speak of a presupposed Christology, a prominent pneumatology and a realised-futurist eschatology. The adoption of this position does not in any way imply the claim that the groups concerned are to be typified as true and pure churches in all respects. It does indeed revolve around Christian churches with defects, as, because of human imperfection, is the case with any church in this present dispensation. Even if some of these groups do perhaps lie close to the periphery of Christianity – incomplete and full of contradictions – they are as churches of Christ on the way. In contrast to Beyerhaus's allegation that here there are no grounds for a theological up-building from within, the established churches ought in humility to extend a hand to the Independents in order to move together from the periphery to the centre: Jesus Christ. In the process of ecumenical cooperation, the established churches and the Independent Churches have a service to perform for one another. The Shona Reformed Church, for example, with its church doctrine and dogma resting in history could collaborate in the theological formation of the prophetic company. In their turn, the prophetic leaders with their uninhibited zeal could contribute to the missionary vision of the almost inert Reformed Church. It is above all in the area of pastoral care that the prophetic faith healers have a specific contribution to make because they occupy themselves consistently and penetratingly with the confrontation between the Gospel message and the traditional worldview.

Musariri Dhliwayo*

(Author's note: In the aftermath of *chimurenga*, Zimbabwe's struggle for national independence, reburial ceremonies for war heroes took place throughout the country. On these occasions, the remains of guerrilla fighters killed during the struggle were commemorated in various local 'heroes' acres'. Having attended such a ceremony in the Gutu district, I used an excerpt from President Mugabe's speech at the beginning of each chapter of *Guerilla Snuff* as a trigger for the thoughts of key religious figures as they relive their war-time experiences.)

... 'Our great, great weapon was the masses of the people. The overwhelming support from the people cancelled out the enemy's superiority in arms and aeroplanes ... Today we give special thanks to the people of Gutu. You served well, you uncles, as I now address you in kinship terms, you gave your full support to the war. Your contribution made us successful, made our striking power surpass that of the enemy ... We not only commemorate the deceased fighters today, but all those who died because of chimurenga: fathers, mothers and children ...'
President Mugabe

'Our support of chimurenga cost us dearly, Bishop Musariri Dhliwayo thinks. His Ndaza Zionist attire contrasts sharply with the Western suits and dresses of the crowd around him. He does not mind. He is proud of his vocation, of the vestments that confirm it. Even in wartime he never prophesied to the comrades or attended pungwe meetings without wearing his official Zionist garb: dark blue robes reaching down to his ankles, coloured cords hanging from his waist, his holy staff glittering in the sun.

Musariri's quest for liberation had started long before the ripples of chimurenga began to affect village life in Gutu. More than half a century before, as a young orphan in Mukangangwi's chieftom in Bikita, he had suffered continual illness. Thus his first liberation was from sickness and neglect, when the kind healer laid hands on him and led him to Jordan to be baptised into Bishop David Masuka's Zion Apostolic Church. That was when he learned to belong to a family.

Then followed the slow rise to the status of a prophet. For many years he fasted and prayed regularly up in the mountains, days and nights at a time. The spirit of prophecy was slow in coming. He persevered until the Spirit started revealing to him the real causes of patients' illnesses. Until

* This chapter is taken from Daneel's novel *Guerilla Snuff*. Harare: Baobab Books, 1995, pp. 165–194 (the author's pseudonym is Mafuranhunzi Gumbo, meaning 'the sharpshooting hunter belonging to the Gumbo Rufura people of Gutu).

his prophecies started coming true. That was when he was liberated from obscurity to the prominence of a recognised Ndaza prophet.

Even then there were still the shackles of illiteracy constraining his freedom. Once he had shed these, years of missionary work followed. They were good years, trekking from Bikita to Gutu to Selukwe to Mashava to Mutare. Preaching, prophesying, healing people; baptising them into the Zionist fold. The good news of Jesus was liberating the people from sin, the lonely from their isolation, the poor from their poverty, the ill and the crazed from demons and wizardry.

Then, in the mid-fifties, he settled on a little farm in Vunjere. Chindoza, who had broken away from David Masuka, was prepared to ordain him bishop of several Ndaza congregations in Vunjere and Bikita. The new church was called the Zion Apostolic Church in Patmos.

How good those years of building Zion were, even when the destroyer was drawing close. Even after he became a bishop he remained a prophet. The sick and afflicted kept coming to his homestead for faith-healing. Some stayed and worked in his fields. Others moved back to their villages to inform their friends about the Zionist man of God. The farm itself became a refuge for the needy, Zion in Patmos where the compassion of Mwari was embodied for Africa. Everything fit together. Zionist families grew. The Spirit moved in the rain clouds, in the seed they sowed, in the crops they reaped. Growing herds of cattle, sheep and goats showed that Christ's salvation is not reserved for the distant heavens. It happens right here, where people can feel it, taste it, celebrate it. You can dance in it, preach about it, see it with your eyes – this place of milk and honey, this little black Canaan in Vunjere.

You grow in the Spirit together with fellow vaZioni. You plan new missionary campaigns while you prepare for the communion meal of Paseka. You grow in wisdom and authority during council meetings where you solve the problems of distant congregations. You share with your people the produce of your lands, and in return see the crop yields and animal herds increase. You are to witness blessing upon blessing ... but all the while you hold your breath.

Until the force of chimurenga strikes. The suffering you have prophesied so often becomes part of your life. Perhaps Mwari allowed abundance before the storm. So that there would be food for the freedom fighters ... So that the exacting price of recapturing Zimbabwe's lost lands would be paid in Zion. Perhaps Zion in Patmos had to be stripped naked in the cause of freedom so that it would admit its complete dependence on Mwari. Who knows?

In 1977, when the first five guerrillas arrived at his haven, he knew that the time of testing had come.

I

'Are you the muZioni prophet we heard about in Zinhata township?' Dzawira asked on that morning when they arrived at his homestead. There were five of them: Dzawira, the most senior and most talkative; Guymore, the quiet one, famous marksman; Subshumba, brooding, with an explosive temper; Kris the dagger expert, a terror when drunk; and Magidi the light-hearted joker.

'I am only one of several Zionist prophets in this area,' Musariri said. 'Not far from me lives Bishop Krinos Kuudzerema of the Zion Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ. Prophet Mashereketo stays close to Bhunu's farm, and Peter Muponesi also works in this region from time to time.'

'No, old man, it is prophet Musariri we are looking for,' Dzawira insisted. 'The people say he is a wealthy farmer who can feed a whole army. They also say he is a true worshipper of Jesus, that white son of a whore.'

The guerrillas looked at him piercingly. For a moment he was dumbstruck. For months he had been hearing rumours about comrades harassing church leaders in the Bikita district. At Norumedzo an uncooperative Zionist leader had his church burnt down. Bibles and vestments were burnt. *VaPostori* who openly criticised the guerrilla slogan 'Down with Jesus' had their beards shaven off and were forced to drink ancestral beer in public. It was even whispered that defiant believers had been martyred for their faith.

Musariri had often wondered how he would react to such threats. Now the challenge had come. To his surprise he felt perfectly calm as the decision he had all along expected of himself crystallised.

'So, old man, don't just stand there! Are you the one we are looking for?' Subshumba's words had a harsh ring.

'Yes, indeed, I am Musariri, leader of the Zion Church in Patmos in this area. And if the one you call son of a whore is Jesus of the Bible, then, yes, I worship the son of a whore.' Having taken his stand, Musariri easily held the gaze of the comrades.

Kris was the first to react. 'Be careful, old man,' he said, lifting his AK menacingly. 'We have heard many brave speeches by Jesus followers. But they all end up hiding their Bibles or burning them when we give them some *chimurenga* treatment.'

'I was telling you the truth,' Musariri said calmly.

'What kind of shit truth are you talking, old Zionist fool?' Kris shouted. The prophet's refusal to be intimidated had touched a nerve. 'The truth of *chimurenga* is that we are fighting for our ancestors, for the people of Zimbabwe. This Jesus is the idol of the *bhunu* bastards. They have blinded our people. They have

kept them enslaved for years with their stories about this whore son. I say, *pasi naJesu!* Down with him! Where is he anyway? Just show him to me, old man, let me see him ... I'll drill him full of holes with this rifle. Then we'll be rid of him for good.'

'Shut up, Kris!' Dzawira commanded curtly. 'You forget you are speaking to a supporter of *chimurenga*. All the reports we have had about comrade Musariri tell of his prophecies about how we will conquer the varungu. Besides, you know damn well that many church people support our cause just as much as you and I do.'

Kris shrugged. He mumbled something like an apology to his commander, then moved off to sit in the shade of one of the prophet's huts.

Turning to Musariri, Dzawira smiled. 'As you see, prophet Musariri,' he said, 'some of our fighters are sensitive about the Jesus issue. But have no fear. I myself shall not interfere with your religion as long as you remain true to *chimurenga*.'

'You know that I support the struggle. All the people in Vunjere know it,' Musariri said simply. 'What is it you want of me?'

'First of all,' Dzawira enumerated, 'your farm has thick cover. We shall often base our fighters not far from your house. Our presence is to be kept secret under all circumstances. In the second place we shall expect you to provide us with food. Chicken, for instance, should never include the heads, claws or intestines. Finally, and most importantly, we shall expect you to assist us with your prophecies. If you are as good a prophet as the *povo* in this area believe, the spirit of Mwari will certainly give you the information we need for our operations. We shall also expect you to attend *pungwe* meetings in Vunjere.'

It was a daunting brief. Musariri realised that life in his peaceful Zion would never be the same. The produce of the farm would no longer be his to control. Implicated so deeply in the shifting fortunes of war, his own life and that of his family would be in constant jeopardy. Have no fear, said the confident commander in front of him. Have no fear, *Mwari* had repeatedly told the beleaguered Israelites through Isaiah and his other prophets of old. Have no fear indeed! What do you do when the anti-Jesus freedom fighters get drunk and run amok on your farm? How do you protect your wife and children when the collaborators betray you to Smith's army, when the soldiers come to take you away, break up your home?

'Have I made myself clear?' Dzawira's voice put an end to his reverie. 'Yes, yes. We shall assist you as best we can.'

And that, Musariri remembered, was how the war entered the haven in Vunjere which he had struggled so hard to secure for his family and his church.

Zion in Patmos changed overnight. The church headquarters became a little city under siege. There were simply too many mouths to feed; the comrades kept coming back with demands for more and more food. They cared little about the dwindling herds of livestock and the empty granaries at the prophet's homestead. The hard-won signs of divine blessing and wellbeing were soon consumed. When the fowl run no longer held any chickens, Musariri's wife, Mai Rudo, shrugged her shoulders disconsolately and called for some goats to be slaughtered. The sons and daughters of war had to be fed. A herd of thirty goats was quite a nest egg for a small farmer. But *chimurenga* had no care for the long-term interests of individual families.

There was only one big family, one overriding objective, no matter what it cost individuals, whether *povo* or fighters.

Soon the herd of goats at Patmos had gone. Then followed the sheep. Until the kraals of Zion stood empty. Only a few cows with calves were left to provide the comrades with milk. The people of Zion and their dwellings were left alone. But the good life, the milk and honey of Canaan, was no more. Lament hung in the air like a beggar's cloak slung across the shoulders of the poor.

To build a black Zion means to have peace. To be in Zion means to be in the presence of Christ, to realise his good news of salvation in this world. It means establishing signs of his justice in a world of oppression. *Chimurenga's* ideals, prophet Musariri reflected in that time of tribulation, are similar to those of Zion. Yet its practice casts a shadow. It breeds fear, deprivation and bitterness, not love.

At least, that is how it often appeared in the war years in Vunjere.

There was an afternoon of dread when one of the guerrilla commanders threatened to shoot Mai Rudo. He had accused her of skimming the cream off his milk. Beside himself from smoking *mbanje*, he would have carried out his threat had one of the other comrades not appeared on the scene in time to stop him. When drunk, Kris too was a menace to whoever irritated him. What utter humiliation to be beaten around one's own courtyard in front of one's wife and children by this drunken upstart. Kris could not forgive his superiors for not disciplining the Zionist prophet who continued openly to worship the *murungu* whose son. Musariri can still feel the thumping blows, taste the blood trickling over his lips.

Increasingly he had to contend with fear inside Zion. Mai Rudo was a pillar of strength, but fear for her husband's safety every time he was called out to *pungwe* meetings wore her down. Whenever he returned he noticed the anxiety in the faces of his wife and children.

There was the day when an army helicopter unexpectedly dropped from the skies to pick up a group of white soldiers who came walking down the granite

face of Madungambira hill, right behind Musariri's house. The little community was shaken. It was a bad omen: the enemy, it seemed, knew about Zion's role in the struggle.

Later that afternoon Dzawira and a few comrades walked into the courtyard to inform them that the soldiers had been watching the prophet's house for three days from Madungambira. Meanwhile the guerrillas had been watching the soldiers from another hill. Had they not seen the soldiers' arrival they would have walked into the trap. That would certainly have been the end of the little settlement at Zion in Patmos. Commander Dzawira felt that the sell-outs who had alerted the enemy should be sought in the Chibarirwe church. Some of its members, seeking to please the comrades, had publicly stated that they no longer worshipped the Bible's son of a whore. They were known to be envious of the Zionist prophet, not only for having stood his ground on the Jesus issue, but also for his influence amongst the comrades. He was one of the few church leaders who was allowed to continue celebrating *Paseka*.

For weeks after the army incident a cloud of apprehension hung over the inhabitants of Zion. Whenever army movements were observed in the neighbourhood they feared the worst. At night, when army trucks could be heard in the distance, Musariri felt Mai Rudo tense, then shiver. He held her close as silent tears ran down her cheeks.

'The *mabhunu* will fetch you,' she insisted. 'They will torture you for information ... What will happen to our children?'

He tried to reassure her. 'No, Mai Rudo, the Spirit of God will protect us. I pray and fast. I have had no revelation about the return of the soldiers. The message of Mwari is that we should not fear.'

All he could do was to seek strength in the word of Mwari, in prayer, in the seclusion of the bush. His own fears always subsided when his family needed support or when he was assisting the comrades. Inner peace grew; his bitterness at losing all his livestock faded; his anxiety about army interference abated. *Chimurenga* could wear an ugly mask, yes. His task in the Vunjere community, he felt, was to give it a humane face.

In spite of its empty granaries Patmos kept functioning as a refuge for troubled members of the community, both guerrillas and *povo*. Sick comrades came to prophet Musariri for prophetic diagnosis and laying on of hands. Commander Dzawira regularly asked for holy water for his chronic stomach complaint. Comrade Magidi started attending services after being healed and converted. He became a member of Zion and his infectious laughter brought lightness to the prophet's home. Comrade Nyika was an outspoken Christian. He insisted that the guerrillas operating from the liberated zone should always consult their prophet at Patmos before every military or scouting operation.

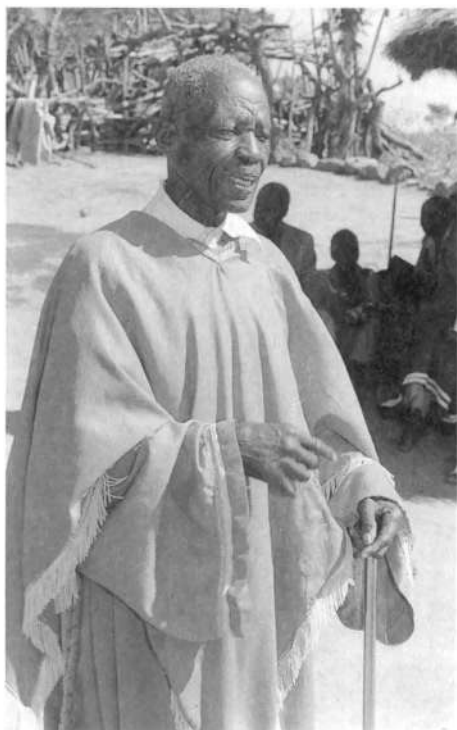


Plate 17: Bishop Musariri Dhiwayo, the war prophet, wearing his blue robe (top). Robed Zionist bishop performs a circle dance – a variation on the type of dancing Dhiwayo was engaged in during the liberation struggle (bottom)



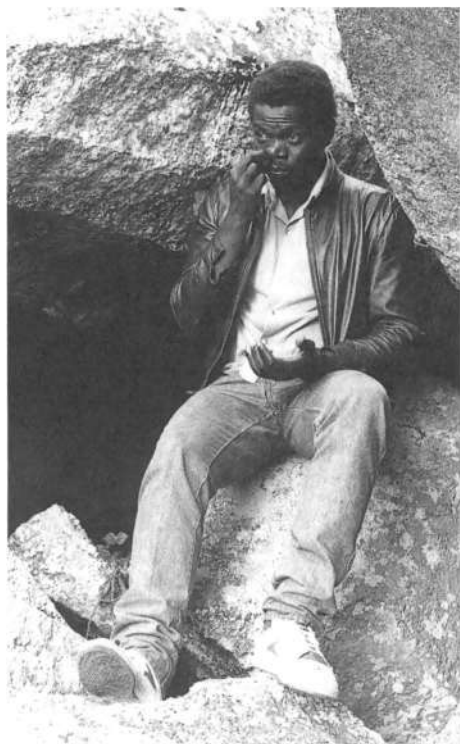
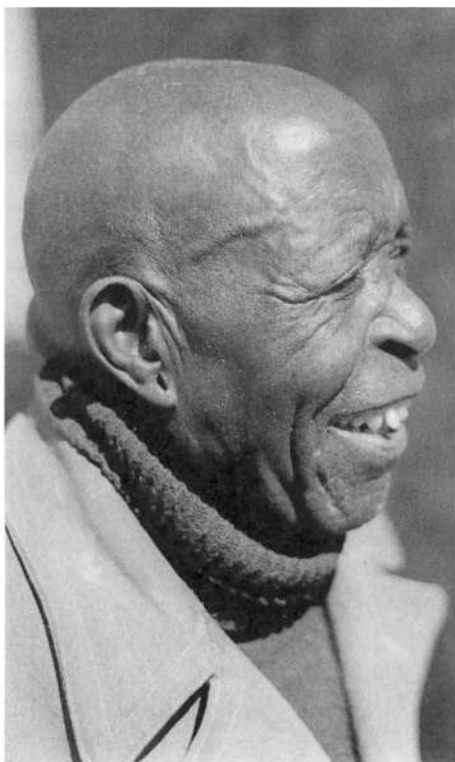


Plate 18: Guerilla commander sniffing ancestral snuff (*bute*) at one of the cave entries where the battle of Musukutwa took place (top) Bishop Forridge, one of the *Fambidzano* leaders, collaborated with the guerrilla fighters. He promoted the cause of AIC ecumanism during the struggle and paid a heavy price for it (bottom)



So there was no rest for the man of God. He prayed for the safety of the fighters. He prophesied about enemy movements and how these had to be countered. He warned the guerrillas of ambushes. He sprinkled their AKs with holy water, declaring their campaign a holy war against oppression. He preached that Mwari was on the side of the oppressed, that his whore son was the true liberator of all humankind. At night he sometimes prayed with comrade Nyika for a speedy end to the suffering. Patmos became a kind of operational base from where the war of liberation was masterminded by the powerful Holy Spirit of Zion.

Pungwe meetings were often arbitrary ordeals of life and death. Musariri had no option but to participate. Reflecting upon those occasions as he looked at the black coffins containing the remains of comrades Guymore and Shamhu- he had seen them die – he came out in goose-pimples in spite of the humid heat. Ah *bodo*, these are not pleasant thoughts. The blue robe he wears today is the same one he wore when, as bishop and prophet, he helped decide the fate of those unfortunates in Vunjere. The robe symbolises the ultimate authority of the Holy Spirit which he represented at those sessions, which he still represents today.

During those court sessions – for that is what the *pungwe* meetings often were – he was cast in the role of judge on account of the divine power and illumination he stood for.

He had to be careful. Against his will he was empowered to do what he had never aspired to: in the name of the Spirit, to take or save lives. To exercise the unbearable power of destiny.

The *pungwe* after the death of comrade Guymore was one occasion, Musariri remembers with gratitude, when the spirit of Zion saved lives. During the weeks after Guymore's return to Vunjere, a hero of the Musukutwa battle with shattered arms, several families were responsible for providing him with food and drink in his cave hide-out. Towards the end it was the family of Shumbaererwa who fed the ailing commander. Prophet Musariri often visited the wounded fighter, treated him with holy water and prophesied for him. The Spirit had revealed that there was a chance of recovery provided Guymore stopped his heavy drinking. But Guymore persisted and was eventually told by the Spirit the exact date of his death. To the prophet no less than to the guerrillas this meant bidding farewell to a heroic liberator of the land.

Someone, probably an enemy of Shumbaererwa, sensed that the popular commander's close comrades were suspicious about the circumstances of his death. His death *had* to be avenged. A sorcerer had to be found. So the suggestion that the Shumbaererwa family had poisoned their patient's tea was planted in the minds of the guerrillas. In the right circumstances mere suspicion grows into blind certainty, clamouring for Old Testament justice: a tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye.

At the *pungwe* the comrades had already started rounding up members of the Shumbaerewa family when the prophet arrived. 'Down with the wizards!' they were shouting angrily. They had seen other comrades-in-arms poisoned. And the suspects knew that, in reprisal, enemy collaborators, the true *varoyi* of *chimurenga*, were driven with their families into huts and burnt alive. The situation was explosive.

Inside his blue robe Musariri shivered then, as he shivers now. Could he turn the tide? Desperately he started to pray out loud: 'Mwari of all power, reveal your truth. Let your will prevail . . .'

Then the heavens opened and Mwari's Spirit possessed him with a fury he had not experienced before. He shook like a leaf buffeted in a storm, his teeth chattering. From a distance he could hear his own muttering in tongues: '*Urindi witi, urindi witi ... Jehovah, Jehovah, Jehovah ... overlord wamasimba ... kan tek forrorition ... Arrerujah! Arrerujah!*' It went on and on. The force of the Spirit dazed him. He lost track of his surroundings, felt a numbness in his legs. Insensibly he lingered in another universe where the darkness of the underworld alternated with the blinding light of God's presence. Gradually the tempest subsided. Peace returned ...

He found himself standing at the centre of the *pungwe* gathering, exhausted but calm, leaning on his holy staff. Everybody sat patiently, not saying a word. For the moment the storm of the Spirit had quenched the flames of wrath. They were waiting for the message of his revelation. The change of mood wrought by mystery beyond the *pungwe*, beyond war, was astounding. Gone was his inner turmoil, the trembling, the fear. In his mind God's command was inscribed as on a stone slab.

'Mwari says,' he announced calmly, 'that comrade Guymore has died the death of a courageous warrior in the cause of liberation. He died a hero of Musukutwa.'

'Hmmm ...' the crowd agreed.

'Mwari says that because of men like Guymore, because of fighters who are prepared to sacrifice their lives, *chimurenga* will succeed. The war will soon come to an end. Blacks will reign in a new Zimbabwe.'

'Viva! Viva!' the comrades shouted, lifting their AKs.

'The Spirit clearly shows that there was no poison in the food of our deceased friend. The Spirit says too much beer weakened his body so that it could not resist the destruction of his terrible wounds. Sometimes the real wizards are our own weaknesses, not the people we accuse. Therefore the Spirit commands that the case of Guymore be closed peacefully, without further bloodshed.'

For long moments there was not a murmur to be heard. Mwari's Spirit had spoken; he awaited the response of man. In the distance the *njerere*, Mwari's rain bird, called.

Amen! So be it! one of the commanders said solemnly.

The crowd hesitated. Then there was a deep sigh and a murmur of assent. Life had vanquished the need for death. Shumbaererwa's wives and daughters sobbed brokenly.

'Quiet! Quiet!' the prophet shouted. 'The Spirit also says that the family of Shumbaererwa will have to come and stay at Zion in Patmos for a while. There they can rest and receive instruction in the ways of Mwari.'

Ameni! Shumbaererwa and his family chorused. They knew only too well that the prophet was offering them sanctuary. Survival for them lay in Zion. Until such time as the emotions had calmed down, they had to be seen by the comrades and the community to live willingly under the direction and control of the Spirit at Zion in Patmos. They knew that prophet Musariri's farm had been denuded of agricultural produce. They also knew that it had become a haven to many falsely accused members of society. Here they could live for a while under the protection of the prophet and the Spirit he obeyed.

To Musariri the outcome of his prophecy that day was a victory for his wartime ministry of justice and sanity in the midst of vengeance and unreason. Stemming the tide through the Spirit's intervention on the side of the accused was like taking on bare-handed the demonic titans of the underworld. The risk was extreme. There was no guarantee that the flames would not consume you as they threatened to consume the accused. One could never calculate in advance the cost of surrendering oneself to the Spirit and acting as his agent.

But as the Spirit of God, he was also the spirit of liberation, of *chimurenga*. He could act as prosecutor and judge of collaborators, *varoyi* who delayed the new order by their support of white rule. In such cases the prophet's task was inhuman. When the Spirit disclosed the identity of a *muroyi* it was a death warrant. Those were prophecies that cost life; an enemy life, to be sure, but life nevertheless. These occasions were to haunt his dreams.

On that day of doom the *mijiba* came running into Zion in Patmos towards noon. They were out of breath. 'Come quickly, vaMusariri!' they shouted. 'There is trouble at Zinhata. Some comrades are very ill. The others are rounding up the villagers for a big killing.'

'God forbid,' he thought as he listened to the young messengers of ill tidings. For a moment he resented the intrusion, wishing them gone. But there they were, waiting impatiently for him to get ready. From the house Mai Rudo, who had overheard the conversation, brought his blue robe. Although her eyes

were wide with fear, her hands were firm and reassuring. When she noticed his fumbling fingers she helped him put on the garments and holy cords. She also fetched his holy staff. Thus she steadied him for the ordeal that lay ahead.

He jogged behind the *mijiba* in scorching sun, the hard soles of his feet impervious to exposed patches of burning sand. Despite his apprehension and hurting, heaving chest, the billowing robe buoyed him. The man of God had been summoned and was flying in blue on yet another life-and-death mission. Somewhere along the road the self-image of a shaky, unwilling prophet vanished.

In the shade of huge *muchakata* trees near the kraalhead's homestead he found a motley crowd of subdued, bewildered people. MOs were tending three critically ill comrades. They were writhing in dreadful pain and vomiting blood. Shamhu, the whip, was one of them. He was ashen grey, on the verge of coma. A short distance away from these stricken fighters, comrade Shungu sat slumped against a tree trunk, doubling up every few minutes with severe stomach cramps. Two less ill fighters were being carried to the pick-up of a Zinhata businessman. He would take them to Father Kaufmann, the Swiss Catholic missionary at Mutero, to see if he could smuggle them into the hospital at Silveira mission for treatment. To the comrades Father Kaufmann was a war hero. He ran errands for them, helped to repair faulty AK rifles and, like Musariri, blessed their weaponry by sprinkling it with God's water.

There was no time to waste. Still sweating profusely and breathing heavily, prophet Musariri started to pray. The Spirit took hold of him, showed him three corpses and a healthy fighter before his eyes. Without hesitation he prophesied that Mwari was about to take away Shamhu and the other two convulsing fighters, but that comrade Shungu would survive with proper treatment at Zion. He immediately called for boiling water and salt so that he could start the Spirit's treatment of the suffering Shungu. This one, he realised, had to be made to vomit repeatedly to rid his body of the *varoyi*'s poison. And so, while three of the men were slipping into the dark valley, Musariri started treating Shungu – treatment which was to continue for many weeks at Zion in Patmos before the young fighter fully recovered.

The mood under the trees was ominous. This was a terrible blow. Seldom had the enemy succeeded in killing so many fighters in one incident of food poisoning. Nobody doubted that the eggs which had been prepared for the comrades by the leading women of the village had been poisoned. The fighters' eyes reflected grief; but the underlying mood was one of outrage and anger. It could erupt at any moment into murderous retaliation. The arrival of a group of commanders from the neighbourhood prevented the close friends of the poisoned men from firing into the crowd of villagers they had rounded up.

Wide-eyed and whimpering children were hugging their mothers. Terrified young people gaped; some wept. Elders sat with sunken heads, while their wives stared back at the guerrillas defiantly. Musariri knew that some of them had sons in the Rhodesian army.

As the afternoon wore on and one after another the three limp bodies were covered with blankets, the tension reached breaking point. Even the commanders appeared unwilling and unable to prevent a massacre. Retribution was in the air. One of the comrades shouted: 'This whole village is guilty. Evil has invaded it and it will strike again at the forces of *chimurenga*. Down with the *varoyi*! I say kill them all, young and old!'

It was then that prophet Musariri made the most daring move of his life. 'Wait! Wait! Don't shoot!' he shouted loudly as he lunged into the clearing between the terrified villagers and the angry guerrillas. There he stood, a lean figure in blue, looking down the barrels of several AKs.

'Shoot the old Zionist bastard together with the others!' one of the fighters urged.

'No, wait, give him a chance to speak. He has supported us all along!' The deep voice commanded obedience. It was Chakarakata, the one with the red headband and long plaited hair. He was seated to one side, along with Obey, Kirwen, Subshumba and a few other commanders.

There was a lull. AK muzzles dropped grudgingly; the men remained silent.

'Listen, valiant fighters of Zimbabwe,' the prophet said. "You are quite right to be angry at this terrible deed. The guilty must be found and punished. But the new nation of Zimbabwe and the Spirit of Mwari, who is directing our struggle, refuse to have innocent people shot. Mwari says that if there are some rotten members in a family, a village, it does not follow that all the relatives or all the villagers are evil too. You fighters of liberation know that in the customs of our forefathers we have a practice of detecting wizards. Now we have the Holy Spirit who can guide us to determine who the *varoyi* are.'

'I implore you to remain calm and to give us a chance to do just that. Let someone go and fetch prophet Chimbare, whom all of you know. He, too, is a *muprofiti* of Zion. Allow him and me to fast and pray through the night. Then, tomorrow morning, we shall find the *varoyi* for you to punish.

'Let there be true justice in our liberated zone of Vunjere! If we shoot the innocent together with the guilty, we shall only worsen the scandal which has already taken place today. The Spirit of God may abandon us and invite the powers of evil to strike us down if we waste the lives of his people . . .'

Musariri's speech carried on and on while the shadows grew long. He repeated himself. He spoke about the lives of good people he knew in the village. He

dwelt on the heroic deeds of the fighters who operated in the district. And when the seething anger had subsided into murmurs of approval, he started moving around in the crowd, turning briskly hither and thither so that the authority of the Spirit was punctuated by the billow of his blue robe. Towards the end his speech was interspersed with Spirit language, a reminder to the still hidden offenders of Spirit revelations to come. At last he sank to the ground, utterly drained of strength and emotion.

Impressed by the prophet's courageous appeal for sanity and justice and relieved by what they felt was divine prevention of a bloodbath, the commanders seized the opportunity to announce a *pungwe* the next morning. The villagers were to remain where they were under guard; senior guerrillas were to withdraw to various *poshitos* in the vicinity; and *mijiba* were dispatched to fetch prophet Chimbare.

That night there was no rest for the man of God. He was relieved that the village was saved. Yet the ordeal was far from over. The reprieve obtained for the community was temporary, a terrible price in human life would still be exacted in the morning. To save lives in this instance meant to take life. As at other *pungwe* meetings in the past, he would have to help determine who the secret enemies of *chimurenga* were. Committed to the cause, he was irrevocably bound to the task of detecting and stamping out witchcraft. The personal cost of virtually forming part of a guerrilla death squad was unbearable. But it was war. Besides, it was nothing other than Mwari's war against oppression in which the Holy Spirit kept intervening and directing the affairs of life and death.

In between spells of tending comrade Shungu beside one of the fires, prophet Musariri made regular sorties to a nearby hill. There he could sit and rest in the moonlight, collecting his thoughts. He was too tired to pray for any length of time. At no point, however, did he doubt that the Spirit was listening to the inner cry of his soul: that he be given a conclusive revelation on the morrow, as well as the wisdom to act justly, whatever the pressure. Every time he moved back to the fires, the subdued voices from the dark blob of humanity where the villagers sat anxiously huddled together under a *muchakata* tree deeply distressed him. The occasional eerie howl of a hyena to the north, near Mount Rasa, kept reminding him that amongst their number there were witches to be dealt with.

Next morning at the *pungwe* court the massed faces in the crowd were drawn and haggard from the night's vigil. A putrid smell under the *muchakata* trees betrayed human fear and torment. Even the guerrillas were drained. They wanted prompt action, to get the grim procedure over and done with. Prophet Chimbare, who had arrived in the early hours, was the first to prophesy. He pointed out seven witches. While he was busy the prophet in blue sat at a distance, his eyes averted. Mwari had to speak conclusively through their two voices, without human influence. The

easy way out would have been to watch and merely confirm Chimbare's findings. But that was not the way of the Spirit.

The experience of that morning would never leave him. He was trembling, more from the impossible weight on his shoulders than from the presence of the Holy Spirit. He can still hear the sharp intake of breath as he approached the villagers. Tired beyond endurance, he just stood there. A dry leaf in the wind – deliverer, yet judge, before friends and acquaintances. Pleading eyes, terror-stricken eyes, sad, defiant eyes held his ... until he could stand it no longer. Involuntarily his arms rose, his hands beckoning heavenward. 'Mwari! No! Let this ordeal pass...' his inner self protested. His lips moved but there was no sound.

Then the Spirit took hold of him, shook him out of inertia. His limbs loosened. Blue billows swept around his hips and ankles. The holy staff flashed in the morning sun. And the ancient words of Mwari started to flow like the rumble of thunder against the offenders of God's holy order.

The vision in front of his eyes comprised a sea of faces. Unknown faces ... black faces ... white faces ... faces young and old. Then a beam of light illuminated a number of known identity. As they emerged in sharp relief the others faded and disappeared. There were seven of them, the faces of popular leading women in village society, the wives of friends, mothers of youngsters who came to play and dance at Zion in Patmos. Mothers, too, of soldiers in Smith's army. The kraalhead's wife was one of them. She was pregnant. So were two of the others.

As he watched intently, he saw that the seven had shadows obscuring their eyes, deflecting the beam of light. He could not read the expression in those eyes. Behind them, in the distance, hovered blurred images of hyena, snakes and owls – symbols of witchcraft. Faintly his nostrils registered the odour of rotten eggs. As if standing outside his body, he watched his right hand rise. Slowly, unerringly, he raised the holy staff. Its tip rested briefly on each of the shadowed faces. Thus spoke the Holy Spirit.

The next moment a babble of voices erupted around him. Cheers and angry shouts, thanks and derision, ululation and shrieks of anguish, praise, the low wail of mourning engulfed him all at once. His head was spinning. He was out of breath and darkness was closing in.

Strong arms held him, led him to a tree. 'Father, your staff pointed out the same women as did prophet Chimbare. There can be no doubt now. The seven *varoyi* will be executed immediately. Forward the struggle!' It was the deep voice of the commander with the red headband.

Sick at heart, he sat down in the shade. In the Spirit he had saved the village; in the Spirit he had exacted an inhuman price. Part of him gave way as he listened

to the reports of AKs and the dull thuds of bodies falling to the ground. Three of those bodies carried unborn babies with them to the grave.

'Yes, comrade President,' he muses, his eyes fixed on comrade Shamhu's coffin, 'we, the uncles of Gutu, did give our full support. Some of us still suffer because of it. I shall never know whether the seven women were all equally guilty of poisoning those eggs. None of them confessed. They died in the morning sun before they could speak. Mr President, you should know this: those eyes still haunt my dreams.'

II.

The mass burial at Dewende in 1978 was a nightmare. After it was over Prophet Musariri and two friends – evangelist Mutema of the Chibarirwe church and Bishop Forridge of Makuti's Zion Christian Church – sat under a tree contemplating the horror of the massacre at Chimungoma's farm. They had just seen the blanket-wrapped bodies disappear into the earth. Raw hurt and anger mingled inside them as grief-stricken women and children sobbed and wailed in the background.

'How many did you say were killed altogether?' Musariri asked evangelist Mutema.

'They say a hundred and fifty villagers were shot at the Chimungoma *pungwe*. I did not count the bodies, but I can tell you there were many. Truck loads have been taken away for burial.'

'And you were there the next morning?' Bishop Forridge asked.

'Yes.' Mutema sighed. 'A terrible sight; all those mangled bodies. Some of them we could not even identify. Their faces were gone, brains splattered all over the place. I wanted to vomit...'

'I knew something terrible was happening, the other night when I lay listening to the rifle fire,' Bishop Forridge commented. 'You could hear the shots as far away as our place near Sote river.' Forridge was an elderly, light-complexioned man with kind, lively eyes. He removed his khaki cap with the ZCC badge to wipe the sweat from a clean shaven pate. Scrutinising Mutema's white collar and black suit as if to size up the differences between Zion and the Chibarirwe, he carefully phrased the question nagging at the back of his mind: 'Tell me, friend, how come that you who live here at Dewende, so close to Chimungoma's farm, did not attend that *pungwe* ?'

Mutema looked at Forridge, his wide eyes and heavy face intent, as if to probe the motive behind the question. He smiled disarmingly. 'You surely don't think I stayed away because I am a sell-out, old man.'

'No, no, that is not what I am suggesting,' Forridge held up his hands defensively. 'I was just wondering.'

'Well, it's like this,' Mutema seemed relieved. 'I have attended all the *pungwe* meetings in our area, ever since they started. But this time I had a warning dream.' Mutema looked teasingly at his friends. 'Yes, you need not look so surprised. It is not just to you vaZioni that Mwari speaks in dreams. Even the old Chibarirwe, for all its beer and ancestors, is close to God's heart!'

The three men chuckled softly, not to disturb the mourners. For a few moments mirth lit up their eyes.

Mutema cleared his throat and proceeded on a more serious note. 'It was a heavy dream, that. I could clearly see the foot of the mountain where Chimungoma's farm is. A large number of people were gathered there. In the dark sky above the farm, there appeared a huge white cloth. As I was watching it, it slowly turned red with blood. The blood oozed out of it and started dripping all over the farm. When I woke up I found myself sitting upright, trembling with fear. I have never had such a vivid dream of coming danger before. When I told my family about it, we all agreed that it was a warning from God. We decided to act upon it immediately. So I sent the family away to visit relatives down the other side of Chiwara. I myself stayed home. I informed my neighbours that I would be absent from the *pungwe* on account of illness. When I heard the firing that night I knew that Mwari had saved our family.'

'The ways of Mwari are unknown,' Musariri said after a while. 'One just wonders why such a terrible thing should happen at all. I believe whole families were wiped out.'

'Many families.' Mutema heaved another deep sigh. 'Mukwembi's wives and children are all dead. How can I rejoice about the survival of my own family when so many of my neighbours are grieving?'

'To feel guilty about your good fortune is pointless. You can only thank God.' Musariri spoke with conviction.

Inwardly he knew that he was addressing his own conscience, disquieted by involvement in many *pungwe* meetings that ended with summary executions. He guessed that the harrowing sight of all those corpses of friends was preying on Mutema's mind. How easy, he thought, to start mistrusting your continued good fortune when you live in the midst of turmoil. 'You know,' Musariri continued, 'the three of us are blessed to be around still. At *pungwe* meetings the Holy Spirit has often saved me from ugly situations. It is hard to be a prophet of *chimurenga*. How do you think I feel when I have to detect the *varoyi* and the sell-outs, knowing that these people are sure to be killed? The war must come to an end soon now.' Musariri looked pensively at the shiny staff in his right

hand, fondling the familiar roundness of the doorknob at one end of it as if to feel the reassurance of the Spirit he so often spoke about.

'I wish I could see things as clearly as you do, Musariri,' Mutema replied. 'I do not experience the Spirit as you do, and I certainly do not envy you your role at *pungwe* meetings. Let God be praised for giving us brave prophets to preserve sanity and peace between the fighters and the *povo*.'

Mutema paused, then continued almost tonelessly. 'Here at Dewende, this massacre will waken us at night for the rest of our days. All those familiar faces, the talk, the laughter – all gone, just like that.' Mutema flicked his fingers, raising his shoulders in resignation. 'I wake up telling myself that I have been dreaming, that nothing terrible has happened. But over there are all those mounds of soil. They tell me...' Mutema's voice trailed away in sorrow as renewed wailing in a distant hut thrust the reality of death upon them.

For a long time the three figures, forlorn icons of a troubled humanity, sat silently in the shade. The prophet's lean hand rested on Mutema's shoulder, supporting the evangelist as he found relief in tears. When outward grief had subsided, Musariri asked: 'How is it possible that the soldiers got to know about this *pungwe* ?'

'According to the comrades,' Mutema replied, 'the informant they tried at the Gumindoga *pungwe* in Chingombe must have overheard talk about the meeting to be held at Chimungoma. He escaped before he was sentenced and must have informed the soldiers at the Mupindimbi camp.'

'That just goes to show how careless our people have become of late,' Bishop Forridge interjected. He stamped the ground in front of him with the tip of his staff to emphasise his point. 'The comrades should have changed the date and the venue of that *pungwe* after the escape of that informer. But no! They have become too accustomed to the misleading quiet here in their liberated zone. I keep telling them and the villagers not to underestimate that Satan just around the corner at Mupindimbi. He can still strike whenever or wherever he chooses. I know! I have experienced it.'

'You are right. One must always be vigilant,' Musariri said. 'But our people are getting tired of harassment. They need a bit of normal life for a change.'

'Not if it costs that many lives!' Mutema's eyes flashed. 'You should have seen those bodies. May Mwari avenge their deaths ... Some were shot from behind, others from above. A number of the soldiers must have climbed into the trees. They just fired from there into the milling crowd below them, killing men, women, children. Apart from the *povo* they killed only one comrade – the one who was addressing the *pungwe* when the firing started. Think of it. One hundred and fifty villagers butchered in the process of killing one armed fighter! It was plain murder!'

In his outrage Mutema jumped to his feet. He waved his arms in an attempt to describe the wicked destruction of his neighbours. Then, looking down into the gaze of his friends, his movements faltered; his outstretched arms froze in mid-air. Slowly he sank back to the ground, burying his face in his arms.

'Well, the killing reveals one thing about the soldiers,' Musariri murmured, staring stonily in front of him.

'And what would that be?' Bishop Forridge asked. He leaned forward, his hand cupped behind one ear, straining to hear the prophet's words.

'That they are getting desperate. They sense that the tide of the war has turned, that more and more people are siding against them. So now they feel they have to punish the sell-outs. Every incident in the villages becomes an excuse for punishment. But behind it there is fear and uncertainty.. '

Forridge was nodding his head in agreement. 'Yes, yes, that is so,' he muttered.

Musariri guessed that something was weighing on his friend's mind. 'Is anything the matter, friend?' he asked gently. 'Why is it that you have difficulty hearing me?'

Forridge sighed. In contrast to his usual enthusiastic self, he seemed shrunken and frail. 'It is that very thing you talk about, my friend. The punishment of the people ... I was beaten up badly myself in the Mupindimbi camp not so long ago. Since that time I have this noise in my ears. Some days I can hardly hear at all. I worry about it. How am I to preach if I become completely deaf?'

'Sorry, sorry, I did not know. What happened?' Musariri's voice expressed his concern. His friend clearly needed to unburden himself. Suffering became bearable through sharing.

'Oh, I suppose it is just another war story,' Forridge said, waving his right hand self-deprecatingly. But his eyes flickered with anticipation. He enjoyed telling stories. And you don't tell a story sitting down. It refuses to come out properly unless you move around. So the old man rose slowly, dusted his trousers and poked the ground with his holy staff while he gathered his thoughts. Then he cleared his throat and turned to his friends.

'There were eight of them waiting for me at my house when I returned from Fort Victoria. It was some months ago. I had gone to *Fambidzano's* office to fetch the lessons for our students in Chingombe. You know about *Fambidzano's* work of uniting churches and our training programme in Bible knowledge and church history; the one for which my wife and I also got certificates a few years ago?'

The two listeners nodded affirmatively.

'Ha! My heart beat like a bass drum when I saw the eight fighters with their AKs. They only had eyes for the briefcase in my hand. 'And where are you going with all those papers, old man?' they asked. 'Bring them here. Some of the people here in Chingombe say you are collaborating with the whites in Fort Victoria. You know what that means.'

'Ah, ah, ah, my friends! I knew I had been sold out by my enemies. I could already hear my death sentence at the *pungwe*. I tell you, my knees were like water as I handed over the briefcase.'

Forridge tottered around on wobbly legs, half expecting to keel over at any moment. He shivered, swallowed and croaked from a dry mouth, his eyes wide with mock fear. Mutema's spirit returned from the Chimungoma debacle. His wide face creased with laughter at the old man's miming.

'Can you believe it!' Forridge continued. 'The comrades spent all afternoon reading those lessons. They had expected something else. I tell you, they could not stop reading the history of our black churches in Africa. In the end they said that they would also like to study such courses. They volunteered to help me distribute the courses to the students. Can you imagine such a miracle? Many of our students had buried their papers for fear of being branded sell-outs. And here the fighters themselves come to do our work. Week after week they read and distributed in the Chingombe villages all the lessons that I brought them from town. Soon they had convinced all the drop-outs to dig up their material and start studying afresh. It was a happy time; it lasted a full two months. The comrades said: '*Chimurenga* also liberates the churches of the black people.'

Forridge smiled at the incredulity in the eyes of his friends. He knew they thought the story too good to be true.

Prophet Musariri shook his head. '*Aiwa bodo,*' he ventured, 'the ways of the Spirit are beyond comprehension. Miracles still happen.'

Mutema plucked at a tuft of dry grass, his brow puckered at some hidden irritation. 'What I want to know, Bishop,' he said pointedly, 'is what the comrades had to say about the white man working in your organisation. Or did you not tell them about him?' The question was a challenge.

'You mean Mafuranhunzi, the one who writes black church history, who lived in Chingombe during the early days of *chimurenga*?' Forridge asked. 'Yes, the very one. He is your close friend, is he not?'

Forridge leaned on his staff, meeting the questioning gaze of the *Chibarirwe* man. 'Of course he is my friend. We hunted together in the mountains of Gutu. We started *Fambidzano* together. He is the one who set up our training programme. No, Mutema, you are trying to trap the wrong polecat.'

'How can you be so sure, Bishop?' Mutema frowned. 'Mafuranhunzi is a muDutchi, a real *bhunu*. How can he not be a supporter of Smith?'

'This one is different. He is the first muDutchi to side openly with our black churches. He has dodged several call-ups to serve in Smith's army. He says that would be the end of his work in *Fambidzano*. I say he has the skin of a *murungu* and the heart of a *mutema*.'

Mutema grunted disapproval. 'Can you be sure, vaForridge, that he does not carry any weapons against our people?'

Forridge shook his head. 'Ch-ch-ch, the questions my friend asks!' he mocked. 'Mafuranhunzi has anti-mine plates on his truck. Land-mines, you know, are not selective! And he always carries an anti-ambush weapon in his truck. He says he has a right to return fire at anybody who starts shooting at him on the road without provocation. All he wants to do is to write books about the black churches. Maybe it sounds like blasphemy against our liberation struggle. But after all, he is a man of books.'

'You are right there,' Musariri agreed. 'Mwari sooner or later judges the indifference of these spoilt rich *varungu*. They write stories while we suffer.' 'You see!' Mutema held out both hands in exasperation. 'Just another *bhunu*! He has black friends but he remains an exploiter. They are all the same.' Forridge shook his head emphatically. There was irritation in his voice. 'Mutema, your bitterness about Chimungoma is clouding your judgment. Even the fighters in this area will disagree with you. At several *pungwe* meetings I had to tell them all I know about Mafuranhunzi. They were impressed by the *Fambidzano* courses he had worked out. They laughed at his name and said if he is really such a good shot he should be carrying an AK on their side. But the important thing is that they have all agreed not to fire at his truck when they see it on the road. I described the truck to them.'

'And you think you can protect your white friend in this war?' Mutema asked cynically.

'*Bodo! bodo!* I know that is impossible. War gives no guarantees of anyone's safety! But I have at least told the comrades the truth. I have done what I can for my friend. So let us drop the subject!' Forridge swept his staff sideways with finality, cutting short the conversation. There was anger in the line of his mouth.

'Yes,' Musariri concurred. 'Let us not argue about this white man. The war is difficult enough as it is. What I want to know, *mukuru*, is why you got beaten up at the Mupindimbi camp.'

Musariri wondered whether the bishop would continue his story. The old man had walked away a few paces and was standing with his back turned to them, facing Mount Rasa.

There was no trace of anger left when Forridge turned round to face his friends. He merely asked casually: 'Have you ever seen a land-mine explode?' Without waiting for a reply he proceeded: 'I did! Why my guerrilla friends decided to plant that demon's device in the Basera road opposite my homestead I shall never know. That morning I stood at the cattle kraal watching the army trucks coming down the hill from Mupindimbi's side. Suddenly there was this flash of lightning. Then came a deafening thunderclap and a huge cloud of dust. The one truck just drifted off the road like a feather and crashed into our maize field. Ah, *iwe!* It was like the roar of Satan himself.'

Forridge was getting back into stride. He raised a clenched fist. 'I thought of shouting '*pamberi nechimurenga*', but I saw some of the soldiers running towards my house. They were mad, angry. I realised then that we had entered the pit of fire. Someone must have informed them about the comrades visiting my place. I rushed into the house to see if I could salvage something. All I could think of in my panic was the two framed *Fambidzano* certificates, mine and my wife's, hanging on the wall. I ran for my life around the kopje to hide them in the little cave on the far side.' Forridge paused, chuckling ruefully at himself.

'When I returned my wife and children were running towards the kraal, shouting and crying. They were terrified. The flames were already consuming our huts. It did not take long before everything was razed to the ground. Only one of the granary huts remained standing. It was like a dream, standing there watching your home burn away; all the clothes and things you had worked for. And the soldiers shouting at you, calling you a traitor. *Helle wena!* It was a nightmare.'

Forridge appeared lost in a world of his own, a world crackling with the sound of flames ... His hooded eyes refused to reveal their hurt; only a brief tremor puckered his lips and chin. His friends waited patiently.

'What came after the fire was worse,' he continued wearily. 'The soldiers had to punish someone for the land-mine. For days they tortured me in that Satan's camp of theirs. Every time I refused to tell them about our fighters they beat me. It was tu! tu! tu! against my head, first this side, then that.' The old man swayed on his feet as he lashed out with both hands to convey the helpless fury he had felt. 'My ears just kept droning inside after the beatings. Sometimes the darkness closed over me to relieve me from pain. The next day it would start all over again ... There was no rest and I lost count of the days. Not a single piece of information did I give them! Do you hear me? Not a word about the fighters!' Forridge paused. He scrutinised the faces of his friends. Their nods of approval made him square his shoulders.

'Mwari alone kept me alive in that pit of fire. Eventually, when they saw I was no use to them, the soldiers just threw me out, like you throw away an old rag. . .'

There was another long pause. 'Now we are rebuilding our home,' the old bishop concluded his story. 'I may not hear so well any more. But my hope – no, my certainty of winning *chimurenga* has come back. May God be praised!' His voice held no bitterness.

'Ameni!' the other two whispered.

'And when the new house is finished the two of you must come and visit us. You will see the two *Fambidzano* certificates hanging on the wall in the front room ... all that was left of my life before the fire. They remind me of everything our black churches stand for, of the unity we have built.'

Mutema stood up, stretched out his large hand. Frail brown fingers clasped his firmly. 'I am sorry about your loss, *mukuru*,' he said simply. 'And about the *murungu* ... I have never really doubted that Mafuranhunzi is our ally.' Forridge smiled, not noticing a tear coursing down his cheek.

III

The day after *Paseka* was hot and cloudless. It was 1978. The congregation of Zion in Patmos had gathered from far and wide. They were the courageous ones who continued beating the drums. They danced in praise of Mwari in spite of the heat of war. They walked with death by their side. Perhaps that was why they insisted on eating and drinking the sacrament, whatever the risk. In the body of Christ at Mount Zion they found rest and fresh courage for what lay ahead.

Zion, that sultry afternoon, was at Chikukutu, the place of Musariri's birth near Nyika Halt. It seems like yesterday, Musariri thinks. The white, blue, red and green garments. Knotted holy cords. Shiny staves of all inventions: carved wooden ones bearing the symbols of Zion, electric conduit fittings attached to pieces of piping, polished bronze door knobs of antique design mounted on silver rods. Holy staves carrying God's blessing. Cardboard crowns painted silver on the heads of ministers and elders, contrasting with the demure white veils of the women.

Some of the older faces stared in front of them, pensive and serene. Young faces shone with expectation and excitement as if there was no war. The young evangelists and preachers were dancing faster and faster in a close circle, twisting and twirling, displaying their bright robes in splendid billowing swoops of colour above a cloud of ashen dust. Concentrated sweat-streaked faces went round and round, taking in and responding to every move of the dance leader. Alongside the rotating wheel of life uniformed women swayed in

a sideways movement, first this way, then that, a graceful backdrop to the circle of dancing men. In the centre stood the drummer, face impassive, peering into the distance, his sensitive hands directing the rhythm.

In dance and song Jerusalem of Africa took shape. Over and over the words confirmed it:

Jerusalem! Jerusalem!
City of the righteous
Jerusalem! Jerusalem!
This, the city they proclaimed
Jerusalem! Jerusalem!
City of the righteous ...

There was no splendid holy city. Only the mud-plastered village huts, thatched conical roofs, a cattle kraal and, to one side, a kopje of massive granite boulders. This was little Mount Zion, harbouring its treasured history of divine encounter. Here the man of God had spent endless nights of fasting and prayer with only the granite boulders witnessing his first revelations.

Jerusalem in Africa does not have great temples, Musariri thought as he watched the dancers. It exists in the throng of believers gathering to celebrate *Paseka*. Jerusalem is scattered throughout villages where the Spirit drives out demons; where the healer prophet tends his patients; where dancing feet raise clouds of dusty praise; where the cool splash of water in Jordan proclaims a new existence under the scorching sun. And now, in wartime, Jerusalem is the place where the Spirit issues battle directives; where freedom fighters come for peace and healing; where.. .

Suddenly the drumming stopped. The voices trailed away. Uncoordinated, dissonant, without the final drum tap. Another kind of tapping sounded in the distance. Everybody strained to listen. There it was unmistakably: the uneven tap-tap of the messenger of death. Over there in the direction of Sanje's village the muffled thuds of AKs, sharper reports of army FNs and the occasional deep boom of rockets disturbed the Sunday stillness.

'How strange it all is,' he thought. 'Here we are preaching life, trying to establish the peace of God's city through our worship. Yet at this very moment our people are hunting each other down, dying out there in the sun, just the other side of the mountain.'

When the firing eventually stopped Zion came to life again. Dust-laden feet defied the war, stamping out the fears lurking in the crowd of believers. The sermons of the young preachers were a clear call to repentance, to confession of sins in preparation for the sacrament. But the atmosphere was brooding like before a thunderstorm; inevitably they must come to the burning issue of the day. The believers of Zion willed their man of God, their own Moses of *chimurenga*, to address the war situation which was threatening to overwhelm

and destroy them: this cruel menace with many faces, this destroyer of lives in the name of the freedom they all yearned for.

Standing now at Heroes' Acre, Musariri still feels the appeal of the crowd, the surge of his own spirit. His people needed comfort. Reassurance. Above all they needed to hear a strong message of defiance and prophecy, so powerful that it would liberate them from their helplessness amid the forces of war. To satisfy their expectations was far beyond his capabilities. Besides, making radical statements in public could be tantamount to signing one's own death warrant. By the time it was his turn to preach he was sweating profusely. Once again the Spirit came to his rescue, clearing his troubled mind for the sermon. After a few proclamations of peace that drew thunderous response from his audience, he relaxed and proceeded without anxiety. He started with the story of Moses.

'The heading of Exodus, chapter 3, says that Mwari called Moses to liberate Israel. So you see, it was God himself who took action. He wanted to liberate the Israelites from oppression and slavery in Egypt. Mwari is the one who wages war. He starts war and he stops war at times of his own choosing. Our gospel sees war as belonging to Mwari. That is the strengthening of our backbone! We hear people say that this war is a *chimurenga* of the ancestors, of the *masvikiro*. We understand their views. They show respect for our tradition. But we vaZioni, citizens of a black Jerusalem, say: 'This war belongs to Mwari. Mwari makes war! Mwari gives life!' Peace to you all!'

There was a rumble: 'Ameni!'

'It was Mwari who directed Moses to the burning bush while he was herding Jethro's sheep. From the outset Moses, the chosen one, had to obey Mwari. In verse 5 Mwari tells Moses: 'Take off your sandals, because you are standing on holy ground. I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob . . .' Here we have a command which we vaZioni obey to this day. Take off your sandals! Like Moses, we take them off. It was ordered by Mwari. Nobody treads the holy ground where we worship God with shoes on their feet. Peace and joy to all of you!'

'Ameni. . .'

'When Mwari chooses a messenger and directs his actions, he must wait and follow instructions. Even the angel in the burning bush was silent while Mwari was talking to Moses. Likewise we must remain silent when God speaks. Only afterwards do we, the messengers, convey God's message to the people. In doing so we recognise that we are not Jehovah.

'Mwari told Moses, in verses 9 and 10: 'I have heard the cry of my people and I see how the Egyptians are oppressing them. Now I am sending you to the king of Egypt so that you can lead my people out of his country.' Is it not true that

Mwari saw the plight of the black Israelites in this country? Did he not choose believers like Moses to act as his messengers in the struggle? Peace in Zion!

'Ameni!'

'In the conflict between Moses and King Pharaoh, God directed Moses' every move. Mwari himself was leading the *chimurenga* of the Israelites, just as he is leading the *chimurenga* of Zimbabwe today ... Do you think Pharaoh was just naturally a stubborn man? No. He was destined to become hard as a rock; deaf to Moses' request for liberation from slavery. And Smith, and the rest of the *varungu*? Do they listen to the black man's plea? Do they release us from slavery?'

'Ah bodo! Ameni!' the crowd responded with a burst of laughter.

'Before Moses died he had one important task still to perform. That was to give the Israelites the history and the laws of war. He told them: 'If you disobey God's laws of war you will not survive, nor enter Canaan. You will surely die.' Like Moses taught the laws of *chimurenga*, we – the messengers of Zion – are also busy with the laws of *chimurenga*, the way to liberation. . . '

'Tell us, old man, what these laws of *chimurenga* are. We have come to listen to your teaching.'

The taunting voice broke into his sermon abruptly, like a bucket of cold water from behind. When he turned round there were four of them. Four comrades, AKs in hand, grinning at his embarrassment, still panting from their flight from the battle scene near Sanje. He stood dumbfounded, staring at the newcomers.

'Well, old man, can we join you? Can we listen to your law?' one of them asked.

While he stood nodding, fumbling for words, the drummer came to his rescue. Vigorously he picked up the drum, faced the comrades as if this was nothing unusual and struck up a tune with sure hands. The entire congregation rose. Hundreds of feet came to life, stamping the ground in praise of Jehovah and in welcome of the comrades.

They sang:

Jehovah, King of Zion,
We praise you. Hallelujah!
Jehovah, King of Zion,
We praise you. Hallelujah!

In no time the guerrillas had donned some spare Zionist robes. With soldiers in the neighbourhood they could take no chances. Musariri showed them where to hide their AKs and boots in a banana patch behind one of the huts. Their faded denims posed no problem, as many of the young preachers wore similar trousers under their vestments.

Their camouflage complete, the four fighters joined the inner circle of rotating dancers with great abandon. They were obviously relieved to be safe. Musariri's anxiety evaporated as he watched the immaculate dance steps of the visitors. Those perfectly timed sideways swoops, spinning to make the garments billow and delicate taps with one foot showed that these men either were vaZioni or at any rate had had experience of Zionist dancing. No outsider arriving on the scene, he was sure, would be able to tell the fighters from the other dancers.

Elated, the bishop jumped into the whirling circle in front of the leading guerrilla. He shook his staff imperiously, changed the dance step and set as fast a pace as his legs could carry him. Zion exploded in sound. The women shrilled ululations as if they were leading a war dance. Echoes reverberated from Mount Zion. Accelerated drumbeat and frenziedly swaying hips whipped up emotion to ecstasy. In their abandon the enemy was vanquished, danced into extinction. And from the war dance of death issued lusty, earthy life, a burgeoning swell of fertility.

As fevered movement reached its climax, Bishop Musariri broke through the crowd, leading a phalanx of male dancers out into the ploughed fields. There they twisted and twirled, sending clouds of dust into the air, until the colours of their robes blended with the red ochre of loamy soil in the afternoon sun.

Gradually the pace slackened. The column of sweating dancers returned, to be gathered once more to the bosom of Zion.

Those wild moments of joy Musariri remembers: faithful worshippers mingling with armed men of war. The dance itself was Mwari's statement about the blacks of Africa casting off once and for all the shackles of slavery. And Mwari's statement, thundering through Zion, was what the believers needed. Without it Musariri's own proclamation of Mwari's word would have been barren. As he waited for the congregation to settle and for his own heartbeat to slacken, he was at peace, knowing that God would give meaning to what was to follow.

'What then are the laws of *chimurenga* which Moses taught the Israelites?' he asked when quiet had resumed. 'Our answer' – he held the quizzical glances of the four visitors with ease – 'is to be found in Deuteronomy 20. Read the first verse.'

The reader read dramatically: 'Verse one: When you go out to fight against your enemies and you see chariots and horses and an army that outnumbered yours, do not be afraid. The Lord your God, who rescued you from Egypt, will be with you.'

'Listen to that, you men and women of war,' he spoke out with great confidence. 'Mwari calls you not to be afraid. When you are outnumbered, do not be dismayed! When you see chariots and horses, nay, when you see aeroplanes and troop carriers, when you hear explosions all around you, do not fear. Mwari,

who is waging this war against oppression, will protect you. He has given you knowledge of the wilderness. Take to the mountains and the caves. There the God who led you out of Egypt, the one who started showing us the way to freedom already in the days of Mkwati, Kaguvi, Mashiangombe, the heroes of Zimbabwe's first *chimurenga*, will keep you safe. Come, let's have verses two and three!

The young reader obeyed. 'It says here: Before you start fighting, a priest is to come forward and say to the army, Men of Israel, listen! Today we are going into battle. Do not be afraid of your enemies, or lose courage or panic...'

'Take note! Our book says: before you start fighting, you men at arms, you must consult the men of God. Is that not what is happening these days in Zion in Patmos? Is that not where the Holy Spirit gives revelation upon revelation of the enemy's movements, so that our fighters can avoid danger and plan their battles carefully? Is that not where the wounded come to rest and be healed? Peace in Zion! Forward our liberation from slavery!'

'*Ameni!*' the audience thundered. And the four fighters nodded, raising their fists.

The reader resumed. 'Verse 4 says: The Lord your God is going with you, and he will give you victory.'

'Did you hear that?' Musariri proceeded. 'Moses is but the messenger, and so are the men of God from Zion. The only one going into battle with you, the one who grants you victory, is Mwari himself. Hallelujah! You, the weapon-bearers, know that you are fighting Mwari's holy war. Know him! Rely on him! Praise him! He is the victor. He will secure justice for the land. He will redistribute the lost lands which the *varungu* have stolen. Peace to the land!'

'*Ameni!*'

He then turned to the New Testament, 'Our black prophets,' he said, 'find their commission in Mark 15, verses 16 to 18. There Jesus tells them to go into the world to preach the gospel. He gives them power to baptise converts, to drive out demons and to heal the sick. This Jesus is not really the son of a whore as some people say these days. Neither is he a *murungu*. No! He is the son of Mwari, the king of all creation, the saviour of all people in this world. Above all, this Jesus is the champion of the oppressed in Africa. He stands in the line of Moses and King David. He guides our deeds and thinking. He leads the black Israelites from the white house of slavery. His spirit is the true Spirit of God who reveals to our fighters how they should engage in battle; the very one who at *pungwe* meetings detects the sell-outs and the *varoyi*. And he also keeps reminding us that we are not to spill innocent blood. We, the black prophets, respond to his Spirit. The Spirit of Mwari is amongst us. Now is the time of Africa! Africa be blessed! Mwari be praised! *Ameni!*'

As the drummer rose to his feet, the women ululated; a few of them broke from the crowd, briefly showing the steps of an ancient war dance. Then the powerful voice of the lead singer rang out:

I believe in you, Lord
Hallelujah, Jesus King, hallelujah!
I believe in you, Lord
Hallelujah, Jesus King, hallelujah!

Relief and joy flooded the man of God as he watched the spontaneous steps of the four fighters, dancing in praise of the King of Zion. He had known intuitively that these men, having found temporary refuge in Zion, were not going to call Christ the son of a whore.

His own sermon done, Bishop Musariri could sit back and listen to the preaching of his followers. His loyal adviser and friend Mufundisi Mutasa, robed in dark red, stepped into the circular clearing between the men and women to elaborate further on the liberating functions of Moses, King David and Jesus.

Mutasa's droning voice was lulling the tired bishop to sleep when loud voices nearby startled him. Instantly he was wide awake. There was no mistaking the RAR uniforms. Five black soldiers were interrogating villagers about the presence of *magandanga*. They sounded aggressive, ready to punish at any sign of hostility. Zion went deathly quiet as the five figures, FN's at the ready, came striding purposefully towards the place of worship.

Even now Musariri can feel the cold grip of fear constricting him. 'Please God, no bloodshed in Zion ...' he prayed fervently. He looked up into the steady gaze of one of the comrades. The eyes were telling him: 'Our lives are in your hands, old man. Be courageous! Try your best!' And he found the nerve to rise slowly, with grave dignity, and face the soldiers.

'Are you the bishop of this meeting?' the leader of the group asked gruffly.

'Yes, I am Bishop Musariri of the Zion in Patmos Church. We are preparing to celebrate *Paseka*,' he replied.

'I guessed as much. My father is a MuZioni of the Holy Cord. Two of us here are vaZioni. We recognised the singing. You have an excellent drummer.' For a moment he nearly panicked when it occurred to him that the soldiers might have been watching from a distance when the comrades joined the congregation. Forcing himself, he returned the fiercely probing stare of the soldier in front of him.

'Tell me honestly, Bishop, have you seen any *gandanga* movement here this afternoon? Be careful how you answer. I am a prophet myself with the gift of the Spirit. You should know what that means.'

'No, my son,' he replied as calmly as he could. 'We have indeed heard shooting in the vicinity of Sanje, earlier this afternoon, but we have not seen any *gandanga* movement.'

'Should I believe you or consult the Spirit?' Just for a second there was a hint of a smile in the soldier's eyes. Musariri could have sworn that the man was aware of guerrilla presence.

But he kept his poise and replied: 'You are welcome to call on the Spirit. But the senior prophets here may require you first to go and fast and pray in the mountains. The revelations of a man of war who carries a rifle may not be entirely accurate.'

The answer was spot on. The soldier and his companions laughed outright. A ripple of relief ran through Zion. 'Ah, Bishop,' the soldier said, 'you have a brave heart and you know about prophets. Do you mind if we join the service for a while? One gets tired of chasing *magandanga* who keep vanishing like phantoms.' More laughter.

'You are most welcome, my son. As long as you take off your boots and put your weapons on the ground. Mwari requires peace when we worship.' Suddenly suspense gripped the crowd. One of the soldiers was checking out the nearest homestead. He was looking directly at the banana patch. Would he see ... had he seen ... ?

The drummer picked up his drum casually. His eyes fixed in the distance in true drummer's tradition, he tapped out the call to song. Everybody rose and the lead singer started:

Ask and you'll receive
Those who seek shall find
Those who seek
Oh, oh, they shall find!

What the worshippers in Zion found was silent relief as the soldier sauntered back to join his friends, who were unfastening their bootstraps. What the soldiers found were the sinuous movements of the fair dancers of Zion on which to feast their eyes. The banana patch was forgotten.

Mutasa was desperately nervous when he resumed his sermon. Realising that the lives of people depended on his ability to preach normally and appear relaxed, he stammered as he gave instructions to the reader.

His throat went dry at the thought that the soldiers might become suspicious if they noticed his unease. Then he felt his bishop's firm eyes on him, collected himself and shouted loudly: 'Peace to Africa! Peace in Zion!'

Musariri, noticing his friend's dilemma, jumped up, raised his holy staff and performed a bishop's dance all on his own. Applause and laughter rolled over

Zion in waves, long after the bishop had sat down. Mutasa clapped his hands until everybody had settled down. Then he proclaimed jubilantly: 'The chosen one is in Zion! The man of God is in our midst!' From then on he had no trouble preaching.

'Read to us from Romans 8: 28,' he told the reader. And the reader read: 'We know that in all things God works for good with those who love him, those whom he has called according to his purpose.'

'We have already considered the purposes to which God called his messengers,' Mutasa told his listeners 'Moses was called to free the Israelites from oppression in Egypt. David was called to spell out the consequences: the Israelites had to use their newly won freedom to truly worship Mwari. That was the beginning of another liberation, aimed at eventual resurrection from death. We read about it in 1 Corinthians 15. Jesus was the one called to bring about that liberation. This is the state of new life after death. The body dies like a seed planted in the soil, whereafter it can bear fruit.

'Now, in this time of war, Mwari has chosen another man to lead us. Musariri is the chosen one who follows in the steps of Moses, David and Jesus. He teaches us in our Jerusalem the laws of war. He also teaches us about the final liberation which leads to heaven. May Jerusalem rejoice! Amen!'

As the audience responded Mutasa mopped his brow, then resumed: 'Remember what Musariri said today about the laws of war on behalf of Moses, David and the lamb. No innocent blood must be shed! Prevent Satan from devouring innocent people. It is too easy to say: 'The *varungu* are Satan! Drive out the *varungu*!' No! Where there are battles between the soldiers and ZANLA's forces, we don't speak of Satan. For the war was ordained by God. What we call Satan is when either the soldiers or the guerrillas come into the villages to torture or kill ordinary people. That must stop!'

'Steady, Mutasa, steady now,' Musariri thought. 'NaMwari, don't overplay your hand. No more talk about war laws!' From the corner of his eye he saw both the soldiers and comrades nodding affirmation. He hoped they were genuinely agreeing with what Mutasa had said. But one couldn't be sure. Right now he sensed a need for diversion. So he motioned to Mutasa to stop. This time he himself would lead the dance.

And he sang:

You have come, you have come,
The great reaper.
The people shall see the Lord of heaven ...

What a dance that was! At first the people were hesitant to follow him into the circle, anxious as they were about the possible detection of the comrades. For a while they just shuffled, waiting, watching, dreading. Then there was a sudden

blur of red, green and blue as the four comrades themselves joined the dance. Not to be out-performed, three of the soldiers in their RAR uniforms fell in behind the comrades. All of Zion held their breath; even the drummer missed a beat. Was this the moment of truth? But no, the soldiers danced with obvious joy, totally unaware of the identity of the four enthusiastic vaZioni ahead of them.

Musariri felt the crowd heave a sigh. His spirit soared. 'God be praised! God be praised!' he sang to himself, stepping up the dance rhythm. Up came his shining staff, pointing heavenward. The drummer noticed, accelerated the drumbeat. Then all of Zion exploded in a great surge of colour and sound.

There was no let-up as the wall of fear and tension burst; ecstatic abandon flooded the crowd. Round and round Musariri went, pirouetting like a whirlwind to set off wave upon wave of billowing colour. He side-stepped this way and that, his staff held aloft. The snake of trailing dancers coiled and uncoiled behind him.

The women and girls twirled faster and faster, their uniforms lifting in the wind. They ululated until they were hoarse.

It flashed through Musariri's mind: 'A miracle in Zion! The dance of reconciliation between hostile forces has begun here today. Mwari be praised!' At last the Spirit took hold of him. His head shook. Snorts, hisses, the tongues of Zion erupted all around him. Prophets dropped out of the line of dancers, shaking uncontrollably. Women, falling possessed, collapsed in the cloud of dust.

The drummer slowed his beat. Sweat-streaked, the dancers followed the leader at a slowed pace. Finally they came to a halt. The drumbeat faded to a closing tap-tap, accompanying the weary shift of dusty feet.

The rumble of speech in tongues was taking over. It grew in volume, until the crowd roared itself into hysteria. Musariri listened closely, his holy staff held high like a conductor's baton, raising himself on his toes to draw the final crescendo from his orchestra. Then suddenly, in one clean movement, he plucked the staff from on high and dropped to his knees.

In an instant Zion was at prayer. There was a deep, palpable hush. The wave of possession changed to a groundswell of praise. The voices came from afar, softly murmuring supplications to Mwari, acknowledging his peace. Slowly the wave of sound gathered force. The pleasant babble of voices grew in volume and urgency until a thunder of entreaty crashed at the foot of Mount Zion. 'Ameni! Ameni!' Musariri shouted as loud as he could.

At once the tide of prayer abated. In the abrupt silence weary worshippers sank back, content.

A little later, five tired soldiers walked away into the setting sun, their FN's slung across their shoulders. Their carefree stride commemorated the celebration of Zion.

It was well after dark before the AK's were retrieved from the banana patch. For once the sacrament of Zion had caused the guns of war to stutter into silence. The prayers that night were a prophecy of peace in the land.

★ ★ ★

Prophet Musariri shifted to another foot. He was sweating under his blue robe in the hot sun. The discomfort did not bother him while his mind was wandering down the tracks of *chimurenga* history. Neither did the president in his black suit appear to suffer from the heat as he recounted the vicissitudes of war.

Yes, comrade president, Musariri mused. You are right to pay tribute to the *povo*. The men, the women, the children of Gutu. Independence was not won cheaply. Today the fallen fighters go back to the soil in neat black boxes. Yesterday we hid the corpses of the victims of Chimungoma in the soil in cheap blankets ... It is all the same. *Chimurenga* claimed them all. In the end we all turn to dust. Only in the womb of the earth are we equal. That is the way it goes ... Until true liberation dawns ... until we all celebrate in the new Jerusalem!

GO, MAKE DISCIPLES AND BAPTISE

Missiologists such as Lamin Sanneh and Andrew Walls have frequently pointed out that, for two millennia, the most dynamic expansion of Christianity has repeatedly come from its margins. Despite the faith's stagnation in its own heartlands, an explosion of growth unexpectedly comes from the fringes. In the section that follows, Daneel provides a poignant case study of this phenomenon. While Christianity in Europe steadily receded in the 1960s, in the countryside of Zimbabwe a massive missions mobilisation was stirring. Motivated by the great commission of Matthew 28:18–20, from which the title of this section is derived, Zionists and Apostles energetically evangelised any village within walking distance. When converts were made, they baptised them in any nearby stream or pool. According to Daneel, much of their success was due to their Africanised missionary strategy.

Chapter 7 begins this section with a detailed description of a Zionist mission campaign. Missionaries were sent out from a Paschal celebration at 'Zion City' to confront traditional religious approaches by preaching repentance, offering healing from 'vengeful spirits' and declaring that the rain ceremony of Bishop Mutendi was more powerful than that of the traditionalist shrine. Next, in 'AIC Women as Bearers of the Gospel Good News', Daneel discusses the central place of women in Independent missions. Just as women comprise the majority of most AIC movements, women's missionary efforts have been responsible for much of AICs' spectacular growth. Further, the evangelising activities of the AIC women's associations embody a holistic, or comprehensive, approach to evangelism. Many who enter the churches come with testimonies of healing or the newfound ability to bear children. Ultimately, the evangelistic efforts of women results not only in new converts for their church, but higher social status for themselves as well. Finally, in chapter 9, an especially creative essay, Daneel looks at the meaning of AIC baptismal practices that follow in the wake of conversion. He describes 'Life around the pool' as a crucial location for the enactment and celebration of AIC theologies of new life, freedom from witchcraft, and community participation. The various nuances of the meaning of baptism are then carefully considered, such as its status as sacrament, symbol, and source of magical power.

The Missionary Outreach of AICS*

It is appropriate to begin this chapter on AIC missionary outreach by reflecting briefly on some of the key reasons that Western churches have not seen AICs as *missionary churches*. First, Western churches have considered themselves to be the prominent, if not exclusive, agents of mission in Africa. A common trend through much of the previous century was the inclination of Western missionising agencies to consider their white personnel engaged in the so-called mission field as missionaries. By contrast, black Africans were invariably looked upon as recipients of the good news proclaimed by white missionaries. Even if they were instrumental in the missionary drive among their own people, they were only called preachers or evangelists. Later many were to be ordained ministers or priests, but still the qualification 'missionary' somehow remained the prerogative of whites whose self-image was manifestly shaped by predominantly Western missionary traditions and literature. Even where black Africans, in what were known as the 'younger churches' and in the AICs, were fully engaged in the church's outreach to the world, they seldom referred to themselves as missionaries. At African universities and theological seminaries, the discipline of missiology remained the preserve of Westerners for a long time. Few black theologians today refer to themselves as missiologists in the classical sense of the word.

Missiological literature underscores the Western domination in this field. John Mbiti, for instance, pointed out in the mid 1980s that, although black African theologians have written a great deal about the role of foreign missions in Africa, they have produced very little on the African church's engagement in mission (Mbiti 1986:177). In a brief overview of missiological literature Mbiti argued that Ofori's *Christianity in Tropical Africa* (1977) mentioned only ten out of a total of 2 859 items in which African theologians deal with mission-related issues. Johannes Verkuyl's *Contemporary Missiology* (1978) contained not a single contribution by an African theologian, and Horst Burkle's *Missionstheologie* (1979) did not include any African contribution that approached missiology from the angle of the African church. One could add to this list David Bosch's *Transforming Mission* (1991), which to some extent continued this trend. Whereas Bosch outlined in some detail the impact of Latin American liberation theologians on mission theory and praxis, black African theologians were

* An earlier version of this chapter appeared in *Missionalia* 8(3)(1980):105–20. The first two pages were excerpted from 'AIC designs for a relevant African Theology of Missions, *Missionalia* 28(2/3)(2000): 2–3.

mentioned only in passing: The leading authorities on significant missiological themes such as contextualisation, indigenisation and inculturation were mostly Westerners such as Schreiter, Lutzbetak, Nida and Kraft, rather than representatives of local African or related Third World theologies.

Mbiti suggested four reasons for the absence of a contextualised missiology in African theology. First, African Christians became so used to regarding themselves as 'end products' of foreign missions that they were inclined to neglect their own responsibility in this area. Second, foreign missions communicated an imperfect approach to mission, with the result that African Christians tended to consider mission the prerogative of European churches. Third, there was only one mission model in Africa – the Western one – which tended to inhibit the African church from developing alternative models. Fourth, the presence of overwhelming numbers of foreign missionaries in Africa (sometimes up to 57 000) eclipsed whatever missionary vision the African church might have had.

Mbiti provided some valuable guidelines for reflection on the missionary nature of the church in Africa. His emphasis on the biblical basis of mission, the inseparable bond between mission and ecumenism and the involvement of *all* believers in mission affirmed some of the features of the universal church crossing frontiers. On the other hand there were distinctive trends indicating an envisaged African missionary model of specifically indigenous identity. These include the conscious move away from costly Western structures such as mission societies and stations, the transposition of the centre of mission from the mission station to the Christian home, and a new angle on the pre-Christian revelation of God in African traditional religion (Mbiti maintained, for instance, that the ancient God of Africa and the Father of Jesus Christ are one and the same being). These guidelines certainly merit attention from African theologians.

However, in the light of changes in African church growth and theological developments towards the close of the twentieth century, Mbiti's observation about the dominance of the Western mission model in Africa requires some modification. Numerous enculturated African mission agencies have in fact emerged, especially in Eastern and Western Africa (Ojo 1997:537–61). The outreach of these agencies is characterised by indigenous training and cross-cultural encounter. Missiological trends, moreover, increasingly surface in the theological reflections of African theologians regarding the encounter of the African church with politics, socio-economic development, culture and religions. This is particularly noticeable in the publications of members of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). The missiological significance of the recent work of eminent African theologians such as John Pobee and Kwame Bediako is already widely recognised. Given such ecclesio-

theological developments one can no longer speak of a Western 'monopoly' in African missions, despite sustained Western influence in this field.

Mbiti's focus on Western mission strategies, moreover, did not afford sufficient recognition of the missionary models of AICs. He maintained that the reality of the AICs compelled one to consider the missionary policy of Western Mission Churches in order to determine how that enterprise could be brought to bear on Africa's own initiation of, and participation in, mission (Mbiti 1986:205). Here, in my view, Mbiti represented a viewpoint, common in missiological literature, that characterised the AICs as protest movements and more specifically as a 'reaction to Western missions'. Instead of evaluating the AICs as missionary institutions in their own right, the focus remained confined to the Western mission strategies, which provokes African reaction and triggers dissent. This could be a healthy exercise, leading to self-critique in the assessment of white-dominated mission strategies in Africa. But it failed to acknowledge the unique, creative missionary drive and methods already developed by the AICs themselves.

There are indications that other black African theologians recognised the significance of the AICs without, however, pinpointing the exact nature of their contribution to African Christianity. In his call for a contextual African ecclesiology that will prevent the African church from being a by-product of Western Christianity, Ela (1986:120) for instance urged a study of AICs. But he gave us no clue to the anticipated results of such a study.

Fashole-Luke (in Anderson et al. 1976:144, 148) also considered the AICs an important source of African theology. Because these churches lack a coherent systematic theology, he saw them as providing the raw material of African theology. Yet he warned that the search for theological guidelines in the AICs should not be at the expense of the theologising process occurring in the 'young' (mission) churches (Nyamiti 1973:1).

This somewhat ambivalent trend among African theologians of emphasising the theological or missiological significance of the AICs, but using that emphasis to redirect the focus to foreign missions or the 'young' churches (the direct products of foreign missions) derived partly from this tendency in missiological literature to characterise the AICs as protest movements, which not only obscured the genuine growth impulses in the AICs, but also implicitly attributed less significance to the AICs than to their Western-oriented Mission Church counterparts – those churches to which the majority of sophisticated black African theologians who produce written theologies pay allegiance.

This emphasis on AICs as protest movements is echoed by Western theologians, who often portray them as political protest movements against the background of African nationalism and colonial paternalism. David Barrett regards the cause of independency as 'the single failure of missions at one small point to

demonstrate the biblical concept of love as sensible understanding towards others as equals' (1968:156-7). Lack of understanding, paternalism and an unsympathetic approach in the attack on indigenous religious practices on the side of missionaries created a climate conducive to dissent. A basic assumption of Barrett's theory is therefore that independency is basically a reaction to missions.

The problem that arises from these theories is that the Independent Churches are labelled one-sidedly as reactionary movements. The impression is created that they originate and grow mainly by virtue of and in protest against a particular political and/or religious situation. Insufficient attention is paid to the impulses generating growth from within. In other words, the Independent Churches are insufficiently viewed in terms of movements existing in their own rights, as churches expanding through a genuine response to the inspiration of God's Word, regardless of the peculiarities of their socio-political environments. Apart from the limitations in academic theories, there is the widespread attitude in Christian circles that the Independent Churches thrive as 'parasites' and 'sheep-stealers', deriving their membership from defections in the so-called established or Mission Churches. Consequently they are considered 'separatist', sectarian or heretical movements consisting of people who have failed to live up to the standards of the Mission Churches.

One cannot, of course, dispute the protest and reactionary element in many Independent Churches. In Zimbabwe for example the African Congregational Church (*Chibarirwe*) consists mainly of defectors from the African Reformed Church (Daneel 1971:357f). But the significant point is that many of the prophetic movements from their inception recruited more members from a traditional background than from a Mission Church one. In other movements again, where a start was made with a predominantly schismatic group of Mission Church defectors, the reactionary phase has receded into the background and the stimulus for growth derives from missionary zeal and enterprise.

For a reappraisal of the Independent Churches it is crucial that we concern ourselves with their missionary outreach: a dimension neglected in the literature on these movements. Whatever our criticism of the doctrinal misconceptions and theological limitations in these churches, it remains undeniable that while a large number of Mission Churches have stagnated or shown little growth during the past two decades, some Independent Churches have shown consistent and even spectacular expansion. It appears that large numbers of the African clergy in Mission Churches have become so involved in organisational matters concerning the upkeep of Western-oriented institutions – the legacy of white missionaries – that the emphasis has been on consolidation of existing congregations, a re-shuffling of patterns of authority in church hierarchies, and the arrangement of finance in relation to the 'mother churches' or original 'missionary agencies', rather than on missionary outreach and expansion. In the

Independent Churches and particularly the prophetic movements, on the other hand, expansion took place on the basis of what one could call an Africanised missionary strategy. Should the Mission Churches appraise this aspect with humility and a willingness to learn from their 'rebel' brethren, it is just possible that the ecumenical cooperation between Mission and Independent Churches, which in recent years has been confined to theological training, may, in the future, spill over into joint campaigns for the expansion of God's Kingdom.

For the purposes of this chapter I shall restrict myself mainly to the important features of the missionary activities of Bishop Samuel Mutendi's Zion Christian Church in Zimbabwe. As in South Africa, the ZCC is one of the largest prophetic movements with an impressive growth-rate since the 1930s. My special focus on this church also derives from the fact that by accompanying ZCC office-bearers on their country-wide campaigns, I was more directly involved in their missionary drive and well placed to observe their recruitment techniques.

Zionist interpretation of the great commission

Bishop Mutendi conducted at least three Paschal celebrations at Zion City each year. The climax of the festive proceedings was always the celebration of the sacrament of holy communion. Closely attached to this was the bishop's preoccupation with the great commission as found in Matthew 28:19. As thousands of Zionists prepared themselves for participation in the Lord's Supper, during a week of church festivities, they were continuously confronted with Christ's command to His disciples: 'Go ye forth, and make disciples of all the nations'. On the programme of the daily church council sessions would be the actual planning of the missionary campaign that followed each Paseka. Regular prayer meetings invariably centred on the church's outreach into the world. And then Mutendi's mission-directed sermons would culminate, immediately after the Paschal celebration, in a send-off sermon, aimed at a united and courageous response of all Zionists to the Lord's command.

In his treatment of Matthew 28:19 Mutendi seldom dwelt on the meaning of the words 'all the nations' and he declined to define precisely the object of missionary endeavour. But he usually gave the text a specific Zionist connotation by relating it to such texts as Isaiah 62:1, 'For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest', and he would protest against the half-hearted response of some of his followers to the church's mission with reference to Romans 11:25, which deals with the hardening of heart of the Israelites.

On 22 April 1965 Mutendi sent off his office-bearers on their wide-ranging mission campaign with the following message:

Jesus sent out His disciples and they had only one task to perform. This task is like a battle described in Deuteronomy 20:1, 'When thou goest forth to battle against thine enemies thou shalt not be afraid of them, for the Lord thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.' In battle, when the leader says 'Fire!' the soldiers advance. Now that we say 'Fire!' after *Paseka*, you must go out like one man to preach God's Word. Do not be diverted by women or the temptations of this world. Do not think of your troubles back at home – God will overcome them! – but walk straight as you advance. You are going to fight Satan because you are the soldiers of God. Be courageous, and do not be daunted by long distances. You may even have to go and die in the Zambezi valley or Zambia.

Let the cowards who cringe when they see a European sit down, because they will not make good soldiers anyway. In the old times when I met opposition (reference to government efforts to stop his activities) all the elders backslid and left me because of fear. Only John Shoko remained at my side and the two of us kept going. As Jacob freed Israel, a deliverer comes from Zion and then preachers are sent forth into the world. The followers brought in (to Zion City), will be like the sand of the sea.

Mutendi's reference to his own perseverance on preaching tours was intended to inspire his followers to overcome opposition. His reference to a 'deliverer from Zion' reflected the close identification between his own work and that of Jesus Christ. Although Mutendi himself never had the pretence of usurping, as a Black messiah, the position of Christ, some of his followers undoubtedly saw him as the 'deliverer from Zion' and as the 'man of God', as they often called him, who had come not only to assist them spiritually, but also to create a new order, free from oppressive and, by implication, of European control. Response to Christ's mission command in the context of Zion City therefore to many implied involvement primarily in the expansion of Zion and the building of Zion City. One may speak here of a restricted interpretation of the great commission. The Lord's expanding Kingdom is to some extent confined to Zion in its present-day African manifestation. This ties in with the typical African Zionist approach of Christianity, which in theological terms implies a 'realised eschatology'. The new heaven and new earth must be experienced *here* and *now*, with man's contribution towards its realisation in Africa playing a central role. Recruitment and conversion mean the induction of converts into this new order – the Zionist movement – where spiritual peace, material wellbeing and protection against evil forces are the hallmarks of God's pervading presence. Individual salvation in Christ is not necessarily neglected in this approach, but is easily overridden by the obvious preoccupation with the immediate benefits derived from Zionist membership.

To a large number of tribal dignitaries who had joined Mutendi's church, the Zionist expansionist drive was welcome from a nationalistic point of view. For, to many of them the splendour of Zion City with its thousands of African

participants meant the revival, if only in part, of the glory of the old Rozvi dynasty. Did Mutendi not trace his descent back to Dlembewu, the famous Rozvi king? And did the annual pilgrimage of chiefs to Zion City not resemble the contact in earlier centuries between Rozvi kings and representatives of vassal states?

The significant point is that Bishop Mutendi had succeeded in establishing a direct link between sacrament and the great commission. The impetus for the church's organised outreach was derived from the event that expressed most profoundly, in terms of ritual activity at any rate, the unity of members of the church as the body of Christ. Considering the direct link which Christ himself mentions in John 17:21, 23 between the oneness of his followers and their missionary witness in this world, it seems biblically appropriate that Mutendi should institute missionary campaigns as a direct sequel to 'Paschal' (holy communion) celebrations. This was obviously not the outcome of theological reflection about the link between *oikumene* and mission. But one can speak of an intuitive understanding that spiritual experience and growth within the church could only be real if it found expression in and was fed by a missionary witness and drive.

Mobilisation of the church group

The planning of campaigns is done during church council sessions at Moriah. Each minister, together with a team of one or two evangelists and/or preachers, is allotted a campaigning area within reach of an existing church circuit, but situated well away from the visiting team's home-base. Invariably the ministers living in the north of the country visit the southern regions and vice versa. Thus most ZCC congregations are periodically subjected to the influence of officials other than the locally resident ones.

The *rwendo* (journey), or *kufamba patrol* (to go on patrol) as these campaigns are popularly referred to, has a twofold aim: to inform church members of the latest proceedings at and directives from Zion City (an activity which includes the spiritual uplift of backsliders and the assessment of the state of distant congregations); and the conversion of non-Christians. In 1965 it took the Revd Ezekiah, whose activities I followed in detail, two weeks to reach Belingwe, his allotted campaigning area, after he had left Zion City. He travelled a vast distance by bicycle from Zion City in Bikita, to Ndanga, then to Nyajena in southern Victoria, from there to Chibi and then on to Belingwe. Travelling from one congregation to another, he told ZCC officials of the latest council decisions at Zion City. At the homesteads of inactive members he preached encouraging messages with frequent reference to Mutendi's overcoming of hardships in the past. By the time he reached Belingwe, several Zionist evangelists from different areas, who had volunteered to assist with the Belingwe campaign, had joined his team.



Plate 19: Revd Ezekiah preaches during a missionary campaign to the south-west of Zion City, in the Chivi and Belingwe districts in 1965 (top), while members of the home congregation intercede on behalf of their missionaries during early-morning prayer meetings at church headquarters (bottom)



As soon as the missionary team arrives at the homestead of the ZCC minister-in-charge in the 'campaigning area', messengers are sent out to all the local congregational centres, summoning church officials to come to the local headquarters. Under the guidance of the 'messengers from Moriah', the local church unit is then mobilised in a concerted effort to reach the unconverted and to invite as many people as possible to attend the rally that concludes a week's preparatory work. The daily programme involves the visitation of people in surrounding villages, pastoral work, healing sessions, the preaching of sermons where groups of villagers are gathered, reporting back at headquarters and planning for the following day's work. Visiting office-bearers are in a position to exploit the knowledge of local Zionists about the surrounding villages. Their recruitment of new members is often the direct result of preparatory work by local Zionists.

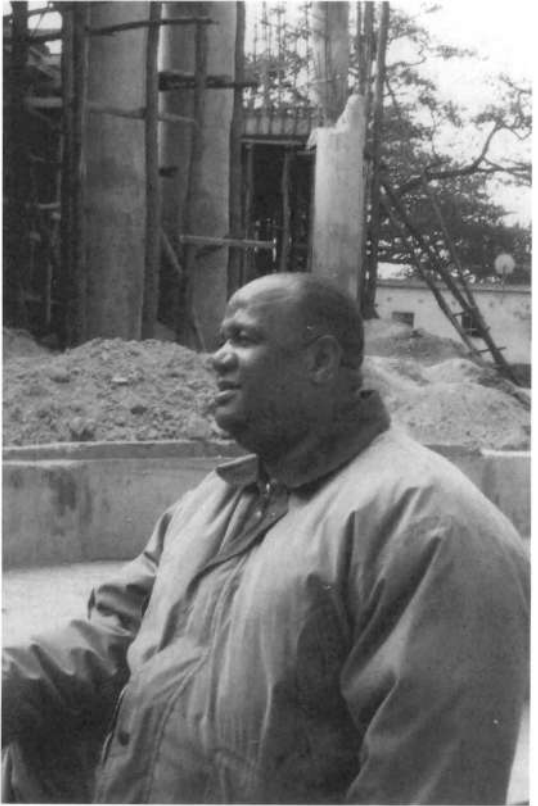
To the visiting ZCC officials these campaigns imply weeks of travel and consistent work, for which they receive no remuneration. To the Zionists in the campaign area they mean caring and cooking for the visitors, running errands for them and spending most of their time out in the villages. Zionist members take pride in this kind of interaction. Zionist kraalheads get their people together for services and the women of the *Ruwadzano* (women's association) come in large numbers to attract villagers with their singing and dancing. Virtually all active Zionists carry some responsibility, which culminates in colourful and festive open-air services. Numerous villagers attend such meetings, even if only for what they may consider the entertainment value.

Towards sunset the teams return to the local minister's homestead for evening prayers. Sitting around fires in the courtyard the men give vivid accounts of their experiences during the day. This is when the senior representative from Zion City has a chance to convey important messages from Mutendi's headquarters to the local officials, to instruct them about the bishop's latest interpretations of certain Bible verses and to discuss financial problems. These evening sessions are informal and the topic of conversation changes as the mood of the participants switches from serious matters to jesting and gossip.

The climax of the campaign is a mass rally lasting a full afternoon and concluding with the baptism of new converts. To the local church group, the entire event has great significance. Links with Zion City are re-affirmed. People take pride in the knowledge that their generosity will be reported to the 'man of God' back at Moriah. It is also a time of spiritual revival, achieved through concrete and active participation in the church's outreach towards non-Christians. Inspiration is derived from participation in the building of God's Church. After the campaign the local Zionists are faced with the ongoing task of maintaining contact with and spiritually nurturing new members. Thus continuity of impact and missionary impetus is achieved through the local church group.



Plate 20: Ezekiah preached about the realisation in Zion of an already present kingdom of God where God's African emissary oversaw the activities of a safe refuge (top); where chiefs and ministers danced out the message of human dignity and liberation (bottom left), and where Nehemiah – Mutendi's son – many years later would initiate the building of a massive temple to seat 17,000 people (bottom right)



Important features of the missionary message

With a view to determining whether the Revd Ezekiah and his team was simply propagating Zionism, whether their call for conversion merely implied a 'turn to' the Zionist fold, whether they were propagating a Black Messiah, or whether their preaching was aimed at genuine conversion in relation to the Christian God, I have tape-recorded and analysed twelve of his Belingwe campaign sermons. Among the outstanding characteristics are the following:

Centrality of Bishop Mutendi

As is customary in the ZCC, the introduction of all sermons included some reference to the God of Moyo (Mutendi) and Enginasi (Lekhanyane). Ezekiah usually started with the words: 'I thank Jesus Christ who came to die for our sins. I also thank the God of Moyo and Enginasi who has guided us safely to this place. We were sent here by Samuel Mutendi from his church headquarters in Bikita.' Such introductions did not assert that the South African and Zimbabwean ZCC leaders were the exclusive messengers of the Christian God, but implied a demonstration of loyalty and allegiance to the leaders of Zion and endeavoured to establish the authenticity of Mutendi's church in relation to the Christian tradition.

Mutendi indeed featured prominently in Ezekiah's sermons. He was presented as a leader with a divine commission. While other labour migrants in the 1930s returned with riches from South Africa, Mutendi returned with the Word of God. As a man of perseverance and courage the Zionist leader was always portrayed as one who pursued his task in the face of African and European opposition. Ezekiah stated: 'At first the African people did not like to hear Moyo preach the Gospel in the name of Zion. They suspected him of being possessed by a spirit which eats human flesh ... But he continued his task and today we have our Jordan (for baptisms) at any river or pool in the country. Although Mutendi was arrested many times by the Europeans, he continued preaching. When he was told to stop, he said: I am not going to stop this work because I have done nothing wrong. I have not taken someone else's wife. I have preached the Word of God only.'

Ezekiah seldom failed to refer to his leader as a performer of miracles. According to him, the healing of sick people, exorcism of evil spirits, curing of barren women and successful prayers for rain in dry areas convinced Mutendi's critics that he was genuinely a teacher of God's Word. Mutendi also featured as a preserver of the rights of women. 'In this church,' Ezekiah preached, 'we do not allow the beating of women. There are many women without teeth because they were beaten by their husbands. My wife's older sister lost three teeth and had a rib broken due to such beating. You Zionist women should thank this man, otherwise you would still be treated badly.'

Ezekiah's admiration for Mutendi was never the exclusive theme of any sermon. Mutendi's healing powers were regarded not as an inherent quality of a magical nature, but as similar in essence to the faith-healing powers granted by Jesus to His disciples. Mutendi did not figure as a Black Messiah with exclusive powers of mediation or salvation in relation to his followers. Instead of obscuring the missionary message with reference to Mutendi, Ezekiah was propagating his conviction that this man was worth following and that he was pre-eminently an example, particularly in the African setting, of Christian discipleship.

God's judgment

The central theme of each of Ezekiah's sermons was God's judgment. This was stressed repeatedly as the main motive for the *rwendo* (journey, 'campaign'): that is, to warn people of the coming judgment 'so that they could meet it well prepared. God's judgement necessitates man's conversion! With a sense of urgency New Testament verses were quoted to remind people of the unpredictability of God's arrival to claim and confront individual people. Ezekiah's favourite illustrations, however, derived from the Old Testament. If it was not the deluge (Genesis 7 and 8), then it was the judgment of Israel as described in Ezekiel 33, which he sought to relate to the lives of himself and his audience. Throughout it was evident that Ezekiah identified himself with the role of the biblical prophet Ezekiel. He had come to blow the trumpet for the 'Israelites' of Africa, to act as their sentinel. His appeals were direct and blunt: 'To those who do not believe God's Word, there will be a gnashing of teeth on the day of judgement. My friends, we have not come to put up a show or to show you how to dance, but to warn you of the coming danger.' Looking at an attractive girl in the audience, he said: 'Death comes even to a person with a brown complexion like yours. Do not cheat yourself! Your breasts are going to wither away on the last day ... Even love between people on this earth comes to an end. My friends, let us believe what the Bible says in order to be saved in the end! *Pindukai! Pindukai! Pindukai!* (Be converted!)

The biblical deluge was always vividly described by setting it in an African village:

Those who did not listen to Noah, died when the rain came because they had nowhere to go. At first the people got their seed ready and expected to inspan their oxen and plough their fields as usual. But they were surprised when it rained all night. Each day the watermark rose until the huts were flooded. The men scolded their wives for not plastering the walls properly, when the water started coming through the walls. Then they started scooping the water out with dishes, but all to no avail. As people panicked they started running about. Some tried to build wooden platforms as a shelter for their families. 'My hut is full of water!' some shouted. 'Mine too!' others replied. Nothing helped. The water engulfed them all ... My friends,

let us believe what the Bible tells us, because in the last days we shall be in the same danger as the people of Noah's time. When you die there will be two angels standing in front of you: one of Satan and one of God. Each will be judging whether you have been doing the will of his master. How are we going to be judged by God?

The destructive power of God's judgment, which always found expression in terms of a destroying sword (Ezekiel 33), engulfing water or the 'pit of fire' (*gomba romwoto*) could only be evaded by seeking shelter in God's Kingdom. Ezekiah's favourite expression was always the *dura raMwari* (granary of God). The real purpose of Mutendi's work and of all Zionist campaigns, he frequently contended, was to gather people in God's granary, where they would be safe from damnation. Elucidation of the 'granary concept' highlighted the eschatological tension of the partly realised Kingdom and the one yet to come. On the one hand there were the this-worldly benefits of joining the believers, of taking shelter – against racial humiliation, illness, the evil powers of witchcraft, etc. – at Zion City. On the other hand, suffering, for example the persecution of Zionists, remains, 'for we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come' (Hebrews 13:14). Ezekiah's frequent use of this text to emphasise the futuristic character of God's Kingdom indicates that in his campaigning sermons the emphasis was more on the eschatological 'not yet' than on the 'already' of God's kingdom. This in a sense provided a valuable balance in the totality of Zionist campaigning activities with their frequently overwhelming preoccupation with the interpretation and 'enactment' of salvation here and now.

Zionism and conversion

Ezekiah's twofold concept of God's Kingdom enabled him to present conversion as having a much wider connotation than joining the Zionist movement. His appeal for conversion was always related to the coming judgement and the coming Kingdom. He seldom qualified the spiritual change he was propagating by saying, for example, 'Be converted to God', 'Be converted to Jesus Christ' or 'Be converted to the Zionist Church'. The context within which each appeal was made suggested that the preacher was primarily concerned with the motive of conversion. The implication was clear: 'Be converted to avert the coming danger!' Constant reference to the coming *dura raMwari* (granary or Kingdom of God) as the alternative to the pit of fire implied, of course, that conversion means turning to God and choosing for his Kingdom.

With the emphasis on the Kingdom yet to come Ezekiah could be quite flexible in his presentation of conversion in a multi-denominational setting. Aware that a large proportion of the people attending his services belonged to other churches, Ezekiah frequently qualified the coming 'granary of heaven' as a place for all races and all churches. On occasion he said to a group of villagers: 'Although we are members of different churches here today, we are

going to be put in the *one* granary of heaven. So we should stop hating each other.' There was no suggestion that those who considered themselves already converted should turn to Zion as if this was the only true way of turning to God. 'The churches can be compared with the multitude of tax-offices through which people pay their dues to *one* government. Then, again, there are many governments under one Man, that is, God. King George of England is also under the one God before whom all creatures should kneel.'

This view is of singular importance. It reflected quite clearly the genuine concern of a Zionist leader for the spiritual fate of his fellow-men, an attitude which in some respects transcended his concern for the recruitment of people in his own church. His tactful and ecumenically minded approach was particularly evident when he extended the final invitation to non-believers during the main service on the last day of his campaign. He concluded a forceful sermon as follows:

We want those who do not belong to churches to join us, because where we go after death nobody knows. All of us must stop sinning, because only then will we be accepted in the Kingdom of heaven. Today churches are like a network, while in olden times it was only John the Baptist who came to preach the Gospel. We do not mind which church you are going to join, because we only want you to join a church and stop doing evil.

Ezekiah's flexibility did not exclude the propagation of Zionism. He had sufficient spiritual maturity and ecumenical insight not to identify the Kingdom of God exclusively with the Zionist movement. At the same time he had no hesitation in stressing the validity of his bishop's mission, and in emphasising that the ZCC was truly a church of God. 'Is not the Lord in Zion?' (Jeremiah 8:19) he would ask. Thus, when it came to conversion in the sense of initiating a non-believer into a community of believers, Ezekiah obviously advocated baptism in the Zion Christian Church. This is not surprising, since Ezekiah's experience of the already present Kingdom of God in this life was a distinctly Zionist one.

Christology

In Ezekiah's sermons there was an obvious lack of a comprehensive Christology. He had an extensive knowledge of the life and work of Christ and he was aware of the importance of personal salvation in direct relation to a crucified and risen Lord. Moreover, he indicated frequently that he recognised the important function of Christ as Mediator and Saviour. Yet, apart from introducing Jesus as the One who had come to tell the people of the last Judgement, there was little teaching in depth about the implications of Christ's life and work for both the individual and the church. As a result, his concept of conversion, as projected during the campaign, was narrowed down to a judging God, the avoidance of sin and the importance of being initiated into God's Kingdom. The attainment of church membership in a sense superseded the implications of conversion in the individual's relationship with Christ.

Christ was frequently mentioned when Ezekiah gave a brief 'historical' sketch, as he invariably did, about the important activities of some of the outstanding characters in the Bible. Characteristic of most of his sermons was the following kind of survey:

After God had created the earth, He also created Adam, from whom *all* the generations of people descended, including Abraham. Noah listened to God's command and was saved when God punished those who were straying. Seeing that there were now many people on earth God sent Jesus to teach them how they should live. Jesus Christ came and died for our sins. That was a most difficult thing to do but He dedicated Himself to the task. When Jesus came He fulfilled what John the Baptist had told the people. He told them that there was hell for all those who did not believe in his Father. Although God had sent John and Jesus, some still did not believe. Jesus healed many people and none of those people thanked Him for it. After John and Jesus many came who were simply fulfilling what had been said by them. Today Samuel Mutendi and the other Zionist leaders are following the example of Jesus by warning the people of the coming danger.

This type of discourse was usually given without much reference to scripture passages. It was more or less taken for granted that the audience was familiar with the basic Gospel message.

The purpose of these brief historical sketches was not so much to elucidate the specific tasks of the Old and New Testament followers of God, but to place the present-day Zionist activities in direct line with the ancient followers of God. Having established a direct connection between the work of Jesus Christ and the African Zionist messengers in Zimbabwe – in other words, having established the religious validity of Zionism in its historical perspective – examples of Zionist expansion, and particularly Mutendi's experiences, could be recounted with an added dimension of importance and justification.

From Ezekiah's sermons it is evident that Mutendi is indeed accorded an important role as 'man of God', as liberator and healer. As in many other African churches, it is a matter of God the Father being more readily understood than the Son, and then in his capacity as Judge, Protector and Legislator. Consequently Mwari, the Father, features more prominently in sermons than his Son, who in terms of customary kinship norms occupies a subordinate position. This does not mean that the relevance of Christ's work is lost in the Zionist camp. On the contrary, their sharp focus on the work of the Holy Spirit rests on the presupposition and recognition of Christ's work as Mediator and Saviour. Preoccupation with the principal church leader is mostly based on similar presuppositions. In this respect one agrees with Sundkler when he suggests that we should speak of 'iconic' rather than 'messianic' leadership.³¹ Instead of obscuring Christ, Mutendi, like many other prophetic African church leaders, reflects Christ and translates the Lord's work concretely and understandably in the African setting.

This does not mean that messianic trends are entirely lacking in the ZCC. The chances of the church leader, particularly after his death, substituting for Christ and being deified, are real, at least for some Zionists. A partly submerged and less prominent Christology than one would wish for any Christian church should not, however, induce one to classify the ZCC as 'messianic' or 'post-Christian'.

It could also be said that Ezekiah's interpretation of texts was mostly literal. Lack of theological training caused him sometimes to manipulate texts uncritically, merely for the sake of emphasising a point or substantiating a statement concerning Zion. Nevertheless, his radical biblicism, his zeal and enthusiasm appealed to the peasant community in which he was working. His genuine concern for people found repeated expression in his prayers when he beseeched God to let *all* people become converted. Theatrics and humour also featured in the 'enactment' of sermons, but never to the extent that they excluded the serious and courageous handling of God's Word as a two-edged sword. As the Spirit moved through the activities of this Zionist missionary, people were converted, Christians were spiritually revived and the members of Mission and Independent Churches worshipped uninhibitedly together in a spirit of genuine ecumenicity.

A comprehensive assessment of Zionist campaigns cannot be achieved on the basis of sermon analysis only. Ezekiah, for example, seldom preached at length about traditional religious practices, about the ancestors and witchcraft. His confrontation with the world of ancestors (*midzimu*) and *shavi* spirits was always short and to the point. It usually amounted to a rejection of ancestor worship and the assertion that the time for such practices had passed. He concluded the final rally in Belingwe with these remarks:

Even the very old people are welcome to join the church because the time of paying attention to the *shavi* and *zvipunha* spirits has gone by. The *zvipunha* was something nobody could like at all. When such a spirit entered a person, he would change his appearance in such a way that his wife would leave him. Cast away all these things in the name of Jesus Christ!

Although, significantly, Ezekiah does introduce Christ at this point as the One who opposes and supplants traditional religion, that is, as the Liberator from destructive forces, the brevity of his remarks on the subject is perhaps deceptive. It could lead the casual observer to the conclusion that a serious confrontation between Christ and the traditional worldview was wholly lacking. Nothing would be further from the truth, for the prophetic, healing and witnessing activities of Zionist office-bearers, which complemented Ezekiah's sermons throughout the campaign, stood entirely in the realm of dialogue and confrontation. The Zionist team showed interest in and tried to come to grips with humankind in the totality of their convictions, religious practices and particularly their daily needs. In this respect one could qualify the Zionist outreach as a comprehensive

missionary approach, which presented the church not only as a soul-saving institution, but also as a healing, protective, comforting and even economy-boosting one.

Campaign reports at Zion City

No *rwendo* (campaign) is complete before a full oral report has been made at Zion City. The names of new converts must be entered in the church books and the church council must be informed about the state of the congregation in the circuit that acted as host to the campaigning team. In addition to discussions with Bishop Mutendi and officials of the *dare* (council) at Zion City, the returning minister and his assistants are expected to 'preach out' their main report to the inhabitants of Zion City at one of the early morning prayer meetings at the *tabero* (tabernacle or meeting place). This gives meaning to the intercession in which the home congregation of Zion City has been engaged on behalf of the campaigning teams. At this juncture, prayer is related to church growth. The good news of an expanding Zionist membership is experienced in Zion City as the direct response to prayer. Thus the call for missionary endeavour, which was sparked off during the Paschal celebrations and which led to the mobilisation not only of the campaigning teams and distant congregations, but also of the home congregation, is brought to a meaningful conclusion at the *tabero*. As the campaign experiences are revived in the lively narratives of returning 'messengers of God' and the people of Zion respond with 'Amen!' and 'Hallelujah!', the inspiring interaction between the supporting home-base and the commissioned missionaries become fully apparent.

When Ezekiah gave his report on the Belingwe campaign at the *tabero*, on 4 June 1965, one and a half months had elapsed since the Paschal celebration at Zion City. Considering the time spent at Zion City, at that stage this minister had been away from home for two months. Unsalaries ZCC ministers are active in such campaigns three times a year, which gives an impression of the time involved in the execution of their missionary duties. Some of these men work away from home at least six months of the year, during which period they are virtually entirely dependent, as regards food and accommodation, on the hospitality of their fellow Zionists. In reality, the response in Zion to the mission command facilitates the development of a wide-ranging network of mutual aid in which visiting office-bearers and host congregations share the produce of the land in a charitable manner. The principal leader is also provided with a first-class 'information service' that enables him to exert control over his followers throughout the country. He obtains a good idea of the changing circumstances in most of the districts in the country. When Ezekiah arrived at Zion City, for example, campaign reports were coming in from Gutu, Bikita, and as far north as Sinoia and Triangle Sugar Estates in the south. Part and parcel of the reports were the latest detentions of ZAPU officials, police investigations into

various matters, the attitudes of district commissioners, chieftain succession issues, food shortages, etc. Here, too, one finds indications of a comprehensive approach that deals with man in his totality.

Ezekiah's report lasted an hour. He told the congregation how he had crossed flooded rivers with his bicycle, about his fear of crocodiles, the temptation to go back home and the consolation derived from the willingness of evangelists in the Jena district to accompany him. The campaigning activities launched from the Revd Ananiah's homestead in Belingwe were described in detail. Among other things, he said:

Each day we went out preaching the Word of God with great strength. God was with us, but an enemy was also tracking us, trying to make our meetings impossible. God did not want to put his servant to shame so he did the work himself and enabled us to continue preaching ... The police arrived at our camp one day. They had been ordered to arrest some Zionists because someone (presumably the 'enemy' referred to above) had made false statements about us. Nothing came of it. When another policeman arrived the next day to investigate, the *murungu* (European) went to phone the district commissioner, whereafter we were all free and greatly relieved in our thoughts ... Later another enemy threatened to disturb our work by preventing the Revd Ananiah's wife from giving birth to her child. She thought she would die. We had no peace. We prayed a great deal ... We blessed some water and sprinkled it on the troubled woman and on her doorposts to drive the enemy away ... I believe the God of Moyo did his work because the child was eventually born in fine condition! (At this juncture the entire congregation started cheering loudly.) On Sunday many people came to Ananiah's place and we preached God's Word with great force (*Tapaza shoko raMwari*, literally 'we demolished God's Word'). We preached about love and told the people to repent and join some church as soon as possible because nobody knows when his last day on earth has arrived ... Afterwards two men from Mataka came to join our church, together with two young women and another man from Chibi. So we received five new members in our church.

(At this point the listeners cheered and ululated joyfully.)

Ezekiah's mention of the police investigation and the success with a complicated childbirth were fresh illustrations of God's protection. These incidents resembled many other Zionist testimonies. As they were preached about at Zion City in the following weeks, they became an integral part of a church history that, through endless repetition, reassured the Zionist community of God's loving, caring and protective involvement in their lives.

The most significant feature of the Zionists' 'Africanised missionary strategy' is Mutendi's combination of sacrament and great commission, which enabled him to harness the experience of unity in his church and guide the impulses derived from it into a concerted missionary drive. Through good organisation

and a repetition of the *rwendo* exercise three times a year, he succeeded in moulding virtually his entire church into a missionary movement. Responsibility for the outreach to non-Christians was shared on a wide basis throughout the church, which implied the theologically sound combination of the church's inner spiritual growth and its outreach into the world; stimulating interaction between congregations; and the support of the church's mission with prayer.

Ezekiah's campaigning activities indicated clearly that the impetus for church growth did not derive from a reaction to missions, but from genuine missionary zeal. At the village level the contact of campaigning Zionists with other Independent and Mission Church members reflected ecumenical cooperation rather than opposition and conflict. The weakness in Ezekiah's presentation of the Gospel consisted in a limited concept of conversion that emphasised church affiliation rather than a changed relationship with Christ, and an incomplete Christology. Still, the combination of conversion sermons and faith-healing practices represents a confrontation between the Gospel message and traditional religion that appears to be more relevant, persistent and penetrative than in some Mission Churches, where the rejection of traditional religion is not always followed up with dialogue and confrontation.

The question remains whether we, as representatives of the 'historical' churches, will have sufficient courage and humility to engage in ecumenical ties with our Zionist brethren that will not only enable us to teach them our Western-oriented theologies – which in itself serves a valid purpose – but which will also place us in a position to learn from them.

AIC Women as Bearers of the Gospel Good News*

If one considers the rapid expansion of African Zionism and related Spirit-type churches in relation to the reality that AIC women constitute the bulk (in some instances up to 80 per cent) of adult membership in these churches, it stands to reason that African women have played a major role in the outreach and growth of the AICs. Ironically, however, scant attention has been paid to this subject in AIC literature. Although some observers have mentioned the evangelistic activities of the AIC women's associations, a thorough analysis of AIC women as missionaries – their mission strategies, theologies, interpretation and propagation of the Good News in the African context – to my knowledge has not been attempted in full.

There are clues in the existing literature to the significance and nature of this subject, be it as a result of passing reference or assumptions in the analysis of gender roles. Jules-Rosette's (1975, chapter 2) description of Apostolic healing, for instance, highlights the prominence of women healers in attracting new converts. She also illustrates how the characterisation of the Maranke Apostles as a 'man's church' (Murphree 1969:97–8) obscures the underlying Apostolic principle of gender equality and the roles of women in the church's ceremonial life. In a recent article, Hennie Pretorius and Lizo Jafta (in Elphick and Davenport 1997:220, 221) mention the far-reaching influence of women in South Africa's Zion-Apostolic Churches. I myself attempted a brief and provisional analysis, in a Unisa study guide, of Zimbabwean AIC women in mission (Daneel 1992). Kiernan (1990:25), in turn, illustrates how Zionist males in KwaMashu, Durban, cast themselves in the roles of 'social isolates', as a result of which they become heavily dependent on the proselytising activities of their women, who are not bound by similar social restrictions. He argues, 'marriage is the basis and indispensable condition for a career in Zionism because it forms an essential partnership for the recruitment of new adult members' (Kiernan 1990:54).

High office can be held only by married men. Their wives function as their chief recruiting agents, the ones who mediate conversion and whose success determines the nature of their careers. Ordination therefore establishes husband and wife as a team with shared spiritual power in a ministry of joint undertaking (Kiernan 1990:63).

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The insights contained in these studies provide us with an admittedly valuable profile on African women's missionary endeavour, but not much more than that. Hence my contention that, with a few exceptions, AIC women have remained essentially the unsung bearers of the Gospel good news in Africa. Numerous questions about their role in church expansion remain unanswered and call for penetrative field research if we are to do justice to this important aspect of African church history and missiology.

The missionary outreach of AIC women can broadly be defined as holistic in nature or, in missiological parlance, as representative of a 'comprehensive approach' owing to its wide-ranging impact on African society. The unobtrusive manner, for instance, in which AIC women have attempted to fashion their households as Christian homes, with various degrees of alignment to customary African notions of family life and kinship, has contributed substantially to the prized image and attraction of the AICs as havens of protection and belonging in the midst of the disruptive processes of acculturation, urbanisation and so-called modernisation. In addition, the neighbourhood support systems developed by some of the enterprising AIC women's associations have undoubtedly contributed to the flocking of numerous women and their families to these churches. In discussions with AIC adherents about their reasons for obtaining membership I was often struck by the frequent mention of family crises that were overcome with the assistance of AIC *Ruwadzano* women as a major persuasive factor in the decision-making process leading to AIC membership. It was invariably during spells of illness or pregnancy, when rural women were vulnerable in their inability to perform household and cultural tasks, that *Ruwadzano* women of the neighbourhood would step in to wash clothes, prepare food or even tend to the crops in the fields on behalf of their afflicted sisters, regardless of kin or religious affiliation. In other instances *Ruwadzano* women seemed to specialise in assisting bereaved families by providing burial blankets or coffins and helping with funeral arrangements. In such *Ruwadzano* activity, the good news of Christ's compassion and redemption undoubtedly obtained understandable African features, relevant particularly to the needs of women and their families in peasant society. These relatively hidden but very real dimensions of church outreach and recruitment obviously require full exposure if we are to arrive at a sound appraisal of AIC women's mission.

There are, however, two areas of AIC missionary activity, namely healing and evangelistic campaigns, in which women have already achieved a degree of prominence and recognition – if not always in AIC literature, then at least in their own churches and surrounding communities. In an attempt to stimulate further research in this field I shall briefly reflect on some of the characteristic features of women's church growth initiatives.

Healing

Prophetic or faith-healing in Africa's Spirit-type churches has long been recognised by researchers as one of the most powerful and persuasive expressions of the Gospel good news (Daneel 1974, chapter 3). Whether intended specifically as a recruitment device or not, healing featured prominently in the outreach of virtually all the influential women missionaries who distinguished themselves as founders of AICs. This at any rate is true of Mai Chaza's City of God movement in Zimbabwe (Daneel 1987:56), Ma Nku's St John's Apostolic Faith Mission in Gauteng (Thomas 1999:20) and the churches of Alice Lenshina in Zambia (Rotberg 1970:513–68), and Miriam Ragot and Gaudencia Aoku in Kenya.

Prominent women leaders virtually all attribute their ministries to a call from God through dreams or visions, as is common also for AIC male founder leaders. A typical example is the 'death-resurrection' experience of Mai Chaza, during which she received a divine mandate to return to earth as God's messenger to heal the sick, grant fertility to barren women and call people to repentance. Women thronged in their thousands to her 'cities of God' (*Guta ra Jehovah*) in Harare, Bulawayo and Mutare, where they could receive intensive care through prayer, laying on of hands and exorcisms. Some became assistant prophetic healers themselves. The deceased Mai Chaza is regarded as still inspiring and directing the expansion of her movement through regular revelations to senior prophetesses and healers. Men also hold office in the 'cities of God', but their positions on the whole are subordinate to those of leading women. In contrast to the women's associations of other AICs, the leading women in Mai Chaza's movement direct virtually all ecclesiastical procedure, plan and execute evangelistic campaigns and – by way of lengthy testimonies on fertility, child-birth and family life – shape the salvation message around distinctly African female concerns.

Next to the female-led AICs, large numbers of prominent women healers and prophetesses operate and achieve considerable status within male-led AICs. In their healing colonies a balance is struck between male patriarchy and female emancipation. These centres are in a sense the symbols of women's liberation where reputed prophetesses are free to pay full attention to the afflictions and a wide range of domestic concerns of women. In some instances a prophetess's healing ministry may stretch into the realm of church leadership and management, or even into local political matters. One of the late Bishop Samuel Mutendi's wives, a reputed ZCC prophetic healer, for instance, acted as a pastoral consultant who provided guidance to affiliated ZCC chiefs and district council elders on boundary disputes and related tribal political matters. Mai Febi, a famous healer in Johane Maranke's Apostolic movement – the largest of all AICs in Zimbabwe – was known for her sense of fairness and dignified autonomy in relation to the church's leaders. She tolerated no interference at her 'Apostolic Maternity' centre and on occasion reprimanded the church's

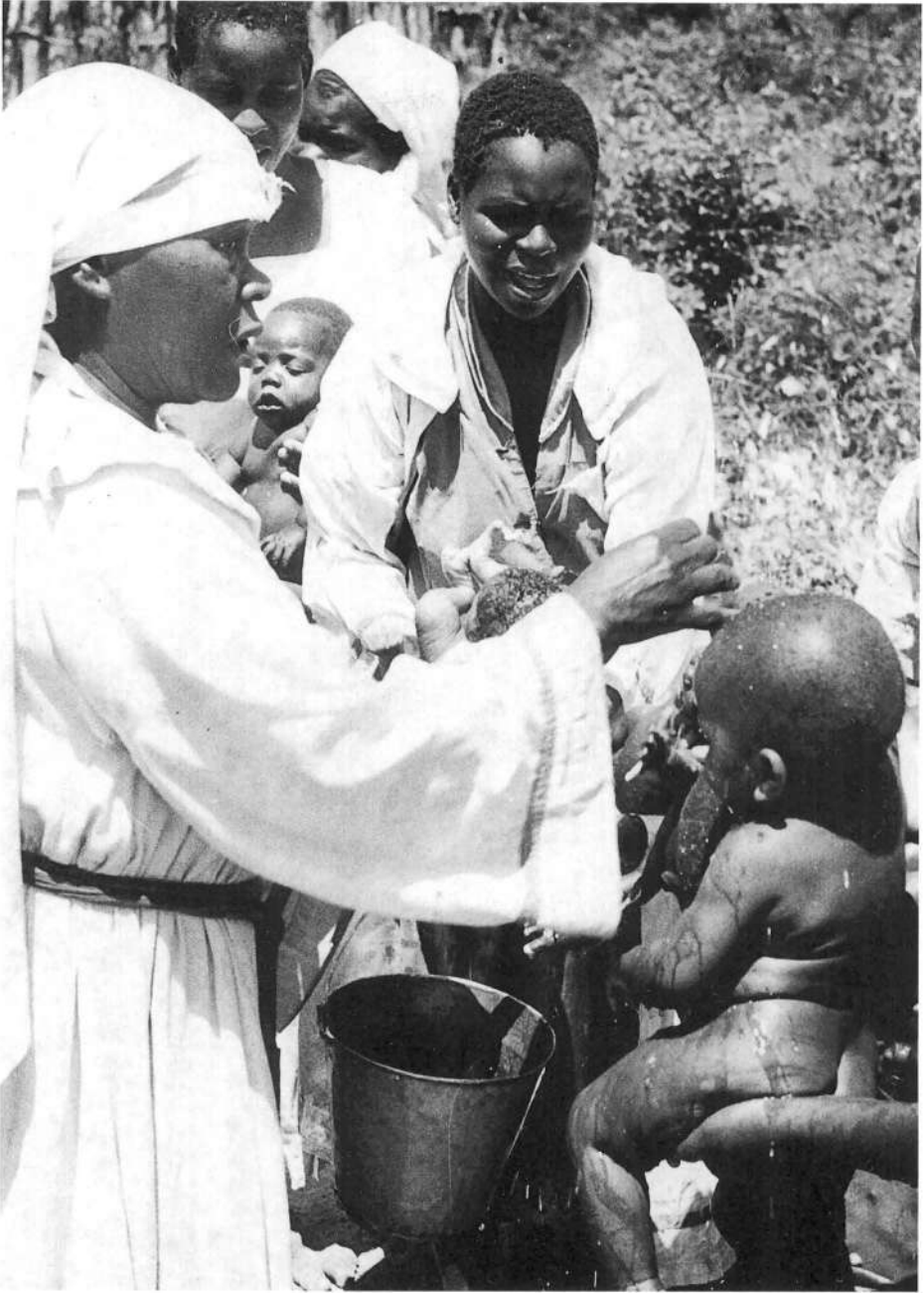


Plate 21: Apostolic healer-prophetess Mai Febi at work in her 'maternity', sprinkling infants with holy water to ward off destructive powers



Plate 22: *Ruwadzano* (Mothers Union) leader instructing women about their evangelistic responsibilities and Christian household duties prior to village visitations (top), Zionist women thresh bullrush millet in mutual-aid programmes (bottom)

principal leader publicly, in my presence, for neglecting a pregnant spouse. I have no doubt that healers of this stature communicate a convincing message of gender equality to their patients and fellow church members, a message that is bound to positively impact church growth. A study of the dynamic of gender interaction at AIC healing centres could significantly complement our understanding of African women's perception of the church as both a liberating and a protective institution.

One of the most important, if frequently overlooked, reasons that the healing centres of women, and of AICs generally, can legitimately be called 'church growth points' or 'AIC missions' is the intensive preoccupation with African cosmology. For it is in the healing context, so crucially important to both healer and patient, that there is a continual dialogue and/or confrontation between contextualised Christian and traditional African worldviews. Here an intuitive and unwritten but very real African theology of religion takes shape. Here, too, AIC pneumatology finds its existentially most meaningful expression.

As with male healers, the prophetess, despite the likeness between her diagnosis of the patient's malady and that of the traditional doctor/diviner (*nganga*), claims an entirely different source for her extrasensory perception, namely the Holy Spirit of the Bible. This prophetic insistence on the divine involvement of the Holy Spirit reflects an important departure from traditional divination. For the aim here is not to satisfy the traditional demands of the afflicting spirit(s) for sacrifice. Instead, the prophetess seeks to take the thought-world and experience of the patient seriously and to introduce at this point the healing and salvific power of Christ the Victor. This means that prophetic diagnosis attempts to determine the traditionally perceived causation of affliction. For a barren woman or one plagued by miscarriages, for example, the web of interrelations between herself and matrilineal spirits – such as a deceased grandmother or mother who claims the sacrifice of the 'motherhood cow' in honour of the procreative powers of their matriline as condition for them to 'release the womb' of their relative, the patient – is unravelled in full. The idiom of the prophetic diagnosis is entirely recognisable in terms of traditional worldviews – an area in which the prophetess has a distinct advantage over Western healers operating in the contexts of modern hospitals and clinics. Only at an advanced stage of the diagnosis is the ancestral or other afflicting spirit identified as the cause of illness, depicted as a demon, and is therapy prescribed. This invariably includes some form of exorcism in the name of the triune Christian God.

All forms of exorcism and symbolic faith-healing treatment are designed to demonstrate vividly the Holy Spirit's triumphal power over evil. This applies even when compromise solutions are prescribed to satisfy afflicted people's non-Christian relatives. The overriding aim of the healer-prophetess's therapy remains the incorporation of the patient, or preferably the entire family (in the event of outsiders seeking membership), or the consolidation of the patient (if the



Plate 23: Women tend to be ardent environmental missionaries. Ms Raviro Mutonga instructs women in tree-planting (top) Uniformed methodist woman plants a seedling during tree-planting eucharist (bottom)

afflicted person already belongs to the healer's church) in the 'new community' of Zion or the Apostles. This is considered to offer the best prospect of security and wellbeing in a world troubled by adversity. Where dialogue between the representatives of Christian and African religious values serves the cure and sense of belonging of afflicted individuals so convincingly, recruitment and church planting are bound to be successful.

Prophetess-healers tend to specialise in the same way as male healers. Some are known for their detection of and combat against witchcraft. Others focus on the purification of adult women during worship services, as does Mai Chipondeni at her Namatapa healing centre in Malawi, or on the exorcism of specific types of destructive spirits, as does Agnes Majeche of the Zvikomborero Apostolic Church in Marondera in her crusade against evil *chikwambo* spirits. The majority of women healers deal specifically with women's procreative roles and problems, such as barrenness and family conflicts deriving from such conditions, pregnancies, childbirth, and infant care. As a result the Apostolic healer Mai Febi (above) called her healing centre a 'maternity', while *Ndaza* Zionist prophetess healers, such as Mai VaShandira Ndamba of the Bikita district, refer to their centres as 'clinics'. They provide pre- and post-natal care. In doing so they reinterpret and Christianise the traditional *rites de passage* concerning childbirth. This is achieved by exorcising destructive spirit forces threatening pregnant women and representing divine forgiveness rather than in-law disapproval or rejection when labouring women confess acts of adultery (real or fictitious) during complicated deliveries. Infants are subjected to protective rituals with the use of holy water and braided wristlets or headbands to symbolically safeguard the fontanel and other vulnerable body parts of newborns against wizardry attacks, and so forth. Mai Febi, for instance, conducted daily prayer-meetings at her 'maternity', which included extensive sprinkling of mothers, infants and young children with holy water to ward off evil and to ensure the wellbeing of God's people in an oft dangerous world.

Theologically speaking, a number of themes that merit further research can be discerned.

First, the good news proclaimed and enacted at the prophetess-healer's healing centre relates the gospel message of deliverance to the immediate needs of African women and their offspring. Salvation therefore is rendered profoundly relevant in this existence and relates directly to family life. As Christian midwife, the healer and her assistants give new content to the partly defunct traditional ritual entry of an infant into the human family. Hereby a contribution is made towards the ritual strengthening of the Christian home. The question arises whether this model of healing ministry also impacts other *rites de passage*, such as puberty and initiation rites, the protection of virginity, and preparations for marriage. If so, the prophetess healer could have a more profound influence not only on the numerical growth of the church, but also on

its moral development and internal spiritual growth than was formerly realised. She may, in fact, represent to her followers the incarnate image of Jesus, the Master of Initiation, as suggested by Sanon (in Schreiter 1989).

Second, the prophetess-healer undoubtedly strengthens and promotes the image of the prophetic church as 'hospital', as protective institution. In this instance the 'African Jerusalem' or 'Holy City' becomes a safe haven against gender discrimination, the ridicule or ostracism of barren women, spirit or witchcraft attacks against expectant mothers or newborn infants, and all forces that disrupt healthy and harmonious family life. How does this function of Christ's church as the protector of fertility, motherhood and childhood enhance the recruitment of women and/or entire families in the AICs? And to what extent does the female healing context, as I have suggested above, form the platform for meaningful inter-religious dialogue, tolerance, Christian witness and conversion? We need to understand more fully the deeper ramifications of an emergent AIC theology of religions implicit in healing praxis if the dynamic of religious interface and change in the church's outreach and growth is to be adequately defined.

Third, prophetess-healers may, in the eyes of their followers, obtain positions of leadership similar to those of males, who, in AIC literature, are referred to as 'messianic' or iconic leaders (Sundkler 1961, 290f; 1976, 190f; Daneel 1987, 185–95). If this is so, it will be of great interest to determine the Christology of such healers: the extent to which they 'mirror' the life and ministry of Christ in African society; represent a form of contextual incarnation more conversant with issues of fertility and motherhood than males are capable of; and the way they perceive of Christ as Victor and Liberator specifically in the field of witchcraft (where women often need protection for themselves or their children against *uroyi*-attacks or support against accusations that they themselves practise witchcraft). Christ's presence in or relative absence from the world of African women (in the event of a female leader absorbing and eclipsing His Person) will certainly condition the nature and essence of discipleship at the cutting edge of the church's growth in Africa.

Fourth, in addition to a healing Christology, attention should be paid to pneumatology, that is, the role attributed to the Holy Spirit in the prophetess's healing community. Traditional notions of mediumship and spirit possession probably continue to condition the understanding and expectations of people dependent on a healing ministry so heavily invested in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Oosthuizen (1968:119–42) has warned against the 'misinterpretation of the Holy Spirit' in the AICs generally. He was convinced of a confusion of the Holy Spirit with the ancestors in these churches to the extent that ancestral demands obscure the role of Christ and sever the essential connection between Holy Spirit and Scriptures (Oosthuizen 1968, 126, 129, 132). Beyerhaus (1969, 75) in turn spoke of a distortion of the personal Spirit of

God to an impersonal, manipulable force, controlled according to the dictates of the prophetic healer. I have indicated that such generalisations can be misleading and that for the Shona AICs, at least, the biblically defined demands of the Holy Spirit, and those of the ancestors are often diametrically opposed. In the Shona prophetic healing context, therefore, the interaction between Holy Spirit and ancestors on the whole leads to confrontation and change (Daneel 1987, 259–63). Prophetic leaders, moreover, tend to be aware of the risk of manipulating Spirit revelations into a convenient sanction for tradition-oriented forms of magico-religious healing. In recognition of the personal nature of God's Spirit and of their dependence on the Spirit's initiative for all forms of inspiration and revelation, they periodically seclude themselves for intensive Bible-study, prayer and fasting.

It is likely that AIC women healers develop a pneumatology that emphasises the maternal nature of divinity and proclaims a Spirit primarily engaged in matters of fertility, the very origin of life itself. In the world of African women such a pneumatology, manifest in what could be termed a 'pneumatic Christology', could well be the cornerstone of the message of salvation and liberation from life-destroying forces – a major attraction in the church's recruitment of female members. This certainly lay at the core of Mai Chaza's message during the initial years of the *Guta ra Jehovah's* rapid growth. Apparently Mai Chaza's identification with the Holy Spirit, in her quest for 'successful pregnancies' in the lives of her female followers, was so prominent that a trend emerged in her church whereby God's trinity was, albeit mistakenly, qualified as Father, Son and Mai Chaza.

Evangelistic outreach

AIC women's associations (*Ruwadzano*) can rightly be described as missionary or evangelistic task forces. It is my impression that irrespective of whether the principal leader of a particular AIC is female or male, the evangelistic drive of its *Ruwadzano* group depends largely on the vision, zeal and commitment of the local women leaders. As I am familiar with *Ruwadzano* activities mainly in the male-led AICs, I shall attempt a brief outline of one of them, namely the Women's Association of Bishop Mutendi's Zion Christian Church. In the 1960s, while living among the Zionists in Zimbabwe, I was in a position to attend and study the outreach campaigns of ZCC women.

Apart from individual Zionist women witnessing to their faith in the course of their day-to-day lives, there are essentially two situations in which *Ruwadzano* women operate as evangelising groups. The first concerns the sacramentally inspired missionary campaigns launched three times a year during the Paschal celebrations at Zion City (Daneel 1980). Once Bishop Mutendi commissions his teams of missionaries to campaign countrywide, as sequel to the *Paseka*, they

travel to the widely dispersed headquarters of outlying ZCC congregations, which, for the duration of campaigns, serve as evangelistic operational centres. Here the local *Ruwadzano* women play a pivotal role in hosting the campaign teams. They accommodate the Zionist messengers, cook their food, wash their clothes and guide them into the surrounding villages for house visitations, healing ceremonies and rousing evangelistic open-air services. The church capitalises at this point on the preparatory groundwork that the *Ruwadzano* women have already done over the years in the course of their week-to-week evangelistic programmes. Many of the converts joining the church during these campaigns have previously been persuaded by the living examples and preaching of the good news by *Ruwadzano* women resident in their villages. Although the local ZCC women receive recognition for their persuasion of villagers to attend the main rally services at the regional headquarters and for rendering such events colourful and attractive through their singing and dancing, it is, ironically, the itinerant male prophets, preachers and baptisers responsible for the public appeals for conversion and 'Jordan' baptisms of the new converts who apparently receive most acclaim for campaign successes, especially when they travel back to Zion City to report on the outcome of their work.

There are a few likely reasons that male evangelisers are more readily recognised in the ZCC as the main agents of church growth. First, the offices of ministers and evangelists in the upper echelons of church leadership are held virtually exclusively by males. They are the ones who control church affairs and who conduct public worship services and related ceremonies. In a predominantly patrilineal and patriarchal society the general progress and success of the church is therefore publicly attributed to male role-players, even when the contribution of women is internally recognised as significant. Second, it is possible that ZCC preoccupation with a 'man of God', whose message contained some distinctly 'male features' of resistance to government rule on land issues and education, could obscure the very real liberative impact of the leader's mission in the lives of women. At the peak of celebrating the church's expansion in yet another wave of missionary activity, it is the iconic leader's life and mission that is extolled rather than the preparatory groundwork of the women. In the third place it is well known that whenever male proclamation of the Gospel is at a premium in evangelism, the more holistic dimension of female witness through the Christian home and related fields of activity tend to be underrated.

The second aspect of ZCC women's evangelistic outreach, next to their role in the post-Paschal campaigns, is their small-scale evangelistic programmes (referred to above) conducted by the *Ruwadzano* associations at local congregational level. After their weekly Bible study and prayer meetings, uniformed women go out into the surrounding villages in pairs or in small groups to preach conversion, pray for the sick and help the needy. Evangelism

thus features in the form of a compassionate ministry of service: cooking food, washing clothes, sweeping and cleaning homesteads and tending to the fields on behalf of ill or absent mothers of families. In such situations the Gospel good news takes concrete and persuasive shape. The members of entire rural households in consequence respond by joining the Zionist fold. Through their persistent word and deed ministry the ZCC *Ruwadzano* women have gained for themselves the reputation of dedicated evangelisers. More than any other women's association they are known for their zeal in 'walking in the villages' to spread the Zionist gospel.

What do the ZCC women preach at their weekly meetings and what is the good news they propagate in rural villages? I mention only a few major themes that featured repeatedly in the *Ruwadzano* village sermons I had tape-recorded in the sixties while Bishop Samuel Mutendi was still alive:

Child-bearing

Testimonies about Bishop Mutendi's intercession and provision of *chibereko* (child-bearing powers) feature prominently. Such testimonies are always narrated against the backdrop of discrimination in rural society against barren women, their deteriorating status as a result of miscarriages, the derision of co-wives on account of a woman's inability to provide her husband with a name-bearer, etc. Against this background, treatment by the 'man of God', resulting in individual histories of successful child-bearing, is experienced and portrayed as 'miracles'. Here salvation takes on the shape of a happy family life, social security and esteem for women, as opposed to marital conflict and rejection caused by barrenness. Testimonies of this nature are demonstrations of group-loyalty. They 're-enact' the most crucial experiences of women in African society. Each testimony brings to life and perpetuates the major attraction of the ZCC for women, whereby the in-group is consolidated and a challenging invitation extended to non-affiliated females.

Faith and good deeds

God's judgment, based on the deeds of a person, is strongly emphasised. Although the link between faith and good deeds is not neglected, moral conduct in relationship to the mores of the church – legalistic strains of which reflect both Old Testament and traditional tribal influences – remains focal. Good deeds as such are always related in the first place to family life. To be a good *Ruwadzano* leader one must be a good wife to one's husband and build a Christian family. The challenge of Christian fellowship finds contextual expression in domestic life. As one of the leading women stated:

God gave us pots to cook in. So I must know in which pot I am cooking – in the good one or in the broken one. If you cook in the broken pot, you

work in vain. God will see it if you use the good pot. Even in our homes we are not allowed to use a broken pot. The same rule applies when we go to Moyo [Mutendi]. If you are given your own home [i.e. your own children through the miracles of Bishop Mutendi] you must keep it like a shining pot. Keeping your sins is the same as being like a broken pot, whatever your position in the church. People will say 'the pot is broken' and they will not follow you. Those are the sins in a person and we cannot help a person who perseveres in sin. If I become a leader, I must be a true mother to my children. What is the use of a leader who does not show love? They will say: 'It is the broken pot.'

In this illustration good housekeeping and proper child-care are integral to Christian worship and conditions for sound leadership. It also hints at the necessity of confession because the broken pot (the woman with hidden sins) cannot be 'mended' before the disabling cause has been 'brought out' through confession. In this instance, the shining pot, the most obvious item in rural African households, signifying order and wellbeing in the family, symbolises spiritually inspired good deeds, effective witness and loyalty to the ZCC.

The new status of women

Great appreciation is often expressed for the improved and elevated status of women in the ZCC. Women speak with pride of their responsibilities in the church and urge others to make use of the opportunities confronting them. The 'man of God' is praised for introducing and upholding strict rules against the maltreatment of women by their husbands. Preoccupation with this theme is illustrated in the following excerpt from a *Ruwadzano* sermon, preached by one of the most influential ZCC women in the Gutu district:

I thank the God of Moyo [Mutendi] that he did good things to us women. Like Maria and Martha, we must be happy, because we have a bridegroom, our husband, Moyo! There is no man who can fight us now. If one of you allows your husband to beat you, it is your own fault. She has a case before God and she must reveal it [report it to the local *Ruwadzano*, from where the matter goes to the church court at Zion City for the culprit to be disciplined] because this man, Moyo, does not allow it ... Women, we must be happy because we have been taken from the claws of the lion! Others are beaten until their teeth drop out. But this 'man of God' has freed us from such a yoke so that we can chew bones with all our teeth. We stayed with Moyo a long time and learned from him. We should no longer fear because now we are free! The God of Moyo helped us [women], once the downtrodden people, so that we can now do things of value.

Much of what is said in this typical introduction to a *Ruwadzano* sermon represents aspiration about female emancipation rather than accomplishment. For in ZCC congregations (particularly during Sunday services) women are not always allowed as much freedom and prominence as they would like to have

in a world still partly dominated by men. But the *Ruwadzano* meetings provide them with a platform to vent their frustrations and to criticise the actions of domineering male office-bearers. In the quest for emancipation, the 'man of God' is presented as the divinely commissioned champion of women's rights. In situations of domestic conflict Mutendi is the unbiased arbitrator to whom an appeal is made. Because of this, ZCC women are in a position to resist false accusations of witchcraft – one of the most effective, if despicable, ways of undermining any woman's status and influence in African society. On occasion, a *Ruwadzano* officer, singled out by two prophets as a witch, appealed to Mutendi's arbitration as follows:

You teachers should not kill and destroy this house. Do not handle it as if it is your own! This matter of *kutemera uroyi* [transfer of the skills of witchcraft through incisions] is your own doctrine which you talk about every day. Leave this matter to Mr Moyo. *He* is the one who will come and distinguish between good and bad things.

Confession of sins and opposition to traditional religious practices

The older *Ruwadzano* leaders, particularly the prophetesses, whose duty it is to detect the hidden sins in the lives of church members through Spirit manifestations, regularly beseech fellow believers to confess their sins. If the hidden sins are not exposed in public, the way to eternal life is blocked. In practice the preoccupation with sin and the pressures brought to bear on the non-conformist and unruly elements in the *Ruwadzano*, in the name of the Holy Spirit, to confess their sins, is a means of group control. Under the veiled threat of forfeiting safe passage to heaven, the less responsive women are more or less coerced into confession; confessions that imply subjection to the authority of the leading women.

The sins that must be confessed are primarily those of fornication, perpetration of witchcraft and participation in traditional rituals. Next to faith-healing (as described above), *Ruwadzano* meetings therefore also provide a platform for dialogue and confrontation with the old religion. *Ruwadzano* in a sense represents witchcraft eradication! Since the nocturnal activities of the witch always threaten family life with disharmony or destruction, such practices – with women as the main perpetrators – invariably form the main target of attack. The ZCC prophetess Maria regularly preached on this subject. In one of her sermons, she said:

We must not be hard-hearted as the old people, but we must be true Christians. Some of us still have hard hearts. If I should *temera* [convey witchcraft potency to] another woman, it will surely be revealed. If these bad practices do not come out' [*kubudirira*] your name will not be written in heaven! That is why I say we must fully prepare ourselves to be worthy

members of the *Ruwadzano*. We must not kill other people's children. If you have the inclination to kill [bewitch] you must sit down and reflect: 'I am a *Ruwadzano* member.' At the gates of Moriah [where ZCC members have to confess their sins to prophets prior to participation in holy communion] a witch will find hardship. She thinks the prophets will not detect her misdeeds. But the Holy Spirit catches her out! [Much laughter at Maria's demonstration of the exposed witch's embarrassment] ... If I still use snakes [as witch familiars] I must tell the prophets about it. If I should stand here with a snake around my waist, under my dress, it will be revealed. If you take the snake under your dress and have it suckle your breasts, it will be revealed. If you suckle a *chidhoma* [psychic animal as witch familiar] it will come out. Nevertheless, we persevere in sin. Do you think all of us here today will proceed to heaven? No! Because some of us invite sin.

Sermons, however, contain more than stern admonitions concerning witchcraft. They include positive testimonies about liberation from the powers of witchcraft and related temptations. *Mai* Lydia, Maria's co-wife, testified in a *Ruwadzano* meeting how she and her family resisted participation in the *mukwerere* (traditional rain ritual) organised by their kraalhead. She had refused to produce the customary basket of finger-millet required by the kraalhead. 'I told the *sabuku*,' she said, 'that I am a Zionist and that we give our gifts to the "man of God" who intercedes for rain for our fields.'

Here, then, we find a few pointers to the nature of *Ruwadzano* confrontation with traditional religion. Essentially the church of Zion introduces a message of liberation in which the binding sins of witchcraft as perceived by women are not only exposed by a superior power, that is, the Holy Spirit, but also overcome and eliminated as a threat to life itself.

Conclusion

In the Spirit-type churches healing and evangelistic preaching clearly function as complementary activities, one dovetailing into the other, as essential components of the church's missionary outreach. Whether the key figures preached about are the 'men of God', Bishop Mutendi and his senior male healers, or women healers who tend to the sick during village visitations, the central message of 'Christian salvation through healing' remains essentially the same. *Ruwadzano* evangelism provides the platform for public verbal witness about the life-giving, healing and saving powers of Christ and the Holy Spirit at work in Africa's Zion. Thus the incarnation of Christ as healer in the African context, enacted in the real-life experience at Zion City or other healing centres, is honed into a persuasive evangelistic message aimed at conversion and recruitment.

From these sermon themes one can gauge the multiple purpose served by and the nature of the good news propagated by *Ruwadzano* meetings. Zionist

doctrines and codes of conduct are expounded regularly, whereby they become entrenched in the minds of people. This evangelistic groundwork, through its repetitive persistence and selfless service, forms the foundation for on-going Zionist church growth. It also contributes towards consolidation and spiritual growth in the existing fold. Owing to the ZCC's patriarchal leadership, which views appeals for conversion during rally services, baptism of new converts, initial teaching of novices and the formation of new congregations as the prerogatives of senior male office-bearers, it would be easy to underrate the role of women in the mission of this church. The *Ruwadzano* women almost certainly do not get full credit at church headquarters for their contribution to church expansion. I have little doubt, however, that further research will underscore the significance of their missionary contribution.

At the time, accounts of Bishop Mutendi's miracles in the field of procreation reminded people of the powerful and influential personality around which the entire movement revolved. Far from inhibiting women, the pervasive mystical presence of the 'man of God' was presented by the *Ruwadzano* preachers as a divinely inspired authority to whom oppressed and/or barren women could appeal. Despite the tendency of the bearers of good news to preach a success story of women overcoming infertility at Zion City, there was enough evidence of uncured barren women, childless widows or people who had become social misfits in their own villages, finding refuge over many years at Mutendi's holy city, for audiences to realise that even the emissary of God could not provide absolute guarantees and that he, too, was subject in the final analysis to the mystery of divine providence. Paradoxically therefore, the Zionist quest for fertility not only held out hope to childless couples in terms of having and rearing their own offspring, but also blunted the tendency in African society to absolutise the ideal of fertility by providing ample example of acceptance and care for childless women past childbearing age in the Zionist fold. Thus the crucified and resurrected Christ mirrored by the iconic leader of Zion City started to transform and humanise the discriminatory practice that tends to isolate barren women and downgrade their social status. Herein lay the real good news for African women who had lost all hope of attaining motherhood.

Ruwadzano sermons show that conversion and redemption in the context of the new Black Jerusalem have both this-worldly and otherworldly implications: liberation and emancipation for women, honour and esteem for them in their families, church and society; the promise of fulfilled motherhood; protection against the destructive evils of witchcraft and the socially manipulative machinations of witchcraft accusations; and ultimately the prospect of eternal salvation in heaven.

It is evident that patriarchal leadership in the ZCC still limits the roles played by women. The nature of their emancipation therefore requires further definition. Nevertheless, the processes of emancipation and liberation are undeniably

under way in the emergence of women as a missionary force, both in male-led and female-led AICs! As prophetesses, healers and evangelisers, they operate at the cutting edge of the church's outreach into the world. In their healing centres and village evangelisation they engage in the kind of inter-faith dialogue that both sharpens and contextualises the ideals and witness of the Christian home against the backdrop of African culture and worldview. To the extent that this immense, if partly obscure, missionary contribution is recognised and studied, the church in Africa will be enriched by tapping into an as yet unwritten mission theology at the core of its being.

Life Around The Pool*

In contrast to the majority of mainline, Western-oriented churches and the Ethiopian-type Independent Churches (Sundkler 1961:38f; Daneel 1971:350f) in Africa, which have a fairly sober form of baptism by sprinkling, the black prophetic churches – particularly the Zionists and Apostles with their obvious charismatic leanings (Daneel 1971:285f) – concentrate on a much more dynamic and dramatic experience of baptism by immersion. To them, the pool selected for baptism, whether it is found in a deep-flowing river, a shallow stream, a dam or even only a pan of muddy water, represents, for the duration of the ceremony, the biblical Jordan. The link with the Jordan of the Holy Land is so strongly felt and the conviction of participation in the Body of Christ is reinforced to such an extent by the re-enactment of the kind of baptism Christ is believed to have experienced that it has become commonplace to refer to baptism by immersion as ‘the making of Jordan’. Invariably, when the Shona Zionists, for instance, set out to baptise people in the river or dam of their choice, one can hear them calling each other: ‘Come, let’s go and make Jordan!’ (*Hendei, tondoita Jordani!*)

It is this ‘making of Jordan’ that highlights the centrality of the pool in church life. For it is not only a matter of repetitive, symbolic affirmation of belonging to the community of Christian believers, stretching back to the world of the Bible. Neither is it a fringe ritual that merely signifies the acquirement of denominational affiliation. The pool itself is the central pivot around which myths and rites, beliefs and liturgical actions revolve (Sundkler 1961:201). It is here that the prophetic congregation in active participation gives expression to the conflict between good and evil, where the passage from the old into the new life is dramatised, where faith-healing starts, wizards are confronted, evil spirits exorcised and humans are convincingly cleansed of impurity. It is at the pool that the Holy Spirit’s radical judgement of sin becomes manifest and his healing and liberating power is experienced with convincing intensity. In a sense, the ‘making of Jordan’ epitomises the black prophetic church as an actively caring community, as a place where the interplay of divine power and human involvement leads to comprehensive wellbeing, both physical and spiritual, and as a safe haven against the dreaded powers of evil. More than anywhere else the black prophetic or Spirit-type church qualifies itself as the

* An earlier version of this chapter appeared in *New Faces in Africa – Essays in Honour of Ben Marais*, eds. J. Hofmeyr and W.S. Vorster. Pretoria: Unisa Press, 1984.

pool of Jordan – in the eyes of Africans at least – as ‘a place to feel at home’ (Welbourn and Ogot 1966:102).

This facet ties in with the characteristic inclination of African people to act and dance out their religion, rather than make it the object of precise definition or contemplation. Thus one feels at home where there is a forceful manifestation of God’s power, a vivid or even sensual experience, whereby the symbolic or magical ritual activity, and what it connotes, can literally be seen and felt. Baptism by immersion in ‘Jordan’ meets this need for the dramatic religious event more than adequately. Hence the fascination of the members of the prophetic churches with the rich variation of ritual procedure they have evolved around this sacrament; and the justification for the somewhat unusual title of this article.

Instead of presenting a detailed treatise of the subject of baptism in the Independent Churches, I shall attempt first of all to portray, by way of ‘poetic-prose narration’, something of the experience of ritual participants in various baptismal contexts. This is done on the basis of participant observation of numerous baptismal ceremonies in the Shona prophetic churches in Zimbabwe, and on the assumption that an attempt to capture the gut-feeling of the ‘Jordan happening’ will lead more readily to a fair and accurate interpretation of this sacrament than the kind of rationalistic academic approach that minimises the emotive element. A brief analysis of the main features of the ceremonies will throw some light on the types of baptism found in the prophetic churches. In conclusion, such issues as baptismal symbolism, the role of the Holy Spirit, magical interpretations and the confluence of traditional religion and Christian beliefs will be considered. Such an assessment obviously requires the necessary caution, but it is essential if the contribution of the Independent Churches towards a contextual theology in the church of Africa is to be given its due.

The experience of baptism

The banks of Jordan

Out in barren country-side
where rivulet winds its way,
through maize patch, arid soil
and granite stone –
they come
Zionists of the Holy Cord
flowing robes and holy staves,
colours, radiant in the sun.
Of water’s murk
no thought

Evil we have come to break;
thus here at muddy pool
our Jordan we will make!

Face east my brother, my sister, my son!
from whence the Christ, our Saviour
will come
Oh, Spirit of God
the tip of my staff
in water I thrust.
Oh, Spirit of Christ
Your power we trust.
With water blessed
God's Spirit is here
in tongues the prophet shout:
confess! ye sons of Africa,
your sins, and have no fear!
through Jordan you'll pass
from old to new,
rejoice with praise and song,
soft, loud, louder, clear.

Distant rumble of sound
as we start to sing
humble at first
as if in plea
growing in strength
throbbing, the rhythm free;
beckoning grace
about to be found.

SONG

When I reach Jordan
lead me, my Lord,
because I have no strength
of my own.
There's a fountain of the Saviour
opened for me,
let it flow
to wash away my sin.
Saviour, Saviour
I trust in Thee
Lord, remove my fear
Saviour, Saviour
make me free,
lead me across to Thee.

Josaya stood waiting his turn. One after the other, Zionist converts moved down the bank to where baptiser Johane – up to his waist in the deep – vigorously immersed them in the pool. A Zionist since birth, Josaya had been blessed in Jordan as an infant. They called it *ropafadzo* (blessing) and did not consider it a real baptism. But now, the acceptance in Jordan was deliberate, the decision and belief his own; his parents having paved the way. With Ruka, his friend, it was different. As Apostle, he was baptised a child. Then, much later, when as a man he was moved by the Spirit, he returned to Jordan. In mind's eye Josaya could still see his friend emerge from the pool surrounded by white-robed, slow-chanting *VaPostori*.

Re-baptism? Or, a celebration of renewal of baptism? Who would know?

The evangelist at Mission school
their hearts couldn't sway;
Johane's message had come to stay:
of Christ's baptism inside the pool,
of Spirit's power:
cleansing the sick
uplifting the poor,
of purifying grace
witches turned cool.

It must be claimed to be real!
powerful act,
symbol of change,
strong hearts that beat
Zion's life around the pool;
all in one
with dancing feet.

'In the name of the Father, the Son ...' Johane's voice droned. Then suddenly, a shriek and guttural protest. Josaya saw flailing fists. It was she, Chipiwa, the quiet woman from the Mission Church. The old baptist was struck with vicious force. Take care, the demon is here! Two evangelists lunged into the pool to grab, cajole and fight. The pool erupted, sheets of water flung afar. Streaks of mud fell on his robe, but Josaya did not notice. Entranced they stood as God revealed his might. Wild-eyed she fought, breaking loose with a rawness of ugly sound. Grunt upon grunt deep from inside; a destructive, chilling protest. Then strong arms pinned her down, hands laid on head with prayer: 'Oh God of power, this satan expel!' With a wail the spirit fled. 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, my sister, Chipiwa, I baptise thee'.

From muddy depth her face emerged, the miracle now complete. Wet lips parted in winsome smile, born of inner peace. From the banks of Jordan came a sigh of relief. Then, a burst of song as the bishop's wife draped a white cloth

over Chipiwa's head. Thus, with a symbol of rebirth and purity she was led on the opposite bank into Zion's embrace.

Josaya knew that Chipiwa had come to Zion in desperation. She was barren, rejected. Prophet Jetro, in the Spirit, had seen the demon grabbing her womb. It was the angered grandmother's spirit – *mudzimu wembuya* – who would not rest. Why? Sacrificial neglect. To the lonely woman it was suggested that Jordan is the gateway to effective prophetic treatment. Inspired with new hope, she had crossed the great divide.

So, to her it was rebaptism, against the Mission's rule. Did she really mind, coming from an empty world? Was she confused, would she stay? Josaya wondered. With the demon's power broken there was new hope; in Zion City there was new care. Now, in the Holy Spirit's power she'd be well protected. The prophets knew no other way. New life for her ... to be with child!

But what of the baptism of finding the truth? Josaya remembered clearly. He had accompanied Prophet Jetro to Gwamure's village after the children had died. Behind it all loomed the fatal threat and paralyzing fear: wizard's revenge. For days the prophet sat in the village-homesteads: talking, listening, praying, quietly observing – until the Holy Spirit's presence was felt. Then, at early dawn all the villagers assembled at the pool.

Wizard's test was Jordan's quest,
all day long
through water they filed,
confessing their sins
loud and clear:
of hatred and theft
loathing and fear;
of murder and anger
adultery, adultery ...
no dignity left.

In Jordan's water there can be no lies. The Spirit of God probes too deep. So the secret history of the village was laid bare, with a message of hope for those in despair. Were the wizards killed, or expelled, as of old? No! Prophet Jetro insisted that they could heal, if placed under the Spirit's control. Therefore threats were removed by prophetic care. In the white man's church 'tis baptism's mockery! How could it be? Did not the villagers know Jordan's baptism from Jordan's test? Of course they did! Did not anxiety and fear give way to harmony? Could correctness of creed really count: when life was preserved against threat of death; an entire village baptised unto peace?

Ahead of Josaya the last of headman Muzondo's children now entered the pool. On the other side, Muzondo, old and frail, stood dripping wet. Proudly he waited

so that he could lead wife, child, kith and kin into the singing brotherhood of Jerusalem.

At verge of death the prophet had come,
for him, heavy drinker, they cared
with holy water, with comforting hands
to God they prayed,
until at last his body was healed
stricken heart swayed.
Aye! Spirit of God,
an old man is set free;
then it's right to rejoice
my wife, my brother, my daughter and son
to lead them through Jordan to thee!

Josaya wondered about the family baptism. Were all Muzondo's children converted? Did they fully understand? Some were already baptised in Mission and Ethiopian Churches. Others were people of the world. Would they in Zion stay? Who could judge their motives? Some would grow in grace. They at least respected their father's wish. As the Bible says: You must honour your father and mother! In kinship they shared the crossing of the great divide: from old to new. 'Tis wrong to stay on the other side. They, with the blood of ancient Rozvi kings in their veins: they, who respected their ancestors, have come to accept the Christ-God's authority.

At last it was his turn. Into the pool Josaya moved to where his father stood. Tired, old, Johane the baptist, shivered with cold. His swollen face, the demon's mark, could not hide the smile. Hands outstretched, he still moved with grace.

My son, my son, it is *you* who have come,
one day soon, *you* will do my work
this robe used in Jordan
you must wear.
But now: *your* re-birth in the pool;
open your heart to the Spirit's strength!
love! be blessed and pray!
your sins are forgiven,
Christ grants you new life –
new day.

Thrice mud-water's caress,
shake of head, a cough, a sigh
'tis done!
frail fingers on his brow
soft, quivering, the voice, the eyes:
'God bless you, my son!'

Together they move up the bank,
to God's commission bound

old father, believing son,
their mud-stains, their dignity
to Zion's new-born community –
of celebrating sound.

Characteristic features

In spite of the variations in the types of baptism referred to above, certain characteristic features emerge quite clearly. This is particularly manifest in the roles played by the office-bearers and by the entire congregation assembled at the pool, and in the sequence of ritual events. These features, constituting a Spirit-type baptism and representing consistency in the midst of a rich variety, require our brief consideration before a discussion of the types of baptism is attempted.

First of all, the Jordan baptism is a total, all-absorbing happening. Everybody participates! There are no passive on-lookers. The emphasis on all-inclusive participation emerges at the outset, in the shared responsibility for the preparation of the major event in the pool. Preparation concerns the ritual affirmation of the presence of the Holy Spirit and the religious conditioning of all participants, so that their actions may be pleasing and meaningful in the sight of God. The entire congregation is an active agent through the singing of Jordan songs that express the anticipation of spiritual renewal and liberation through an outpouring of the Spirit's power. Intermittent exclamations, snorts and speaking with tongues by ordinary church members serve to confirm the group's general recognition of the Holy Spirit's presence. Once the correct climate has been created at Jordan, the baptiser 'prepares' the pool through prayer, which mostly includes a plea for the presence of God. This is accompanied by symbolic activity such as thrusting a holy staff into the water of Jordan, stirring the water or forcibly diving into the pool – all of which represent the recognition and enactment of the Holy Spirit's potent presence in and around the pool. Meanwhile the prophet or prophets assist with the preparation of the neophytes for baptism, by eliciting public confessions from them. This, too, is achieved through loud speaking in tongues as if to establish or confirm the presence of the Holy Spirit. Thereby the probes for and 'prophecies' about hidden sins are presented as direct manifestations of the Spirit's involvement. To the neophyte it is important to respond truthfully under the revelatory scrutiny of the Spirit and to make a clean breast of all serious sins, lest the anger and judgement of God be provoked. For it is believed that God will permit injury or drowning in Jordan through his own or evil powers if the neophyte enters the water under false pretences. Confessions actually represent the heartbeat of baptismal preparation. The entire congregation is instrumental in bringing it about, with the prophet acting as the Spirit's mouthpiece. In it the Spirit's judgement of evil becomes manifest and the elimination of evil forces or matter

from the neophyte's body and mind takes place. In some instances this process culminates in the exorcism of an evil spirit in the waters of Jordan.

Once the baptismal preparation has taken place, the baptiser delivers a sermon. This he will do standing in the pool or on the bank of Jordan. Several New Testament passages may be used to illustrate a feature of baptism. If a baptiser anticipates exorcism, he may preach about Christ driving the spirits from the Gadarene (Mark 5) or about Paul exorcising an afflicting spirit from a slave-girl (Acts 16:16–18). Philip's baptism of the eunuch of Ethiopia (Acts 8), the classic mission command (Matthew 28:19) and the discussion between Christ and Nicodemus about rebirth (John 3) are all popular sermon themes on this occasion. Yet the most prominent theme, which recurs in virtually all baptismal sermons, is the work of John the Baptist. A similar prominence has also been noted by Sundkler (1961:208) among the Zulu Zionists and by Pauw (1960:144) among the Tswana pentecostal-type Independents. Sundkler states, for example, that 'it is because of the central role of the rite of Baptism that John the Baptist becomes the most important biblical personality in the Zionist Church. "We do everything which was done by John the Baptist" they constantly claim. When baptising in a Zulu Jordan ... they feel that they would base their behaviour on that of John the Baptist who is to them the ideal Christian prophet' (Sundkler 1961, 208).

The following excerpt from a *Ndaza* (that is, Zionists of the Holy Cord) Zionist sermon, delivered during a baptismal ceremony in Bishop David Masuka's Zion Apostolic Church in 1965, illustrates the preoccupation with John the Baptist:

This baptism we are about to conduct means the rebirth of a person, in the Spirit. We find this in John 3 where Nicodemus questions the Lord about salvation.. Jesus told him he had to be born again ... In Matthew 3 John was sent to baptise the people. In the forest of Judea he said to the people: 'Believe, because the kingdom of heaven is drawing near'. He said this to the people standing on the banks of Jordan. In the same way we are all baptised in the pool, through a three-fold immersion in the water ... Baptism means the washing away of sins, therefore, when one leaves the pool he is not free to do what he likes. Subsequent to conversion and baptism one should obey the commandments and pray perseveringly ...

Baptism does not merely mean the changing of names, whereafter one can continue doing what he wishes. The commandments must be obeyed! Non-believers will be burnt in hell while believers are saved. Believers do not commit adultery, scold, steal or bewitch people, but they pray consistently and as a result are saved ... Jesus left his place of birth to be baptised in Jordan by John the Baptist. John was reluctant, but Jesus requested the baptism, so that the law could be fulfilled. Immediately after the baptism when they came out of the water the Spirit of God ascended on Jesus from heaven in the form of a dove We are here to do the same thing, because others with greater wisdom than us have also done so. One may

ask whether the place where we are standing is really Jordan, but we must remember that according to Matthew 3 a threefold immersion is stated to be a full baptism. When the people now start coming into the water we are doing exactly what others have done in the past.

The literal and fundamentalist approach to Scripture is evident in this excerpt. A straightforward and simplistic account of the facts about John the Baptist's work and Christ's baptism underscores the need to identify with biblical events and to derive from it the kind of authenticity about which there can be no doubt. That questions can arise about the 'making of Jordan' is recognised, but this is countered with the assertion that a genuine baptism is achieved through a precise repetition of the biblical event. In other words, re-enactment of the old rite, as described in the Book, establishes truth. With this in mind, one can understand the conviction with which rebirth in the pool, the washing away of sin and the subsequent response of persevering prayer and obedience to the commandments are propagated.

Repeated reference to the commandments reflects the moralistic tendency that characterises much of Independent Church life. Against the background of tribal laws, taboos and a kinship system that regulates reciprocal behaviour between kinsmen in minute detail, it appears inevitable that stress is often placed on the conduct of the individual rather than on the acceptance of grace through faith. But preoccupation with the commandments also represents a projection of group identity. In this particular sermon the commandments were not spelled out in great detail. Invariably, however, the baptiser instructs the neophytes during this sermon, or in a series of messages following shortly after the baptism, about the specific rules they have to observe, many of which may be food taboos or ritual restrictions taken from the Old Testament. Thus the pattern of conduct that is expected of the neophyte once he or she joins the 'new community of believers' on the other side of Jordan, the code that will also identify him/her from other church groups in the future, is made clear. Together with the ritual act of confessing sins, this sermon-instruction takes the place of organised biblical and catechetical instruction with its underlying assumption of intellectual preparation as a condition for baptism, as practised in many Mission Churches.

After the sermon the candidates for baptism file into the water as their names are read out, one after the other. The baptiser immerses each person three times while he pronounces the trinitarian formula. In most Spirit-type churches the immersion takes place with both baptiser and baptisand facing east, from where the second coming of Christ is expected. The details of immersion vary considerably from group to group. Sometimes a great issue is made of the baptisand positioning his/her hands next to the head, or of moving backwards, sideways or forward into the water for immersion. Although the correctness of ritual activity is stressed, it appears that the finer detail of the actual event represents the distinctiveness of

the group in relation to other church groups, or the individual style of a renowned baptiser, rather than the efficacy of baptism itself.

As the new-born church member emerges on the other side of 'Jordan,' a senior member of the congregation will 'receive' and welcome him/her into the new fold. Symbolic activities, such as the draping of a white cloth over a woman's head to indicate purity, dressing the neophyte in new garments to illustrate the passage from old to new, or reception of the newcomer by way of a holy kiss, now take place. Part of the congregation that has assembled on the other side of the pool acts as a choir. In their singing, the mercy and salvation of God are praised in the new Zion or Jerusalem. To the new member, joining this group implies his/her symbolic integration into the body of Christian believers, the Kingdom of God, founded on African soil. Here again the total involvement of the congregation dramatising a ritual context in which symbolism acquires meaning, particularly in the experience of the newly baptised members, is apparent. It is in such a context that the acquirement of church membership is experienced by many Africans as a profound 'home-coming', an entry into the 'house of God' which he has specially prepared for His sons and daughters of the African soil.

Types of baptism

The connotations attached to baptism in the Independent Churches are not uniform (as indicated in the above narrative). Although the main objective remains the acquisition of church membership and with it incorporation into the body of Christ, baptismal ceremonies are used for faith-healing, purification, spiritual renewal and detection of wizardry. It is to this variety in intention and achievement in the ritual life around the pool that we now turn our attention.

Infant and/or adult baptism

In the Shona Spirit-type churches, as in most prophetic movements elsewhere in Africa, (Turner 1967: 188; Sundkler 1961: 201; Pauw 1960:162f) a marked preference for adult baptism prevails. This practice represents an obvious departure from that of the majority of mainline churches of the West. Turner suggests that one of the most important reasons for this change is that baptism in Africa is still to a large extent a corollary of the school rather than of the home. The decision for baptism mostly takes place at a relatively advanced age during or after schooling, since the home-life situation in Africa is not similar to that in Western Christendom. 'In general,' says Turner, 'the church is still very much in a missionary situation where it is difficult to maintain infant baptism as the norm it has become for many in the West' (Turner 1967:189). Turner points out, in addition, that the Aladura churches in Nigeria had undergone considerable influence by the Faith Tabernacle and similar churches with Baptist

views. These factors also have a bearing on the Shona churches. Faith-healing churches, in particular, have a regular flow of adults joining their ranks. One of the strongest reasons for adult baptism, however, lies in the nature of Jordan baptism itself. The emphasis on the candidates' public confession of sins and on faith as a prerequisite for entry into the pool and for rebirth to some extent inhibits infant baptism.

Nevertheless, there are exceptions! Many of the Zionist churches practise a form of infant baptism that is not considered complete, but as a blessing (*ropafadzo*) has the value of a preliminary induction into the body of believers. Others only bless infants with the laying on of hands. Whatever the nature of the infant ritual adopted by the church, a 'proper' baptism is expected to take place once the child of Zionist parents have come of age (as was described above for Josaya). Even in those Zionist groups where infant baptism is developing into a more complete ceremony for second- and third-generation infants of believing parents, rebaptism at a later stage in life – which reflects the premium on a mature individual's deliberate confession of faith and sins – is still practised with great regularity. As elsewhere in Africa (Oosthuizen 1968:187) this amounts to the inclusion of both infant and adult baptism in quite a number of prophetic churches, despite the explicit preference for the latter.

As the largest of all Independent Churches in Zimbabwe, the African Apostolic Church of Johane Maranke (Daneel 1971:315f), popularly referred to as the 'Apostles' (*vaPostori*), is distinguished from the Zionist churches in that it attributes the same validity to infant as to adult baptism. Infant baptism to the *vaPostori* does not merely imply a preliminary induction or a blessing, but a complete incorporation into the body of believers, which includes all Christian responsibilities and privileges. As a result, the young *vaPostori* are expected to grow in the faith to which their parents have introduced them. The best example of the church's recognition of the full status of all its baptised members can be witnessed during the holy communion ceremonies when everybody who has been allowed by the Holy Spirit to enter the holy enclosure, from infant to adult, partakes in the sacrament of bread and wine. The significance attached to infant baptism, however, does not preclude *vaPostori* from being rebaptised as adults (as was mentioned in the narrative above). Such rebaptisms are not experienced as a relativising of infant baptism or as a cheapening of God's grace, but are generally viewed as an affirmation of what has gone before, based on individual faith which has matured and which, once more, requires symbolic, ritual expression. In the absence of an explicit and systematised theology, the recurrence of baptisms holds no great problems for the Shona Independents. The same applies elsewhere. Appiah, the founder of the Musama DiscoChristo Church in Ghana, for example, was baptised three times: the first when he himself was filled by the Holy Spirit, the second when he received power over evil spirits, and the third time when the Holy Spirit entered his

followers (Oosthuizen 1968:131). A clear distinction should, however, be made between the various kinds of rebaptism. In the same church there can be rebaptism of members to celebrate the renewal of their infant baptisms, or repeated baptisms of individuals for purificatory, exorcistic or healing purposes. According to Sundkler (1961:209) this latter type of rebaptism 'is the transition stage from baptism as a sacrament over to lustral ablutions'. Then there is also the rebaptising of new members who have already been baptised in other churches. As in the Aladura churches of Nigeria, the official policy of numerous Shona Spirit-type churches allows for the admission of the members of certain churches (mostly those considered to 'have the Spirit') without baptism, while in practice virtually all such newcomers are rebaptised. According to Turner (1967:196-7) this rebaptism is mostly for one or more reasons: in the previous church baptism took place during infancy and therefore could not be genuine; the previous baptism lacked the completeness of immersion or for other reasons was experienced by the new member as inadequate; and baptism is interpreted as a mode of entry into a particular denomination, as a result of which the promise to abide by the laws of the new church to some extent overrides the incorporation into Christ and hence into the church universal as His Body. Among the Shona, the inclination to interpret baptism in terms of denominational initiation is also noticeable. Yet it remains difficult to assess the motives of recruiting baptisers and prospective candidates from other churches. Motives that may appear to be fairly superficial at the outset often prove to be undergirded by a deep need for belonging and for a new meaningful identity. The ritual at the pool, moreover, can be instrumental in transforming the neophyte's anticipation of a mere switch of denomination into a vivid experience of being drawn into the Body of Christ. Thus the outcome of the pool experience to many who had previously belonged to other churches can be a blend of denominational initiation, a demonstration of willingness to accept the new church's code of behaviour, as well as in induction into the Body of Christ. Considering that such rebaptisms, to some at least, constitute the first genuine experience of being incorporated into Christ's church, in its meaningfully contextualised appearance in Africa, an over-hasty judgement of this phenomenon, on theological grounds, should be avoided.

With their blessing and semi or full baptismal ceremonies for infants, the Shona Independents have to some extent succeeded in relating the sacraments to their traditional background, in the sense inferred by Mbiti (1971:117). 'Infant baptism in Ukambani,' according to Mbiti, 'would lend itself readily to the traditionally rooted ideas and practices of giving names to children and humanising the new-born babies ... Only when this rite is performed does a baby become truly a human being, a person and not just a thing or an IT. This traditional practice and the concepts that go with it can be transposed to convey the central meaning of Christian Baptism as a Sacrament of birth and incorporation into the Body of Christ'. Although the Shona did not traditionally practise such elaborate name-



Plate 24: A pool or river is prepared as 'Jordan' prior to baptismal ceremony. Facing east in prayer and song Maranke Apostles affirm the Holy Spirit's presence at a mud pool (top) ZCC novices pray ardently for Spirit-deliverance in 'Jordan' – prior to their baptism (bottom)



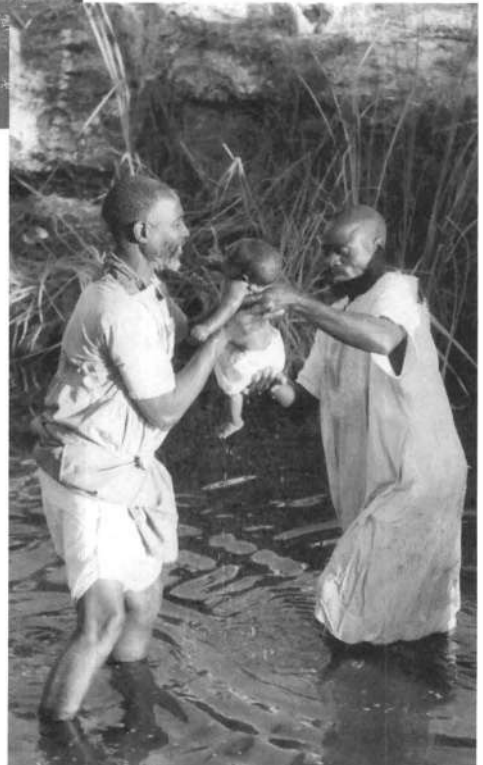
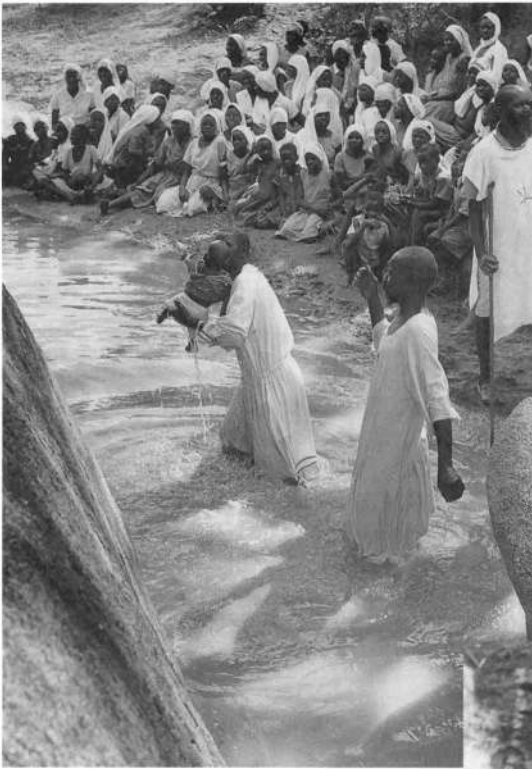


Plate 25: Infant baptism by Maranke Apostles. The infant receives a holy kiss after three-fold immersion (top) and is subsequently handed over by baptizer to receiving officer on far side of Jordan to symbolize passage to community of christian believers (bottom)

giving and infant-humanising ceremonies as those described by Mbiti for the Akamba, the Zionist blessing and Apostolic baptismal ceremonies are indeed a meaningful Christian transformation of the old rites of passage that aimed at inducting infants into the family of humanity. Through these Christian ceremonies the infants become truly human, for despite their inability to confess, they are fully or at least potentially reborn and incorporated into the Body of the only true Man. This is particularly true of infant baptism as practised by the *vaPostori*. By naming the infant at Jordan, a new identity is conferred on him/ her, an identity moulded on the personality of Christ and conditioned by the new brotherhood which both honours and transcends traditional kinship ties. This new identity is repeatedly reinforced and given substance through the inclusion of baptised children in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Baptism as a condition for faith-healing

Faith-healing has always been one of the major sources of attraction in the Spirit-type Churches. In a survey of the Shona prophetic movements, an average of up to 60 per cent of all the members interviewed indicated that faith healing was a major factor that had contributed to their seeking membership (Daneel 1974: chapter 3). An analysis of their testimonies clearly showed that they considered themselves to have been healed or that they had observed this happen to a relative or acquaintance and they considered the source of the healing power, officiated by the prophetic healers, to be the Christian God of the Bible, with particular emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit.

Whenever an outsider seeks assistance in a Zionist or Apostolic faith-healing community, such as Chipiwa (above), who as a Dutch Reformed Church member sought a cure against barrenness in Bishop Mutendi's 'Zion City', a number of group-integrating factors are brought into play. The 'patient' is exposed to testimonies, sermons and songs in daily prayer meetings and healing ceremonies. These provide a challenge to outsiders to consider the benefits of church membership. The songs refer to the healing power of Jesus Christ, through the hands of the church leader. The testimonies of leading women in the *Ruwadzano* (women's association) almost always refer to the overcoming of barrenness. *Mai* Ezekiah, for instance, on occasion preached as follows at Zion City:

The God of Bishop Mutendi has granted me four children after years of barrenness. We thank you, God of Moyo (Mutendi), because you have visited us. When we were young we journeyed to Zion. The women of the Reformed Church scoffed at us and our parents beat us. But we persisted. Now we have love and security! Peace in Zion! *Godzo* Zion!

This kind of testimony generates a sense of security in the face of affliction and holds out the prospects of a cure. In addition, the outsider patients are

immediately integrated into the healing colony's agricultural activities, which establish the traditional principle of reciprocity: the patient responds to the faith-healing care of healers by doing menial tasks in the fields or helping with the upkeep of 'Zion City'. A sense of belonging is enhanced by the prophetic healers spending a great deal of time with the patients, diagnosing their problems through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, praying for and with them and counselling them. Psychologically this is extremely important because the patient is made to feel at home; he or she experiences genuine consideration and invariably finds a meaningful identity and purpose in life. In the process of identification with fellow patients and church officials a sense of self-respect and dignity is generated, for during each church service or healing ceremony the involvement of patients, their own centrality and importance in the eyes of God and of the prophetic community are accentuated.

It is against this background that one can understand the effective impact of the subtle pressure brought to bear by the prophetic healers on their patients. In 'Zion City' they will at least suggest that the patient stays long enough to see and consult with the main leader, the 'man of God'. Their diagnostic prophecies also make it quite clear that the best chance of a cure is only achieved through initiation into the church by way of the Jordan baptism. Only after the Spirit has cleansed the newcomer in Jordan, it is suggested, can both prophet and the patient pray more effectively and perseveringly for a cure. Only then does the Spirit's healing power become fully manifest in the life of the patient. Somehow the climactic experience of the Holy Spirit's presence at Jordan and the patient's participation in the group's affirmation of this potent, sanctifying and purificatory force becomes a condition for God's healing intervention.

There can be little doubt that prophetic healers exploit the need of outsider patients for a cure as an inducement for Jordan baptism, which they then interpret as a full denominational initiation, whether the patient had previously belonged to another church or not. Nevertheless, many prophets are careful not to make Jordan baptism an absolute pre-condition for their own services or for the work of the Holy Spirit. On the whole they recognise that the Holy Spirit is not subject to human control. The case studies of numerous Zionist and Apostolic members reveal that faith-healing actually took place well in advance of immersion in Jordan.

The motives of patients participating in the Jordan baptism vary considerably. To some, it is merely part of the treatment and they allow themselves to be baptised without any intentions of becoming full members of the prophetic movement. These people do not regard the faith-healing colony as an end-station and will move elsewhere in search of a cure without hesitation if the treatment is considered ineffective. Such movement contributes to a 'fluidity of church membership', marked to a large extent by spells of superficial church affiliation.

Others again may go through Jordan with similar motives, but then gradually grow into the faith-healing community and may eventually testify to a very genuine conversion experience. This even happens without a cure of the original malady being effected. I have come across barren women who have lived for years in faith-healing communities, who have philosophically accepted that they will have no children, but who have, in spite of disappointment, become staunch members of the prophetic church concerned. In still other cases the Jordan experience coincides with a strong conviction that from the outset a meaningful integration into the church of Christ is achieved.

Baptism and purification

It has been pointed out by several observers that some Independents have turned baptism into purification rites. According to Oosthuizen (1968:186), baptism has been interpreted by the Independents in terms of the traditional context where purification, as a *rite de passage*, takes place, especially during the transition from one stage of life to another. The dirt of the old stage has to be washed away with the purpose of establishing contact with the supernatural. Beyerhaus (1969:4–13) judges rather severely when he states that the Zulu Zionists have completely changed the meaning of baptism into a pagan act of purification in order to be healed. Sundkler's assessment (1961:202), by way of contrast, is much more constructive, but he nevertheless indicates the tendency of Zulu Zionists to turn baptism into a purification rite which cleanses of magical pollution and which should be repeated in order to accumulate its healing and redeeming power. Preference is given by the Zulus to deep and/or running water to enhance the symbolism of a complete immersion which rapidly removes sin, sickness and pollution. The repetitive element transforms the sacrament into lustral ablutions, or, as Sundkler (1961:209) says, 'seen from the other angle: daily or weekly purification rites are the constant repetition and re-enactment of the death-and-resurrection drama in the baptism'. Zulu Zionist prophets deliberately reject the traditional purification (*ukuphothula*) rites as demonic. They give preference to such terms as *ukuhlambulula* ('to wash' or 'to make thin') and *ukusefa* (from the Afrikaans verb 'te sif' that is, 'to sieve') which connote the idea of liberating or unbinding a person and setting him/her apart through the 'sieving' process (Sundkler 1961:210).

Elsewhere in Africa different trends emerge. In the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in Nigeria, there is no overt indication of baptism developing into a purification ritual (Turner 1967:196). Compared with the Zulu, the Tswana tribes traditionally did not develop elaborate cleansing rituals connected with rivers or pools. As a result, baptism by immersion in Tswana Independent Churches has, as Pauw (1960:194) indicates, no close morphological parallel in traditional Tswana rites. Pauw regards the tendency of some of the Taung churches to base their purification rites on baptism rather than on traditional rites as a direct

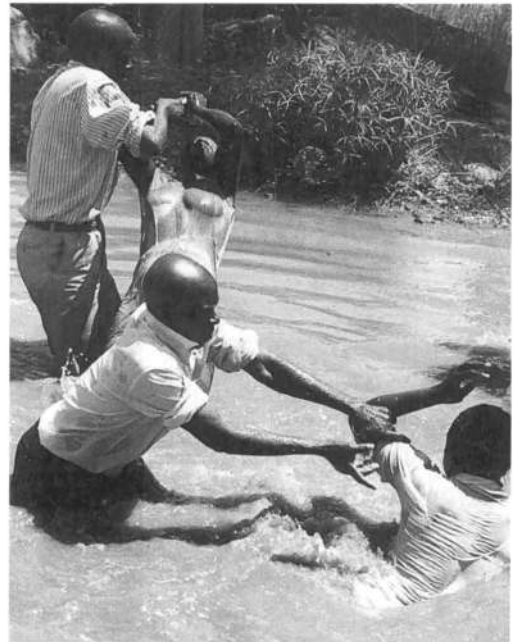


Plate 26: Demon possession and exorcism occur during baptismal ceremonies. Young woman (top) and an expectant mother (bottom) fight ZCC baptisers as the possessing spirits resist their expulsion

result of the magical interpretation of this induction ceremony, whereby it is considered to contain a certain inherent efficacy. In other words, purification from pollution is obtained through the correct ritual procedure, in the same manner as salvation is safeguarded through a correctly performed baptismal ceremony (Pauw 1960:195). Pauw's (1960:166) description of some baptismal ceremonies, where *all* the people present pass through the pool – some to be incorporated for the first time into the church and others for the sake of healing or the preservation of health – suggests, in addition, that Tswana baptismal ceremonies can contain both salvific and purificatory connotations.

The Shona Spirit-type churches resemble the Tswana Independents insofar as their traditional background contains a lesser emphasis on purification in rivers than that of the Zulu. Traditional ritual cleansing among the Shona did include such practices as a wizard swimming across a river or casting his evil medicines into a deep pool as a sign of rejecting malignant intent and practice. Yet, the parallels between these ancient rites and baptism by immersion are not very prominent. Neither would it be valid to argue as exclusively as Pauw does for the Tswana that the magical nature of Jordan baptism accounts for its purificatory significance. I shall argue below that the magical interpretation of baptism is not an overriding feature in the Shona churches. The need for purification derives both from biblical and traditional motives. Sin, in the biblical sense of the word, and evil forces, traditionally conceived, are destructive forces and should be dealt with resolutely. Only the power of God can achieve this and insofar as he is potently present in the manifestation of the Holy Spirit at the pool, it stands to reason that Jordan baptism, among other things, will acquire the connotation of purification.

Significantly, however, the Shona prophetic leaders, unlike the Zulu, do not turn baptism into a purification rite with the exclusive aim of cleansing people from magical pollution. Neither do they repeat it to the same extent in an effort to accumulate healing or purificatory power. It follows that baptismal ceremonies are seldom conducted with the sole or explicit aim of effecting purification, healing or exorcism. These are important and additional benefits, but subordinate to the primary aim of ritually expressing the acquirement of salvation, rebirth and church membership. The purpose, for example, of Chipiwa's participation in Jordan baptism was not exorcism but incorporation into the Body of Christ. To her, exorcism of an afflicting, evil spirit became an integral part of her baptism, and as such represented a vitally important introduction to future faith-healing treatment. Yet the powerful expulsion of the invading spirit was not an end in itself, but the unique manner in which the Holy Spirit asserted his reign, while she was passing from the old into the new world.

This does not mean that repetition of the baptismal experience, for the sake of purification or healing is entirely excluded. In the course of a baptismal ceremony, previously baptised members at times do follow the novices through

Jordan for such secondary purposes. Repetitive spells of spirit possession after baptism could, in the case of Chipiwa, lead to a return to Jordan. In such an event the 'rebaptism' is clearly distinguished by the baptiser from the first more significant and therefore 'real' baptism. Aimed at a follow-up exorcism, it is attributed the value of a supplementary rather than a full baptism. At no stage will it become the sole objective of a full baptismal session at Jordan. For despite the centrality of Jordan in church life and the unique nature of Spirit-manifestation at the pool, the Shona prophetic churches have, on the whole, developed an adequate range of purificatory and exorcistic activities (Daneel 1974:239f) to deal with demonic or destructive threats under any circumstance. During services or special faith-healing sessions such aims are achieved through any one or a combination of ritual activities such as the laying on of hands, prodding with a holy staff, forceful prayer, drinking or sprinkling of holy water and tying demon-possessed persons down with holy cords.

Family baptism

Kinship plays such a significant role in the Independent Churches that most of them can be called 'family churches'. It is not unusual for a small *Ndaza* Zionist church to consist of a few congregations, each led by a younger brother, son or nephew of the bishop. In Bishop Forridge's Zion Christian Church – a splinter group of Mutendi's Zion Christian Church – all congregations are controlled by kinsmen of the bishop, and in the central congregation at church headquarters both the evangelist and the prophet are the bishop's sons, while his wives and daughters act as choristers, drummers and dancers during services. In the larger movements, too, key positions are reserved for relations. In Mutendi's Zion City his sons and sons-in-law play an important part in a ritual, organisational and judicial-authoritative context. Johane Maranke's widely dispersed Apostolic movement obviously cannot appoint relatives of the leader in each circuit. Nevertheless, the right to administer the sacraments is reserved for Abero and Makebo, his senior sons and successors. This gives the principal leaders of the *vaPostori* an effective means of control whereby they can prevent the initiative from passing into other hands.

The baptism of Headman Muzondo's family (above) suggests that kinship plays an important role from the outset, that is, when the official entry into the church takes place at Jordan. Family baptism forms part of the expansion strategy of most Independent Churches. In its widest connotation the binding authority of the clan head is used to persuade the heads of related households to have the members of their households baptised en masse. A more restricted manifestation of this trend is that of a family head having his wife, children and possibly a few members of his extended family unit baptised when he joins a church. At times coercive circumstances are exploited by church leaders to bring about family baptisms. Prophetic healers may, for instance, urge an entire

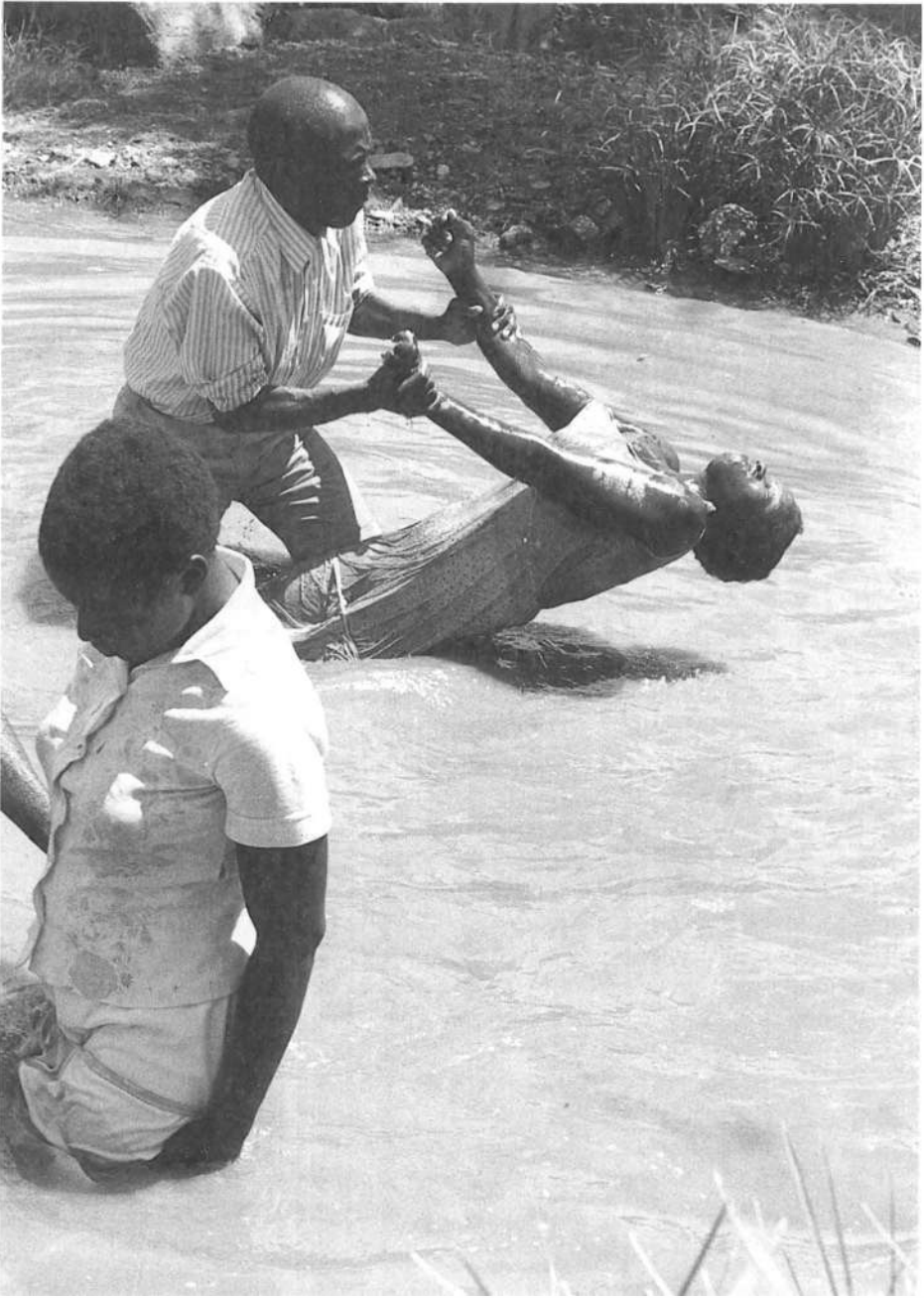


Plate 27: The resistance of possessing spirits can last for length of time before they 'flee' from the presence of the all-powerful Holy Spirit – leaving both baptiser and novice tired and dazed

family to be baptised as a condition for effective faith-healing treatment for one of its members. The testimony of prophetic healer Torera of Johane Maranke's Apostolic movement bears this out clearly. He gave an account of how he and his wife visited hospitals and traditional doctors desperately in search of a cure for his sick child, before they eventually turned to the *vaPostori*.

When the Apostles came,' he said, 'they prayed for my child. They then rose from their knees and addressed me as follows: 'We must baptise you in order to obtain the power of praying for your child.' I told them I had no objection if they started by baptising my wives so that I could stand and watch the procedure and make up my mind. Thereupon they asked me: 'Don't you want your child?' I told them: 'I want my child!' We quarrelled until they said they would stop praying for the child. At this stage I consented. So I took my whole family with me to Jordan. We were all baptised and then returned to the homestead. There the praying for my son was resumed until he was healed.

In both Muzondo's and Torera's cases, as in numerous other family baptisms – whatever the circumstances of the family unit concerned – one notices the tendency of the traditionally recognised seniority of the head of the kin group to override the individuality of related kinsmen. This need not imply that individual conversion, in the New Testament sense of the word, is minimised. For most prophetic leaders emphasise such conversion and they appear to accept that some individuals who were not yet 'ready' when they were baptised will spiritually mature in the course of time. Nevertheless, on the occasion of baptism itself, the authority of the family head can override other considerations to such an extent that the converted state, the spiritual growth, or the conviction of family members is not sufficiently considered. Some kinsmen, as suggested in the narrative on Muzondo's family baptism, may have little or no intention of joining the church concerned, since they are active members of other churches. This will not deter them, however, on this festive occasion from showing their respect and loyalty to their senior kinsman by participating in the crossing of Jordan. Neither will such participation prevent them subsequently from attending worship in their own churches as they had done before. Family baptisms, therefore, only seem to have a decisive influence on the lives of the children of the converted family-head and on those adults who have previously had no or only a loose affiliation with another church. It seems that it is generally accepted that those who participate in a family baptism out of respect for a senior kinsman are not at fault, but that they are considered to celebrate in unison a memorable family event which is both pleasing to God and a legitimate manifestation of belonging to the wider family network of Christian believers.

Another feature of family baptisms is that official roles may be created for members of the baptised kin-group on the basis of natural leadership potential and/or seniority rather than spiritual ability or maturity. Naturally some eventually 'grow into' their offices, in the same way as spiritual growth may



Plate 28: During periods of drought baptism amounts to a 'mud-bath' in a vlei where a hole has been dug for the occasion. Nobody complains about such conditions, for baptism has many manifestations in an agrarian society

lead to a genuine conversion experience after baptism. Others drop out or try unavailingly to meet the requirements. The responsibilities of a particular office at times even cause embarrassment to the prematurely appointed kinsman. Bishop Forridge's son, for instance, admitted that despite his early appointment as a prophet, he could never get beyond speaking in tongues because in spite of years of persevering hope and spiritual preparation the Holy Spirit did not send him any revelations.

One cannot ignore the discrepancies and weaknesses in family baptisms. The uniqueness of the sacrament can indeed be superseded by kinship loyalties, desire for expansion and other considerations. Nevertheless, such baptisms also imply the radical or gradual transformation of kinship obligations in the church context. In the dramatic event of a family unit passing through the pool and joining the new community of believers on the other side, the transposition of the traditional to the christological sense of kinship is evident.

Village baptism as a wizard-detecting ceremony

The theologically most debatable, yet in terms of resolving social conflict, the most intriguing and spectacular type of baptism is the one referred to above as the 'baptism of finding the truth' at Gwamure's village. Not all prophetic churches acknowledge such village baptisms and they are not as common as those aimed at denominational initiation. For this is the work of a rare breed of prophet, those individualist Apostles or Zionists who are virtually obsessed with their calling of combating wizardry in the name of the Holy Spirit, those roving prophets who travel far and wide when they are summoned by afflicted villagers to conduct a large-scale 'wizard hunt'. These are the freelance prophetic operators who continually run the risk of being prosecuted under the Witchcraft Suppression Act, which forbids the imputation of wizardry. Convinced, however, of the Holy Spirit's guidance, these prophets are not daunted by legal action against them, and quite a few have served out prison sentences for what they consider to be unquestionably the 'work of God'. Continually on the move, these prophets rarely concentrate on establishing stable congregations. Their aim with village baptisms, after all, is to fight wizardry, to ferret out the truth about social conflict whereby peace can be restored, and not in the first place to recruit or initiate new members into their churches. Even when they succeed in making new disciples, the short spells of stay in a particular village give them little chance of consolidating their leadership.³²

Evaluation

Having looked at the types of baptism in the Shona prophetic movement, one can at least say that a process of creative indigenisation is under way. This inevitably implies a confluence of old and new, a process which may both

clarify and obscure the real meaning of baptism. It remains a hazardous task to determine exactly how the Jordan event is interpreted in the different church groups under varying circumstances, and whether the majority of participants perceive of the essentials with sufficient clarity so that they are not waylaid by syncretistic misconceptions. Certain discernible trends emerge, however. These we shall consider briefly, conscious that critical comment or commendation should be of a preliminary and tentative rather than a definitive or judgemental nature.

Baptism as sacrament

It is in the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist that Christian worship is at its most intense and real. Freytag (1946:395) therefore correctly maintains that 'all walling-up of Church life in confessional tradition, in a blind alley of self-satisfied self-assurance, is constantly challenged by the Sacrament'. Considering the lack of a confessional tradition in the prophetic churches, at least in the Western sense of the word, the danger of introverted stagnation is not as great as in Western denominations. Nevertheless, the centrality of the baptismal pool as the main pivot around which religious life revolves certainly acts as a challenge for continued reorientation about the central truths of the Christian message as well as the significance of belonging to the Body of Christ. The imaginative use of symbolism, the very real enactment of the passage from an old to a new life, and the involvement of the entire congregation during the baptismal ceremony are all positive features that make the sacrament of baptism come to life.

A valid question, however, would be whether, in view of all the additional connotations attached to baptism (purification, faith-healing and wizard-detection), the sacramental nature of this rite remains intact. It is my impression that in the majority of Shona prophetic churches a fairly clear distinction is maintained between 'real' baptism as an initiatory rite into the Body of Christ, and baptism with supplementary objectives. The overriding concern in baptismal sermons with the baptism of Christ, which transforms and fulfils the Johannine baptism, is indicative of a literally interpreted but sound theological basis for baptism. Although detailed theological statements are lacking, it seems fair to state that at the intuitive level briefly in the prophetic movement briefly strong affirmation of Mbiti's observation that 'already the whole life of Jesus, between His baptism in the hands of John and His resurrection, is a baptismal act by means of which men must be incorporated into Him' (Mbiti 1971:97). Mbiti, in addition, argues that Matthew 28:19 does not constitute an independent basis of dominical authority for this sacrament, but by itself is the result of the sacramental transformation already enacted in the life and ministry of Jesus. These finer theological distinctions are obviously not made by the Independents. Yet their efforts to relate their Jordan experience primarily to the

baptism of Christ, to his death and resurrection, as well as to the command of Matthew 28:19, form the basis for a distinctly Christian ceremony.

Then there is also the identification of baptism, as initiatory rite, with rebirth and salvation. Misconceptions are at times evident, such as the inclination of some Independents to attribute a certain inherent efficacy to the ritual itself, whereby re-birth and salvation are 'achieved' virtually by way of ritual manipulation, instead of through an act of God's grace. On the other hand, the spiritual maturity of numerous prophetic baptisers is such that they are aware of these pitfalls, as a result of which they emphasise in their teachings the qualitative change of the inner state and entire life of the individual in relation to God as a condition for meaningful participation in baptism. The identification of baptism with salvation in some respects even enriches the sacrament. For, in the African holistic interpretation, salvation is not only a future, spiritualised state, but a comprehensive condition spanning all sectors of life; a situation in which the Christian is actively involved in realising God's kingdom here and now (Daneel 1983a:40). In other words, entry into that kingdom via Jordan implies much more than the prospects of eventual entry into heaven. It opens new perspectives for responsible participation, as a member of the community of believers in the religious life of the institutionalised church as well as in the socio-economic and political spheres (Daneel 1983b:57f).

It has been argued above that faith-healing, exorcism and purification form an integral part of baptism and seldom become the exclusive aim of baptismal ceremonies at the expense of the central motive of initiation into the Body of Christ. In this respect the Shona prophetic churches do not have the clear switch from baptism as sacrament to that of lustral ablutions that Sundkler describes for the Zulu Zionists. It is the implementation of village baptisms as a kind of wizard-detecting device, however, which raises the problem of a possible corruption of the spiritual meaning of this initiatory rite. The addition of new objectives and a wide range of ritual (and tribal court) activities, foreign to the essence of baptism, is bound to lead to misinterpretation and degradation of this sacrament, especially in the eyes of non-Christian participants. Another negative implication of this rite is the stigmatising of certain individuals, which at times triggers a process of discrimination contrary to the Christian spirit of love and sympathetic understanding. Accusations of witchcraft mainly concern women, and the pressures brought to bear on them facilitate subjection and control that retard the important process of female emancipation. In addition, the rivalry between religious groupings in some instances is sometimes aggravated rather than relieved during village baptisms. This is particularly true if a wizard-hunting prophet lacks impartiality and publicly ridicules the members of other churches.

On the positive side it should be pointed out that it is fairly generally recognised that a baptismal wizard-hunt does not constitute a sacramental ceremony in

the ordinary sense. It is an adapted rite aimed at eliciting the truth rather than facilitating denominational initiation. As an imitation of true baptism it remains theologically questionable, but it is psychologically of the utmost significance. The entire procedure reflects the prophet's concern with the persistent traditional notions of evil. He appreciates the need of his people to combat anti-social and disrupting forces, the need to do something about these forces through symbolic action which rings true according to African perception. Having himself experienced at the existential level what fear for the destructive powers of wizardry is, he is in a position to introduce the Christian message of God's liberation from fear and his protection against evil powers in a realm frequently dominated by stark terror. The prophet, moreover, has a reconciliatory function in relation to those accused of perpetrating wizardry, when he opposes excessive punitive measures in the proceedings of the village court. Through incorporation of the wizards in his church, the prophet demonstrates an attitude of sympathetic understanding whereby he enhances the prospects of an improved social status of the guilty parties in the village. Thus he staves off their complete ostracism. This attitude reflects an understanding of the biblical message of reconciliation, forgiveness and brotherly love, and a willingness to put it into practice at a level of complex relationships. It also shows an awareness that God is the ultimate judge of human beings, which by implication calls for restraint and care in the treatment of those who have misbehaved. Any criticism of village baptisms should therefore take cognisance of this positive process of transformation whereby the more limited sense of temporary security derived from traditional magic increasingly culminates in an awareness of being in the protective hands of an almighty God.

Confessions

Confessions play an important role in the Shona prophetic movement not only at Jordan, but also at weekly services, faith-healing ceremonies and particularly during preparations for participation in the Eucharist. The prophetic check on sinners is not intended to be a discriminatory measure, but a means of purifying God's people so that they may be worthy of entering the pool for baptism, of receiving God's healing or of entering the holy sanctuary to partake of the sacrament of bread and wine. As stated above, the prophet or prophets eliciting confessions represent the Holy Spirit; their probes for hidden sins are aimed at complete confessions whereby the anger and judgement of God can be averted. The question arises, of course, whether this practice always achieves the desired end. It appears that a magical trend marks some of the confessions, whereby the act of 'speaking out' acquires an efficacy of its own, regardless of an inner attitude of real contrition or humility. Under the pressures brought to bear by persuasive prophets and an attentive congregation, it is more than likely that circumstance rather than inner conviction conditions the confessions of participants. Nor is there any doubt about this practice forming the core of

a powerful prophetic control system. The repetitive revelation of hidden sins at various ceremonies provides the prophets with a fund of information about fellow church members and places them in a position of manipulative authority at least in relation to submissive or easily influenced followers. This system therefore is open to abuse.

On the other hand there can be no doubt about the salutary effect of public and private confessions on the lives of numerous individuals. The exposure of secret deeds, hidden forces and destructive motives often eases the troubled conscience and provides a new incentive for spiritual or quality of life improvement. Sundkler has stated that for the Zulu Zionists no confession is regarded as complete until sexual transgressions are mentioned by the baptisee (Sundkler 1961:211). A similar emphasis is noticeable among the Shona. Yet the destructive power of such 'heated' sins as anger and jealousy causes these to be considered equally serious. Confessions related to wizardry more often than not appear to benefit the guilty party. Potential witches, for instance, who experience call-dreams and develop a sense of guilt because of their contact with the spirits of deceased witches often respond willingly to the proddings of prophets to talk freely in front of the congregation about their problems. They request the intercession of their fellow church members, witness to the spiritual assistance they have received in overcoming temptation through such intercession, and are often markedly relieved of inner frustration. Even self-confessed witches benefit from recounting their nocturnal activities to prophets.

Confession therefore not only forms a convenient part of the prophetic control-system, it stimulates spiritual growth, liberates from fear and generally appears to be one of the ways in Africa in which Christ demonstrates his dominion over all powers, including the secret and terrifying.

Baptismal symbolism

The centrality of the pool in the Spirit-type Churches is not incidental. It goes back to the symbolic significance of water in both the Christian and the African religious traditions. It involves an ambivalent symbolism, because man has always found water cool, refreshing and therefore life-giving, or in a flood or storm as threatening and destructive. In the Christian faith, water symbolises 'death and resurrection', not only in the Jordan baptism, but from the creation to the last judgement, through the flood, the atonement and regeneration. Similar ambivalent parallels are discernible in Shona traditional religion, where water connotes both destruction and new life.

One of the praise names of Mwari, the Shona high-god, was *Dzivaguru* (the great pool), which in the first place referred to this deity as the rain-giver. For all its sexual, fertility and life-giving connotations, the great pool was an ominous

place where the great water-snake lived. Paintings of this threatening reptile were found in caves near the high-god's cult centre in the Matopo hills.

In addition, the crocodile is associated with *Dzivaguru*. In the Indonesian religions an ambivalent deity was symbolised by a bird on a totem-pole, representing the male aspect, and a water-snake, wound round the totem pole, representing the female aspect of this deity. It is likely that the soapstone Zimbabwe bird with the crocodile on the stylus (immediately below the bird) had similar connotations. Whereas the bird symbolised Mwari as Wokumusoro ('the one above'; another of his praise-names), the crocodile connoted something of the mystery, darkness and also the unpredictable fatality of the 'great pool'. The female connection here is obvious, for the crocodile is one of the most feared familiars of the female witch. It is believed that once an embittered witch has suckled a crocodile, she can direct it at will to destroy any of her enemies. In the sense, then, of water or the high-god 'himself' harbouring the water-snake and the crocodile, we find the theme of evil, the destroyer of life, the unpredictability of wellbeing symbolically expressed.

Traditionally, the 'resurrection' or new life theme emerges even more vividly than that of destruction in water symbolism. Mwari restores life when he gives rain after the drought. As life-giver, his main concerns, for which he was and still is regularly petitioned at the oracular cult centre at Matorjeni (Matopo hills), are to grant both rain and female fertility. Consequently a good rainy season and ample water supplies, apart from their immediate agricultural significance, symbolise new life in terms of enhanced crop, animal and human fertility. Water also symbolises the preservation of life through healing. For it is in the great dam or river pool that the 'city of the *njuzu* spirits' (*guta renjuzu*) is situated. These benevolent water spirits provide female 'doctors' (*nganga*) with medicinal knowledge and herbs so that they can successfully heal their patients, particularly barren women. In addition, life is preserved through reconciliation between the living and the dead. When the anger of neglected ancestors threatens to become a destructive force, their living descendants sacrifice goats next to a stream of water to 'cool down' the 'heat' generated by the anger of the ancestors. Here water becomes the symbol of forgiveness of 'sin' – the 'sin' of neglect against the ancestors, which, in the traditional African worldview, represents a serious threat against social harmony. Finally, it should be noted that traditionally the pool already symbolised in a limited way the passage from old to new. For a male sorcerer was made to swim across a pool as a sign of dissociating himself from his harmful practice, before the community could accept his switch towards a more constructive role in society.

It is against this traditional background that the symbolism of Jordan baptism should be interpreted. Immersion undoubtedly has great significance in vividly expressing humanity's sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ. The old symbols and symbolic activity are given new content. Instead of the traditional

ritual unit appearing as spectators at the pool to watch the *nganga* disappear in the water to fetch medicine from the *njuzu* spirits, to observe the slaughtering of a goat for the ancestors or see the *muroyi* (sorcerer) swimming across the water, the prophetic congregation itself symbolically creates the setting around the pool for a meaningful transition: the prophesying prophets represent God's judgement of the old sinful order, the confessing candidates indicate man's willingness to respond to God's call, the baptiser gives ritual expression to man's identification with the new way in Christ, and the singers on the other side of Jordan symbolically represent the kingdom of God (already there and yet to come) into which the new believers are now incorporated. Instead of the destructive threat at the pool being primarily associated with the water-snake or the crocodile, it is now Satan, the destroyer, manifesting himself as a demon-spirit, who must be overcome in the pool. At this particular point, however, some of the traditional imagery remains. Sundkler describes how the Zulu Zionist prophet first of all has to overcome mysterious monsters in the pool before he can commence his baptismal work (Sundkler 1961:305). As a result it is dangerous and awe-inspiring to enter the pool. Similar trends, though less prominent, are also found in the Shona churches. I was told of several instances of baptisers or candidates being drowned as a result of evil forces overpowering them in the water. This prospect obviously heightens the need for the protective power of the Holy Spirit at Jordan, which explains the often-elaborate, symbolic activities of 'preparing' the water. Hence the thrust of the holy staff into the water, the diving of the baptiser into the pool or even the forceful immersion of candidates as if to act out convincingly the dominion of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, over evil forces.

To the Western observer whose intellectualism has left him a stranger in the field of intuitive, symbolic language, the question inevitably arises whether this highly dramatised symbolism of God's power conquering evil in the pool really conveys the essential message of Christian baptism. Is this not just another form of magic – of a stronger power neutralising a lesser power? Is evil not externalised to such an extent in mysterious reptiles, demons operating from beyond the human self, or wizards, that a true perception of inner individual sinfulness and rebellion against God, which should be overcome through identification with Christ's death in the pool, is entirely lacking? Does the 'new life' symbolised in this manner really involve conversion, inner sanctity and eternal life, or are the old symbols merely perpetuated in a new guise, whereby the objectives of a this-worldly harmony in society, of good health and of protection against evil forces still predominate? Provided that such questions can be stripped of Western pretence and the judgemental attitude of critical outsiders, they should be considered seriously if a sound evaluation of Jordan symbolism is to be achieved. It is conceivable that in the thought-world of many who pass through Jordan, a complete transformation of the content of traditional symbols has not taken place, and that the identification

with Christ's death and resurrection as intended by the church, is not achieved in the baptismal experience. Nevertheless, it should be considered that the symbolism of Jordan forms only part of a comprehensive symbolic system in the life and worship of the prophetic movement. Incompleteness at one point can therefore be corrected at another. The experience of an externalised evil power in Jordan, for instance, can acquire greater depth in the context of church services or interpersonal relations. In this context it becomes obvious that individual sinfulness in relation to God and man has to be dealt with for a true expression of Christian love, and that salvation implies much more than reconciliation between the living and the dead or a kind of safeguarded wellbeing in material and social terms. Besides, the symbolism of Jordan has very distinct connotations which convey a message entirely different from the traditional water symbolism. The great emphasis on facing east in prayer and with immersion, for example, introduced a dimension of hope and futurity that explodes the traditional time-conception with its overriding emphasis on the past. In the symbolic act of expecting the coming Christ at Jordan, the old order of seeking salvation in the ritual maintenance of harmony between the living and the dead is drastically transcended. For although the ancestors of the immediate and remote past remain important, the focus is now directed at the Saviour who is manifestly present in the Holy Spirit and who gives definition to salvation here and now in terms of a fullness yet to come.

Magical trends in baptism

Oosthuizen (1968:74, 194) has pointed out that the magical element is a continuous problem in both the Independent and established churches of Africa, as regards the baptismal water, the sacrament of baptism itself, and the elements of Holy Communion.

Like the amulets and charms of old, baptismal water conveys power and health in a magical way. Oosthuizen also contends that the magical structure of old is often being used in the nativistic movements (which includes the prophetic Zionists and Apostles) to manipulate the supernatural forces in order to restore the golden era or to create it. In his evaluation of baptismal rites in Tswana Independent Churches, Pauw (1960:146-7) adopted the following definition: 'When the rite of baptism is in itself nothing more than a symbolic representation of an inner cleansing, the rite is non-magical. But when the performance of the rite in itself is believed necessarily to have a beneficial influence, whether of a spiritual or physical nature, it bears a magical character.' Where a spiritual being is concerned, a ritual can still be magical if it is thought of as necessarily having a specific effect, as if the spiritual being is compelled by the ritual to react in a particular way (Pauw 1960:147). In the Tswana ceremonies that Pauw describes, he emphasises the magical traits, for example the preparation of the baptismal water with a 'holy' staff to enhance its curative powers. But it is not

only the compelling efficacy of the rite itself that constitutes magic. According to Pauw (1960:167) the entire dogma of all the churches emphasising baptism by immersion reveals this trait: 'All the stress is on the correct performance of the rite: for adults after confession of faith only, by total immersion only (and for some: in a river only). Undergoing the rite in this form is thought of as necessarily bringing salvation, or at least putting one on the way to salvation. But the rite is not valid if it is not performed in the correct manner, just as it was done by John the Baptist.'

Pauw's definition makes a valid distinction between symbolic and magical rituals, but it leaves little scope for discerning both trends in one ritual. His application of this definition to Tswana baptismal ceremonies implies a categorical either-or divisioning that does not seem to do justice to the complexity of empiric reality, at least not of the kind described above for the Shona churches. Here too, the magical trends are unmistakable. I have observed people scooping up and drinking the water of Jordan because of the curative powers they ascribe to it. Reference was also made above to the confession of sins having a manipulative instead of an inner cleansing effect for some people, and of rebirth or salvation being 'achieved' through ritual participation rather than being received as a gift of God's grace, according to the interpretation of others. It should therefore be conceded that magical trends could uproot and in some cases entirely corrupt a sound understanding of the biblical meaning of baptism. Nevertheless, it would be entirely misleading to generalise on this basis as if we are dealing with an all-absorbing characteristic of Jordan baptisms. This in the Shona context is simply not the case! One can at most speak of 'magical trends' of varying degree – in many instances virtually non-existent – depending on the spiritual maturity of the prophets, baptisers and participants concerned.

To be more specific, it cannot be claimed that the Shona baptisms, as described above, generally have a compelling effect on the Holy Spirit to react in a specific way. There are indeed certain predictable patterns of procedure. The Holy Spirit, for example, is expected to reveal hidden sins through prophets, He is expected to overcome the threatening powers that may be lurking in the pool and he will effect exorcism or purification when demon possession takes place. But none of this is conceived of as an automatic achievement through the correct ritual procedure. For the Holy Spirit is generally believed to be a personal being with a will and power well beyond human control. Hence prophetic persuasion does not necessarily imply that the Spirit will reveal all hidden sins; neither does the holy staff in Jordan's water provide protection in all instances. In some cases the Spirit's intention appears to be exactly the opposite from the ritual group's expectations with tragedy resulting instead of blessing. Jordan can therefore paradoxically be a place of judgement and punishment, contrary to man's needs – in itself an illustration of a Spirit being that may respond

to men's supplications, without, however, becoming the subject of magical manipulation.

Against the background of traditional magical practices, it is understandable that the Shona, like the Tswana, will be inclined to attribute an inherent efficacy to baptismal rituals as if participation according to the accepted norms necessarily procures rebirth and salvation. The Shona prophetic dogma on baptism also contains a decided emphasis on the correctness of procedure according to biblical specifications. And yet there are in-built safeguards that to some extent neutralise these magical traits. Baptismal sermons often include a summons to candidates to repent and consider their own spiritual state as a vitally important condition for entry into Jordan. In the second place, the prophetic call for confession normally requires individual initiative and inner sanctity which, when well understood, cancel out in the mind of the candidate the anticipation of an automatic passage from old to new. Then, in the third place, the group's expectation of individual change, with pastoral follow-up of newly baptised members as a result, once more stimulates inner reflection and spiritual growth in opposition to a transition based purely on ritual participation. Moreover, the 'dogmatic' emphasis on correct baptismal procedure not only, or not necessarily, reflects a magical orientation. More often than not, it is the need for authenticity as well as the need for a unique identity, distinct from that of the established churches – rather than a magical worldview – which lies behind the overriding preoccupation with the work of John the Baptist. The variation and improvisation that characterise baptismal procedure in addition reflect a certain relativity as regards the professed emphasis on a correct imitation of biblical ceremonies.

On the whole, the leaders of the Shona Spirit-type churches regard Jordan baptisms, as they conduct them, as having primarily symbolic significance. In the experience of individuals, however, there seems to be a wide range of interpretation between symbolism in its pure form and magical achievement. It remains virtually impossible to assess at what point, if at all, the one overrides the other. Since symbols and symbolic activity have an existential character, they cannot be neutral. They involve commitment, enhance the being of man and stimulate him to play his part in the dialogue between God and man. This essentially appears to be the impact of the Jordan experience on the lives of people.

The role of the Holy Spirit

The centrality of the work of the Holy Spirit in Jordan baptisms is beyond doubt. In contrast to the West African Church of the Lord, of which Turner (1967:194) reports that the Holy Spirit motif is present, but not dominant during baptisms, the Shona Spirit-type churches resemble the Zulu Zionists, who claim that 'the Spirit can nowhere be experienced so effectively as in the

pool' (Sundkler 1961:207). The Shona prophets are less inclined than their Zulu Zionist counterparts to take their followers to the pool solely for the purpose of facilitating the entry of the Holy Spirit in their lives, but they at least share the sharp focus on the Spirit's involvement throughout the entire baptismal procedure.

This preoccupation with the Holy Spirit, at Jordan and in faith healing activities has caused several observers of Independent Churches to signal a return to traditional religion. Pauw claims that the belief in the Holy Spirit in Zulu Zionist churches has not really supplanted belief in the ancestors and that in certain churches it is even employed to reinforce and legitimise ancestor veneration (Oosthuizen 1968:122). Similarly Sundkler points out that some confusion exists as regards a distinction between inspiring Spirit and revealing Angel. He cites examples where Spirit and Angel are identified in the prescription of ancestral veneration as a solution to barrenness. This identification in prophetic practice leads Sundkler (1961:250) to the conclusion that 'the Angel not only brings a message from the Spirit: the Angel is the spirit, the ancestral spirit'. Martin (1964:158) speaks of a 'blending' of the Holy Spirit with the ancestral spirits, and Beyerhaus (1969:74-5) sounds even more condemnatory when he suggests that the manner in which the Holy Spirit is received in the African prophetic churches is a direct continuation of the old *idlozi* possession because the true fruits of the Holy Spirit are lacking and are not even desired. According to Oosthuizen (1968:126, 129, 132) the work of the Holy Spirit is misunderstood in African prophetic movements to the extent that the connection between Spirit and Scriptures is severed.

In contrast to these points of criticism, the Shona baptisms as sketched above portray a much more positive and biblically oriented understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. One need only to consider baptism in its eschatological perspective, which includes the theme of judgement, to appreciate the intuitive and contextualised expression of this dimension in the Holy Spirit's manifestation at the pool. Mbiti (1971:98) refers to Moule's treatment of the element of divine judgement in the two sacraments. During baptism the candidate in effect pleads guilty, accepts God's verdict on sin and undergoes the execution of the death sentence ... without, of course, being annihilated because in baptism 'Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God' (Colossians 3:3). The divine judgement has both individual and cosmic implications. In the entire universe, Christ's cross rings the death knell to the law, sin and to the old man. Although the Shona prophet does not always emphasise the cross explicitly, this insistence on the candidate's confession of all sins by implication underscores this central truth. God's divine judgement on sin becomes understandably manifest in the Holy Spirit's exposure of evil and the candidates' confession represents the acceptance of God's verdict on the old man who dies in him at the pool. Contrary to the suggested 'blending' of the Holy Spirit with the

ancestors, the Spirit's judgement at Jordan implies confrontation and rejection of ancestral demands. For the ancestral spirit that invades a candidate before or during baptism is categorically classified as a demon and is cast out with no claims of legitimacy. This is particularly true of ancestral spirits who, during life, acted as wizards and who try to persuade their living relatives to continue with their practices. This judgement of and confrontation with ancestors forcibly demonstrates that an essentially new message is emerging in the African world, with a shift in focus from the ancestors to the Christian God as regards spiritual and physical wellbeing. This judgement in dialogue, which starts at Jordan, is an ongoing process that again receives a sharp focus in the individual's life during times of crisis or affliction. As a rule, the directives that the Holy Spirit is believed to convey through the Shona prophets on such occasions are consistently opposed to, rather than aligned to ancestral demands (Daneel 1983b:37–43).

Next to the judgement theme, that of new life receives a central focus in the Spirit's presence at Jordan. Far from continuing the old *idlozi* possession, as Beyerhaus suggests, or divorcing the Jordan experience from its biblical connotations, as Oosthuizen's observations seem to imply, the Spirit articulates through the Shona prophet and sets in motion in the lives of the baptismal candidates those dynamic spiritual activities that are the marks of a new life. These include the forgiveness and cleansing of sin (Acts 22:16, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Hebrews 10:22, 2 Peter 1:9), sanctification (John 17:17, 1 Corinthians 1:2, Ephesians 5:26) regeneration (Titus 3:5), enlightenment (John 1:9, Ephesians 1:18, Hebrews 10:23) and the bestowal of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 1:13f). Cleansing and sanctification in the African Jordan often finds ritual expression in the expulsion of evil spirits, which goes hand in hand with healing. Even if this, at times, involves a one-sided preoccupation with the power of the Holy Spirit to override external threats, at the expense of inner sanctification, a uniquely African interpretation emerges at this point. For the Spirit identifies the church, in which new life for the believer is to be experienced, as a protective institution where God's care, not only against evil spirits, but also against suffering, oppression, and discrimination becomes manifest. Here the Spirit inspires hope, the prospects of a better future in him. And it is the Spirit himself who provides a corrective on the magical interpretation of those who regard participation in the 'new order' as an automatically achieved privilege through ritual. Why else would the Shona prophet or healer who works in the name of the Holy Spirit insist with such regularity that the Spirit not only works irrespective of man's response, but that he requires the individual's confession of faith, his confession of sins and his persevering prayer?

As I have pointed out throughout this article, the imperfections and limitations of Jordan baptisms are numerous and cannot be discounted. Imperfections,

however, do not necessarily mar authenticity. In all its richness and variation, the life of the Independent Churches around the pool contains all the signs of a genuinely Christian God-man encounter. In this respect a contextualised theology of the church's sacramental life is being developed, or rather enacted, oft unwittingly, at the grassroots level. Those in the established churches of Africa who have become used to judge, reject and by implication ignore the beliefs and practices of their so-called separatist or sectarian brothers can only continue to do so to their own detriment. For it is at the Jordan of Black Zionists and Apostles that the clues for the much-needed liturgical, sacramental and spiritual renewal in the church of Africa can be found. It is here that the old and new worlds stand out in stark relief, not in isolation, as so often happens in the established churches, but in dialogue, confrontation and even in partial synthesis. It is here that the dominion of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit over all evil finds poignant expression. It is here that liberation, culminating in a new, many-faceted identity which stretches well beyond the purely spiritual realm can be found. Here, too, a new 'symbolic language' is developed which gives expression to both the celebration of the transition from old to new and the commitment for the future vested in the newly acquired membership in the Body of Christ.

Having indicated strengths and weaknesses, who will ultimately judge the question of truth in this fascinating, yet elusive maze of black baptismal ceremonies?

And God: frown or smile
His Spirit wrest from the Book?
cast in weird frame
to meet Africa's need?
Nay! tis much deeper than that –
the truth, not always bound, in creed
is danced, enacted, splashed in pool
together in Zion, corporate deed
where God draws nigh
man's heart to probe
with love and sigh
in covenant, sins turned cool.

NOT TO DESTROY BUT TO FULFIL

In this penultimate section, Daneel explores the complex relationship between African Traditional Religion (ATR) and the enacted theology of the AICs. He argues that ATR provides roots from which AIC theology is constructed through dialogue, cooperation, confrontation and adaptation. On one hand, Professor Daneel emphasises that there is a good deal of continuity in worldview and ritual concern for healing, harmony and wholeness. On the other hand, he shows that AICs are traditional religionists' most confrontational competitors – in many ways, AICs transform the expectations of ATR. Implicitly, the gospel according to the AICs claims to be the fulfilment of the central religious concerns of Shona traditional religion, just as Christ claimed to be the fulfilment of Jewish law (Matthew 5:17).

Chapter 10 examines the exorcism ministry of several Apostolic and Zionist prophets who decisively thwart the dangers of malignant medicine, possession by malevolent ancestors, and hidden witchcraft. The prophets' distinctive approach to exorcism is derived from their application of New Testament teachings to the traditionally defined threats that emanate from witches, sorcerers and malevolent ancestors. Next, chapter 11 takes a more explicitly theological approach to the topic of witchcraft and exorcism. After surveying theological supporters and critics of exorcism, Daneel evaluates the ministry of Nyasha, a Zionist prophet. He finds that, despite shortcomings, Nyasha's exorcisms respond effectively to typically African concerns in a distinctively African fashion. Finally, in chapter 12, Daneel compares four distinct Christian theological approaches to ATR. He surveys the responses of the Catholic, Reformed, African academic, and African Independent Church to the traditional religion they encountered in Africa. He argues that the AICs, which are sometimes viewed as most similar to traditionalists, are the most effective at existentially confronting and transforming the religion of their forebears.

Prophetism and Wizardry*

In the following discussion we will distinguish between two major techniques especially employed by the Apostolic prophets in the effort to gain more adherents: detection and removal of malignant medicine, and wizard-finding during village baptisms. In the third place, the regular prophetic detection of wizardry within the ranks of the Zionist and Apostolic groups as a general feature of attraction will be described.

Detection and removal of malignant medicine

In much the same way as a *nganga* may build up a reputation for the successful treatment of a certain ailment, which secures him a regular practice in that particular field, some prophets gain renown as specialists in the prophetic treatment of one specific kind of disability. Jaka Mukurumbera, a completely uneducated MuMbire in his mid forties and senior baptist-prophet of the AACJM in Chingombe, proves to be such a prophet, with a special reputation for the treatment of the potential witch or the bewitched. Something should be said about the background of this remarkable figure before we turn to the methods he adopts. It will throw some light on his preoccupation with wizardry. In his own words:

I was thirteen years old when I was poisoned [*kudyiswa*] at a beer party. The poison stuck in my throat and I 'died' [became unconscious]. So I was taken to Zimbabwe [Morgenster Mission hospital] where I was 'skinned' [operated on]. While still in a state of 'death', a voice came to me saying that I had received salvation. I saw people with long white garments singing: Hosanna! Hosanna! They surrounded me, told me that I was in heaven, but that I had to return to earth since my time had not yet come ... When I came out of hospital, I did not immediately join the Apostles but kept the commandment I had received about not using medicine. My voice never really returned. As you can hear, I have remained hoarse up to this day.

In 1943 my son, Samuel, became seriously ill. He was treated by Makuti's prophets [secessionist group from Mutendi's ZCC], who told my wife and me that we should join the Church which healed our son. So we were baptised in Jordan ... Later the Holy Spirit took hold of me [*ndabatwa noMweya*] and told me to pray and fast in the mountains. I spent a whole

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Sunday speaking [in tongues] and when I returned the Spirit showed me to enter a hut. I found a baby asleep with a snake on top of it [a sure sign of wizardry]. I told the parents that we should pray perseveringly to save the child. I also laid hands on them. At the time I was employed as a bricklayer, but I was then convinced that the Spirit had other work for me. I started going about with Sauro Garanuwako, an Apostle. At one of their large meetings in Nyamande, I prophesied very strongly. The Spirit really possessed me then [*ndarobwa no Mweya*: literally, 'the Spirit beat me', that is, took possession of me with great force]. I was the first of some 50 new members to be baptised. In the water [of Jordan] I had a vision of a pig, vomiting white medicine. I was told by a voice that this was the big satan which vomits sickness onto people. I was told to pray strongly [*nesimba*] so that I might become a big prophet who heals people. I was to become a Peter to others.

After I had taken a second wife I left for Ndola once more to work there as a bricklayer. I worked near a pool inhabited by a *njuzu* spirit. This spirit caused the bricks we moulded to turn to water. I spent a day at the pool, praying, after I had placed my [Apostolic] staff in the water. The following day I was washing at the pool when a strong wind carried me right into the water. I found myself walking, submerged in the water, next to the *njuzu* spirit. This spirit showed me many people and lots of medicine.³³ Two old women [diviners] came forward and tried to catch me with their necklaces [that is, prompted me to become a *nganga*]. The European employers came and tried to fish me out of the water but they failed and said that I would not be seen again because I was dead. Yet, the power of the *njuzu* spirit was broken by the Holy Spirit and I ran off. The Holy Spirit revealed to me that all this had happened because I had disobeyed His command to heal people at home. I was asked whether I still knew the work of Peter, that of healing people. So I returned home [in Chingombe] and after eight days of fasting and praying in the mountains I knew that I had to forget about looking for another job ... I stayed at home to pray for God's people ...'

Jaka's account of his experiences includes the more or less 'standardised' prerequisites for prophetic leadership: 'death' as a special calling, succeeded by visions, seclusion from others through fasting in the mountains, in which period the Spirit manifests itself with increasing intensity, followed by the return to village-life in a new role. Jaka's relapse, which evoked divine punishment in the form of a *njuzu* spirit temporarily taking charge of him, clearly portrays a sound knowledge of the functions of the *njuzu* spirits as providers of medicine to the traditional diviners. It also illustrates how closely the traditional thought patterns are still linked with the new methods of healing through the Holy Spirit, in spite of the opposition between the two systems. Jaka's calling to his prophetic task differs from those of others in that he seems to have interpreted it as having a special bearing on those 'people of God' afflicted through wizardry. His own experience of being ensorcelled as a 13-year-old boy, and the permanent damage it caused to his voice probably have much to do with it. It

is significant that the first person he was to treat after his first spell of fasting in the mountains was a bewitched child, and that the vision he had when baptised as an Apostolic prophet concerned a pig vomiting malignant medicine. It was as if he recognised his main adversary, Satan, in the destructive wizard. The only divergence from the traditional pattern is that in this instance wizardry was not symbolised in the hyena, as the real bogey, but in the pig, which to the Apostles represents the sum total of forbidden food, a kind of polluting species that evokes an apprehensive reaction in Apostolic circles similar to that called up by the hyena.

How then did Jaka set about his task of fighting the evil powers? In the first place he settled permanently in Chingombe after his experience at Ndola. He was therefore constantly available to those who needed his aid. Patients came to stay at his homestead, and he soon had a small colony of people staying for longer or shorter periods according to their need of treatment. The community of patients resembles that of Zion City, except that it is much smaller and centres on the prophetic activities of *one* man. In principle, the pattern of integrating the patients into a new group is the same. Patients must supply their own food unless they earn it through light labour in the prophet's fields. The first diagnostic prophecy concerning a new patient usually reveals part of the causation of illness. A condition for full treatment, as prescribed by the prophet, is baptism in 'Jordan', in other words, church membership. Thus the psychological pressure on people who find their existence threatened by wizardry is sometimes stepped up by the suggestive diagnosis of the prophet and is then exploited as an effective means of persuading them to join the Church. Under such circumstances, patients seldom refuse the Jordan baptism.

Jaka is regarded as an expert in detecting the evil medicine that has been transferred to the victim through poisoning (*kudysia*), the foot-trap (*chitsinga*) and mystical propulsion (*chiposo*: to be 'thrown' at) (Daneel 1971:165). The procedure adopted by Jaka resembles that of the traditional *nganga*. Poison in the stomach is removed through vomiting holy water, which was blessed by the prophet. Holy water symbolising the power of the Holy Spirit is used as a substitute for the *njuzu* or other medicine used by the *nganga*. *Chitsinga* or *chiposo* medicine is removed from the body after the Holy Spirit has directed the point of the prophet's staff to the place where it is located. This then is the 'Christianised' version of cupping or 'biting out' (*kuruma*) bad medicine.

Instead of using his mouth, horns or halves of tennis balls as the *nganga* does, Jaka applies his holy staff to the spot indicated by the Holy Spirit. With bewitched women it is frequently between their shoulder-blades that the evil spirit is 'seated', or the lower part of the stomach if the womb is threatened. While he holds the staff in place, Jaka prays, speaks in tongues, and occasionally shakes violently as if spasms pass through him, thus manifesting the presence of the Holy Spirit. Meanwhile the rest of the patient-community and other

family members who may be present accompany the performance by singing Apostolic songs in a low voice and at a slow tempo, while seated. Prophet Jaka at times presses down on the staff against the patient's body so as to inflict pain. The evil medicine is believed to pass through the staff to the prophet's right hand, held well away from the patient's body, to the staff's top. When it reaches his hand, the prophet shows signs of fatigue (owing to the power of the evil medicine). He briefly shows a piece of brown substance, resembling clotted blood, to the patient and then throws it into a fire for final destruction.

This kind of treatment usually takes place after sunset during the last prayer-meeting of the day, and it may be repeated several times in the course of weeks if the patient is thought to have evil medicine spread all over his or her body. The prophet knows that the actual removal of the *uroyi*-medicine is experienced by the patient as the climax of the treatment. He therefore avoids repeating it each day lest it loses its appeal. At times he deliberately keeps a patient in suspense through a gradual process of diagnostic prophecies each morning and evening, revealing a little more of the patient's background and the cause or multiple causes of illness at each session and confining his preliminary treatment to the use of holy water and the laying-on of hands. When he has prepared the patient for the climax of the treatment and has also given him or her a chance to become acquainted with the religious code of the new movement, in the case of a novice, the malignant substance is removed.

Jaka is also regarded as one of the few prophets who can remove *uroyi* from the blood of a person who was incised (*kutemerwa*) (Daneel 1971:160-1) by a witch. Sonika, a young woman who had been in Jaka's colony for two weeks when she was interviewed, was awaiting the final removal of medicine that was intended to draw her into a circle of witches. Of her stay with Jaka, she said: 'I suffered from stomach trouble for a long time and visited both hospitals and *nganga*. They failed to heal me, so I came here for treatment, having left the Roman Catholic Church. Through the Spirit, Prophet Jaka saw the cuts that had been made [*kutemera*] on my body at night while I was asleep. At the hospitals they never detected it. I have been incised by my relatives because they hate me and want me not to have good manners but to practise witchcraft.'

Jaka himself regarded Sonika as a potential witch who had not yet fully succumbed to the persuasions of other witches. 'If she had not come to this church, she would have been a *muroyi* by now; our prayers have prevented her from becoming one,' he said.

At times Jaka will extend his activities to the homestead of a patient. He prophesies that he 'sees' evil medicine in the victim's house, mostly hidden somewhere in the thatched roof. It is then suggested that the medicine should be removed to achieve a proper and lasting cure.

Once he has reached the homestead, sometimes after a long journey, the prophet goes through all the motions of becoming possessed by the Holy Spirit, removes his shoes, enters the house, staff in hand and allows the Spirit to direct the staff's tip to the place in the roof where the medicine is hidden. Having been removed and shown around to interested spectators, the medicine is burnt. There is no doubt that Jaka makes expert use of a sleight-of-hand technique. On all the occasions of removing *mushonga* from a person's body or from their houses that I witnessed personally, Jaka produced the same kind of brownish substance, resembling the gum of a certain species of wild tree.

Outsiders are often enough critical of Jaka's techniques, and the odd patient may turn against him, but it was clear that he was having considerable success with his special methods. The rebukes he receives from other local Apostolic leaders who criticise him for following *nganga* practices too closely stem from enmity rather than from a concern with the possible perversion of Apostolic practices. Although Jaka lays no special claim to the leadership of those he has converted into the Apostolic movement, he tends to be individualistic and at times acts independently of his congregation. Because his prestige rests on the treatment of wizardry cases 'which the hospitals and *nganga* have failed to diagnose or cure properly', this tempts him to adopt methods that are not completely aligned with the ordinary Apostolic manifestations of the Holy Spirit. He has nevertheless been careful enough to abstain from straightforward imputations of wizardry, something which the prophetic specialists in *uroyi* are often tempted to do at the risk of being prosecuted under the Witchcraft Suppression Act.

Another figure in Chingombe who has had considerable success with the detection and removal of malignant medicines is Prophet Elison Mutingwende, the main personality around whom the *Shinga Postora* movement grew (Daneel 1971:341, 344). The difference between Jaka's activities and those of Elison is that the Jaka's recruitment of new members is a local process that forms an integral part of a much wider Church organisation, while the latter's activities are the main pivot upon which the formation of a new movement rests. Whereas one is subjected to the control of senior office-bearers higher up in the leadership hierarchy of the local *Paseka* unit, the other could develop his own techniques in greater freedom, since Gandanzara's (Johane Masowe's) continual absence contributed towards the generation of local initiative and independent action.

Elison, a 40-year-old member of the Gwai tribe, who, as a boy, had reached Std 3 in a DRC school, had settled as a 'foreigner' (*mutorwa*) in the village of Kono, near the Zimbizi school in Chingombe. Regular contact with Zionist and AACJM prophets in the years preceding his final decision to start a new movement had revealed to him how these people exploited their prophecies to attract new church members. In Chingombe North he himself became known

as a healer. Yet his healing activities, at first, were not directly attached to Jordan baptisms, and he did not rely on them as a condition for his services. His expertise consisted mainly in the removal of magical horns (*makona*)³⁴ or snakes from the homesteads and fields of those who were bewitched or ensorcelled. Concerning his prophetic activities in the years leading up to the initiation of the new movement, Elison gives the following account:

An enemy [*muvegi*] had hidden a horn [*gona*] at Kuchekenya's house in Makomo's village. This horn caused much trouble in the family, and I was called to remove it. I also detected [through the guidance of the Holy Spirit] a horn hidden in Amos's granary. The reason why the enemies succeeded in placing their medicines at Kuchekenya's homestead was the wrath of Kuchekenya's [maternal] grandmother-spirit. She had not been properly inducted [*kugadzirwa*] after her death because Kuchekenya refused to give her name to one of his daughters, fearing that this daughter would be taught to *roya*. [This *mbuya* was reputed to be a witch.] Now the offended *mbuya* spirit attracts enemies and 'opens the door' of Kuchekenya's houses for them to assault the family. She is also angry because she died alone, without sufficient clothing ...

'I was called to Ranga's house in Magagade's village. He needed the aid of his deceased father, since his father's younger brother [*babamunini*] had moved off to the farms with all the cattle of the deceased man. So I told him to *gadzira* his father's spirit, after which he would become a rich man. I warned him that if this *kugadzira* was not conducted, all his daughters would become whores [*mahure*]. This was revealed to me by the Holy Spirit. I removed a horn from his house and killed a large snake which we dug up in the yard . . . Kraalhead Magagade's fields stopped yielding good crops. The Spirit revealed to me where his enemies had buried the medicated horns and hoofs of an ox, so I uncovered them. These bad things were wrapped in a piece of red cloth and had been placed there by one of Magagade's rivals for kraal-headmanship. After the removal of the medicine he was able to reap good crops.

'I also 'worked' in the villages of Makuwise [Nyamande chiefdom], Muchemwa, Gwamure, Zeka, Muza and Chaminuka [mostly villages near Elison's homestead]. In Zeka's village I predicted the death of two children through witchcraft at Purazen's homestead ... At Muchemwa I removed *makona*. At Potai's house in Muzas' village I removed *makona*. Inspired by the Holy Spirit I entered his house and removed a snake which had bitten fowls and one of Potai's children. I tore the snake apart³⁵ and burnt it outside. It had been sent by a person who was jealous of Potai's good crops ...

'I used to charge only those people who did not belong to a Church. The fees varied between one and ten shillings. Whenever a *nganga* requested my assistance, such as *Mai vaGhoni*, in whose house I removed a snail, I charged them heavily for my services.

Elison's story was checked with inhabitants of surrounding villages. He was indeed believed to have performed the feats to which he laid claim. Thus, by the time he had persuaded Samuel Dziro (Daneel 1971:340) and a few of his close friends to assist him in campaigning for their own church, he had gained a considerable reputation in traditionalist and church circles as a formidable opponent of all forms of wizardry. The following description of the first official service of the *Kushinga Pastora* (Courageous Apostles) movement at Kraalhead Rutsate's homestead on 26 February 1966 illustrates the main features of Elison's campaigning technique.

Kraalhead Murambasvina Rutsate called in the aid of the Apostolic prophet resident in his younger brother Kono's village, after two children of his son Pome had died in quick succession. Elison asked his assistants to accompany him to Rutsate's village. The main figures in charge of the service were Elison himself, as initiator of the movement, Samuel Dziro, the original *mufundisi* of the Masowe Apostles in Chingombe, Jerry, the son of Kraalhead Kono, who was appointed evangelist after Elison had 'given his barren wife a child', Prophet Zingwangwa, also a former Masowe Apostle, and Prophet Aron, a Maranke Apostle who considered joining the new movement. A group of about fifty people, most of them women, gathered at Rutsate's on the appointed afternoon. Important, too, from the *Shinga Pastora* point of view was the presence of such influential men as Kraalhead Rutsate, the main leader of a faction of eight Rufura houses in a bid for ward headmanship, and Kraalhead Makuwise, the senior representative of one of the leading houses for ward headmanship in the Nyamande chiefdom. These were the men who had to be convinced of the new Church's right of existence.

When everybody was seated under some trees not far from the stricken Pome's house, the Hosanna song, from which the nickname of the Masowe followers derives, was sung. Facing in an easterly direction, Elison led the congregation in the chant of an opening prayer:

Hallelujah! In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit ... Bu, bu, bu ... [speaking in tongues by Elison]. You are the God of this place of Mishek, Abednego and Daniel. You are the God of heaven. You, Jesus, we trust in your power ... Bu-bu- Hosanna ... We believe in you, Lord of Truth. Gather your people, Lord, the men and the women! Even the chiefs [*madzishe*] have come awaiting you, Jehovah. They are awaiting You, Mwari, Lord of the [tribal] leaders. You are the God of the lame and the weak-bodied people – bless them with your power, Jesus. Amen.

As the congregation continued to chant the Lord's Prayer, Elison reached a high pitch of prophetic excitement with loud shouts of Haiya! Hai-i-ya!

Half an hour was spent in the public confession of sins and the narration of dreams by some of the attendant commoners, which were then interpreted by the prophets; thereafter Evangelist Jerry Kono started with the first sermon. His

introduction concerned a justification of the new movement, with reference to the mission command in Mark 15:15. 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation.'

Jerry: 'You people who have forgotten God, beware, He exists. Be converted! [*Tendeukai!*] We were sent by God to revive [*mutsa*] the people of Rutsate ... Mark 16:16: 'He that believeth, and is baptised will be saved ...' Some of those who are baptised continue the works of evil, for example, they 'eat so and so' [*kudya nhingi*; that is, practise witchcraft], steal food and commit adultery. You, who must still be baptised, confess all your sins first because it is no good to be 'soaked in the pool' while you still have human flesh [*nyama yavanhu*] in your house ...³⁶ All those who do not worship God are going to be destroyed completely [*vangapera nokufa*]. You should pray continually, because God sees what you are doing. Even if you have many 'horns' [that is, malignant medicine], you must pray continually.'

At this stage there was a great deal of speaking in tongues by Elison and the other prophets. Words such as 'Eriah, Hallelujah, Hosanna, Mambo, Section' were heard continually in between spurts of incomprehensible gibberish.

Jerry: 'Mark. 16:18 says: 'They shall take up serpents ...' One day Elison and I caught a snake at Makuwise's village and also removed a horn from one of the houses. It was a terribly dangerous horn which caused the people who came to see it to run away. But it could not harm us.'³⁷

Elison was the next to preach: 'You people hear what the teacher [*mudzidzisi*] has said. We have been given the power of the Holy Spirit and need not be afraid. Each of you must be converted because then you will be given the same gifts by the Holy Spirit, for example touching snakes without being bitten.'

At this stage Elison interrupted the sermons and after a spell of speaking in tongues started to explain what the Holy Spirit had revealed to him:

I was shown medicine [*mushonga*] in the house of Pome, where two children have died recently. There are two types of medicine: that of the enemy, and that of Pome himself. The latter does not matter because it was used for a protective purpose. Yet it may complicate [*kukanganisa*] the removal of the bad medicine. You, Pome, must therefore go and remove your own medicine! I can 'see' the evil medicine in the roof of the house. It is a small horn [Elison holds out his hands to indicate an object about three inches long] with something wrapped around it. No, it is not a string, but a snake's skin. What we want is that the house of Rutsate should not be hard-hearted and unrepentant in not turning to God. We all have much trouble here in the reserves, but God will not punish his people unnecessarily. Just look at the fields and see how nicely your maize has grown. It is a sign that God has blessed his people, as well as the house of Rutsate.

You, Rutsate [in a loud voice] if it is possible, call your people to hear the word of God. It is of no use to remain in the world. Who will bury you if you

come to die? Instead of coming to us, who charge you no money, you go to the *nganga*. But remember, it is not the power of a *nganga*, but it is God Himself who really heals you. We Apostles only touch the heads of people for them to be healed. If it is possible we must go to Jordan and baptise those who accept God.

'You, Pome, go now and remove your medicine from the hut! Do so quickly, otherwise the medicine of the enemy will 'run away'.

While Pome and his wife moved off, Prophet Amos of the AACJM addressed the congregation:

You of this village must choose today between good and bad. I believe that those villagers who are absent are responsible for planting the medicine in that man's hut ... Many people like those absentees proceed with their normal lives and refuse to repent. They just keep drinking and when they are about to die they realise that they should have repented in order to receive a *good room* in heaven. If you people of Rutsate refuse to give heed to God's commands it will be the result of too great a preoccupation with your struggle for the chieftainship.

Our Apostolic Church is *wonderful!* We have our own visions – for instance, right now I 'see' the medicine which Makuwise gave that girl. It resembles a crab. Being an Apostle does not mean that we are freed from temptations, for the *varoyi* are still troubling us. For example, my mother's younger sister [*mainini*] is ill because she has been poisoned [*kud'yiswa*]. But do not fear, because Christians are bound to be tempted or attacked. If a person remains ill and the plants of his field do not germinate, he will migrate because he has been bewitched. The seeds of the bad people will also not germinate because they are punished, and they too will migrate. Even the Apostles may have to migrate from their places. Nobody is excluded from trials. Such Apostles may blame their Church for their problems but the cause of their troubles is to be found with their relatives who are still not converted. Rutsate, you remain free in your choice and you may join the *nganga*. Nevertheless you should remember: 'Where the corpses are, there the vultures are' [*pane mitumbu pana magora*].³⁸ If we take water and pray for it, we just sprinkle it in our houses as a poison to the *varoyi* and it blocks their entry. [Note here the comparison of the 'vulture-like' *nganga* – who by implication are closely associated with *uroyi* – and the witchcraft-eradicating practices of the Apostles!]. Last night I met two *varoyi* at my house. When I sprinkled holy water on them they fell down on the floor, powerless. The power of God is like the electricity [*magets*] used by *changamire* [reference to author]. You must put your hand at the correct place and the power immediately becomes operative.

Perhaps this new church has no witches. In ours [of Maranke] there are many! We forgive them even if we suspect them of presenting us with poisoned food. We fear to be obstacles in their way to faith and deliverance. You,

too, should identify with *varoyi* because his or her bad deeds will 'come out' by themselves. Nothing stays hidden in this church.

Towards the end of his 'sermon' Amos started telling several of the attendants what the Spirit had revealed to him. For instance, a pregnant woman, affiliated with no church, was told that she would have a complicated childbirth. Aron claimed to have 'seen' a hyena approaching her doorstep, which was tantamount to saying that she could expect foul play in the form of bewitchment. Against the background of what had been said that afternoon, the hint that she should join the Apostolic movement for protective treatment was clear enough. This is exactly what she did a few days later.

Mufundisi Samere Dziro, as the most senior office-bearer in the new movement, delivered the concluding sermon. It was his task to give an exposition of the *Shinga Postora* laws. The prophets were the recruiters, and he the teacher, the dogmatician. He explained the necessity for confession of sins, with reference to Luke 12:2: 'But there is nothing covered up that shall not be known.' 'Since nothing is hidden,' he said, 'you must confess your sins, otherwise you will surely die completely [that is, forfeit eternal life]. The confession of sin is also the command of John. Don't just keep moving like a centipede that cannot see where it is going! A person who confesses his sins is the one who has the Holy Spirit because at the time of John the Baptist those who were *varoyi* brought their owls [that is, witch familiars] in baskets as a sign of true confession. They brought their snakes, *zvidoma*, and all evil things to confess their former use of them, and to demonstrate that they were destroying them.'

Several Apostolic practices such as the necessity of baptism in Jordan and of abstaining from pork were briefly expounded with direct illustrations from the Bible. The transforming of water into wine by Jesus at a wedding feast (John 2) was treated in great detail as the biblical justification for the *Shinga Postora's* main divergence from the original Apostolic group, that is, allowing the use of beer:

Dziro: 'Now what is this stuff they call wine? It is beer [*doro*]! Jesus was at a kind of beer party ... In the same way as Jesus sent His disciples to go and call the master of the feast after he had filled the pots with beer, we too call on Rutsate here, today to partake of what Christ has prepared for him.

'Deuteronomy 14:26: 'And thou shalt bestow the money for whatever thy soul desireth, for oxen or for sheep, or for wine or for strong drink ...' You people of God, you must go out and buy beer and then bring it here so that we can all feast together before the Lord Jesus. We must be careful about judging others for their deeds because the Book [Bible] does not always agree with us when we do so. It is an insult to tell someone who buys beer that he is the devil. If I drink and abuse someone, yes, then I am at fault. But there are also people who fight and commit adultery without drinking beer ...'



Plate 29: Elison Mutingwende describes the horn with evil medicine that he is about to remove from hut-roof of afflicted family (top). After removal of the horn, he holds it up for all to see (middle); then has a fire built for it to be burnt... a symbolic descrtion of evil through the professed power of the Holy Spirit (bottom)

Late in the afternoon the service was closed with prayer, singing and a tumult of speaking with tongues. Having announced the presence of bewitching medicine in Pome's hut and having fully instructed the congregation on the laws of the new Church, Elison continued his programme with the removal of the medicine, followed up by baptism in Jordan. Before entering the doctored hut, Elison subjected Pome's wife to a spell of diagnostic prophecy before the entire congregation: 'The work of this medicine that I have 'seen' is *musotosoto* [to cause the loss of property]. It causes you to have miscarriages instead of bearing children normally. You, *Mai N*, must also confess about the medicine you have been taking at your home village in the form of porridge! Did a *nganga* give you such medicine for the power of bearing children [*chibereko*]?'

Mai N: 'Yes, Amen!'

Elison: 'Have you heard others referring to your mother as a witch who goes out at night?'

Mai N: 'Yes!'

Elison: 'There are two causes of your troubles: the trouble with your family spirits back home and your enemies at this kraal. The more important issue concerns those who attack you here! ... Hallelujah ... Hosanna! We know that it will take time, but do not worry; we will solve your problems.'

Addressing Pome, Elison continued: 'I know that curative medicine can help, but in this case it has failed completely. This third child of yours, which is still in your wife's womb, will be born, but it will also die because of the enemies. There is a powerful *mudzimu* at the house of your wife, whom they used to venerate.'

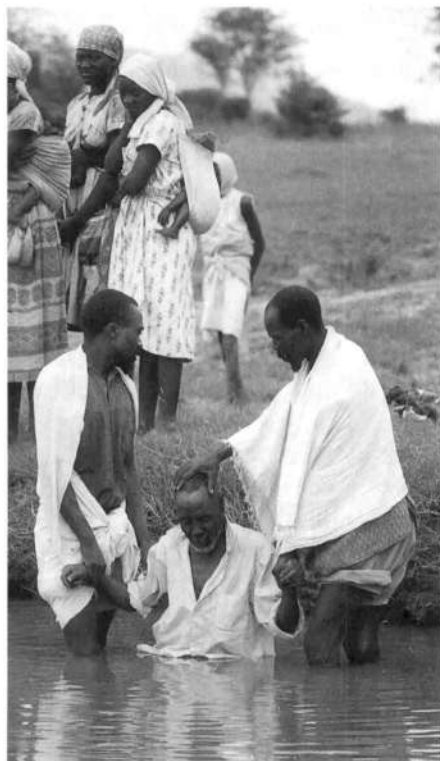
Mai N.: 'Yes, my father and brother used to quarrel a lot about the "ancestral beast" [*ngombe yomudzimu*; probably one of the cows belonging to the paternal or maternal *mbuya*-spirit].'

Elison: 'It is that same *mudzimu* that is following you here and that allows your enemies to enter your house. It will lead to the destruction of your unborn child. Even if you go to the *nganga*, it will be of no avail. Only the church [*Shinga Postora*] can give real aid in this case. Just pray hard that you will be given that child! Without prayer there will be no child! Yes, you must indeed pray hard [*ne simba*] because I 'see' that when you dreamed the other night, you saw the *muroyi* coming into your house. You woke up and followed her. [In other words: If you do not pray faithfully, you will be overcome by the temptation to become a witch.] This demon of *uroyi* comes from your home.

'I am given a "picture" [by the Holy Spirit] of a cow with a calf. When the cow licks the calf, it takes the flesh off its body with the tongue [that is, you will be 'eating' your child as a witch does]. Pray hard because at your house there is an ancestral spirit inspiring witchcraft [*dzindza inomutsa*].'



Plate 30: Recruitment cycle of Elison's *Shinga Postora* church: After removal of evil medicines the newly converted are baptised. Elison addresses his growing congregation (top). Convinced by what he has observed, Kraalhead Makuwise is baptised in the new church (bottom)



Mai N. 'Tell me, is it my maternal or paternal grandmother?'

Elison: 'It is the *mbuya* on your father's side, which comes at night and settles between your shoulders. She wants you to work at night. In your dreams someone at the door beckons you to wake up and follow her outside ... From now on you and your husband must stick together. Then you will overcome your troubles!'

At this stage the congregation assembled in front of the haunted house and started singing the Hosanna song. Elison entered the hut with Evangelist Jerry and Prophet Zingwangwa. He moved about the hut with outstretched arms as if to show that he held nothing in his hands, and with eyes transfixed as if in a hypnotic trance. Suddenly he plucked a bundle of grass from the roof, opened it carefully and produced a small horn, partly wrapped up in snake's skin as he had prophesied. There were sufficient signs of decay on the grass and horn to convey the impression that it had been planted there long ago and that it could at least have contributed to the deaths of Pome's two children. As Elison triumphantly stepped out of the hut, horn in hand, there was much rejoicing by all the spectators and clear signs of relief on the face of the afflicted and half-suspected woman. There was no doubt about the psychological value of this seemingly miraculous feat of the prophet. People pressed close to the prophet to see the evil object and then moved away as he kindled a fire to burn it.

The baptismal ceremony was postponed until the following week because Elison still had to remove some medicine from homesteads of afflicted persons in Kraalhead Makuwise's village. When the members of the new church eventually congregated on the banks of a small rivulet near the Chingombe-Nyamande border, not far from Makuwise's village, there were eight adults and four children to be baptised. Among them were Pome, his wife, and Kraalhead Makuwise himself. Kraalhead Rutsate stated that he preferred the Zion Christian Church, whose leader was more capable than Elison of assisting him to achieve his political aims. Several interested observers also appeared on the banks of Jordan to watch the prophets at work.

As in most Apostolic baptisms there was a sermon that dealt with the work of John the Baptist, followed by prophecies and confessions of sin before the novices entered the water for immersion. Elison guarded the 'entrance' to Jordan and dealt with the confessions of each individual before *Mufundisi* Dziro and Evangelist Jerry Kono immersed the converts and Prophet Zingwangwa 'received' the new members on the opposite bank. During the Jordan procedure songs were sung such as: 'You have come today: cast away the spirit of Satan which follows you', and 'The people are in Jordan, Hosanna, Hosanna'.

The great preoccupation of the prophets and novices with wizardry and medicines once more became evident in the prophecies and confessions preceding the entrance into Jordan. Confession in the case of Pome's wife amounted to an

admission of being tempted by her *mbuya's* spirit to become a witch. Mai Chiedzo, also from the Rutsate village, confessed that she had been visited by a demon of witchcraft which knocked at night and tried to persuade her to 'eat' her child. A certain man, J, admitted that he had planted *divisi* medicine in his fields to ripen his crops and that he had at one stage seriously contemplated getting rid of his wife through sorcery. These confessions undoubtedly impressed the non-affiliated women who stood nearby. They insisted that Elison at least give them a preliminary hearing right there, since they were greatly troubled. A few prophecies followed, in which the prophet with persistent regularity 'saw' evil medicines back at the women's homesteads and hinted at bewitching activities between co-wives. He made appointments to visit the various villages at a later stage in order to remove the evil medicines. Thus the next recruitment cycle, which could likewise be expected to lead to Jordan, was started where the previous one had reached its completion. With a snowballing effect the new movement was gradually gaining momentum.

Within one year (from February 1966 to February 1967) Elison and his fellow-workers had established eight small church groups: three in the northern regions of Chingombe, one in each of the neighbouring chiefdoms of Nyamande and Chitsa, one in Buhera and one in Gokwe, more than 200 miles from Elison's homestead. Taken together, these groups comprised well over a hundred adults and probably as many children; no mass movement, but indeed a considerable achievement if it is considered that the main attraction was provided by the medicine-finding efforts of a single persuasive character, which included a campaign as far away as Gokwe. Kraalhead Makuwise's comment on his reason for joining the *Shinga Postora* movement represents the stereotypical theme that reappears in numerous variations in nearly all the testimonies of affiliated members:³⁹ 'I entered the *Shinga Postora*,' he said, 'because Elison helped me when I was ill. He removed a horn and a crab-like object with human hair attached to it, from my house. He revealed to me that this medicine [*chiposo*] had been 'sent' by my relatives in Salisbury who wish me harm, because they owe me money. My eye-trouble was said to be the result of adultery committed by my wife. Another source of trouble was my angered maternal grandmother. Her spirit afflicted me because she wanted the grandmother's goat [*imbwazukuru*] my father owed her ...'

'Long ago, before Christianity came, we were enlightened by our *nganga* concerning family matters. So that is the most important thing in this Church: '*Zvinhu zvoise ndinoprofitirwa kufanana kushoperwa*'. Everything is revealed to me through prophecy in the same way as through traditional divination.'

The similarity between the prophet's revelations and the *nganga's* divinations is unmistakable. To the ruralist steeped in traditional belief and philosophy the prophet's methods of fighting evil forces at work in his society are understandable and relevant. The power of the Spirit is meaningful in that it

enables the prophet first of all to diagnose evil in its African guise and then to fight it effectively. At first sight it seems that the protection offered to church members is of a magical quality, brought about by the charismatic abilities of the prophet, yet it is significant that the prophets with great persistence encourage their followers to pray perseveringly for deliverance. It is therefore not merely a matter of church members passively enjoying a security manipulated by their leaders, but also of fighting their own spiritual battles under the guidance of the Spirit.

In conclusion, a few important deviations from the traditional system of imputation of wizardry (*kupumha uroyi*) should be pointed out. Elison had been detained twice for direct prophetic imputations of wizardry a few years before he initiated the new church. To avoid further trouble he had therefore changed his methods by concentrating on the detection and destruction of the tools and devices used by wizards and avoiding as far as possible direct imputation, which was customary with any *nganga* of repute. Pome's wife, for instance, under the circumstances described, would probably have been condemned by a *nganga* as a witch who had 'eaten' two children, and after such an accusation the village community might well have felt justified in making life unbearable for her. The prophets, however, made no direct accusation of witchcraft, but suggested that *Mai N* was only being tempted by her *mbuya* spirit. Thus the main blame was shifted onto the ancestral spirit and onto the enemies whom this spirit had allowed to enter *Mai N*'s homestead. These enemies were not mentioned by name. By treating *Mai N* as a potential witch and by propagating church membership as the only effective way of fighting off the onslaught of the *mbuya*'s spirit, a certain amount of pressure could still be brought to bear on the unfortunate woman. There can be no doubt about the prophet's full exploitation of the fears arising from the precarious social position in which a woman such as *Mai N* found herself. Another miscarriage or death of a child could result in complete rejection by her in-laws; a pretty desperate situation for any African woman to be in.

Probably the most important deviation from the traditional system is the treatment of the witch or the would-be witch. Instead of threats and possible expulsion, a message of hope and acceptance within the new group is proclaimed to the unfortunate victim. Pome's wife, for instance, was told not to worry since a solution to her problems was forthcoming. As members of a movement that functions as a refuge against the onslaught of evil powers, Pome and his wife were encouraged to remain united as husband and wife. In this way, favourable conditions for successful childbirth were being created. Elison's removal of the malignant medicine brought about the initial release of tension in the afflicted woman. In addition, the elimination of the threat of rejection by her husband and in-laws enabled *Mai N* to set about her domestic duties in a normal way. Had she been accused of witchcraft in the traditional

manner, she would probably have been forced into a secluded existence, which in turn could have driven her to the type of anti-social behaviour characteristic of the classic Shona witch.

The prophet does not always succeed, of course, in safeguarding the social position of a woman suspected of witchcraft. She may still be rejected by her husband or her fellow-villagers should they decide that the prophet's efforts to exorcise the demon of witchcraft had been fruitless. Unlike Pome, the husband of such a woman may prove to be unwilling to cooperate with the prophet from the start. In the event of expulsion, the victim's incentive for associating with the prophet's group is often intensified.

Wizard-finding during village baptisms

Only a handful of prophets in the Southern Shona regions have become widely known as real wizard-hunters. These are the 'roving prophets' who are regularly summoned from their homesteads to distant villages to conduct large-scale wizard-hunts. They are the individualists such as Apostolic prophet Joshua (Daneel 1971:332), who has broken away from the main Apostolic body of Maranke to act as a freelance, men who are continually faced with the risk of being prosecuted for their activities, some of them having already served one or two sentences of imprisonment. Obsessed with the urge to live up to their calling of fighting wizardry in the name of the Holy Spirit and by additional considerations such as financial gain and the expansion of their spheres of influence, these prophets lead restless lives. They are continually on the move and are generally insufficiently concerned with the integration of possible converts into well-organised and stable church units to profit from their activities in the same way that, for instance, Prophet Elison does from his. Even if they did make disciples, the short spells of a few days at a time spent in a troubled village community give them little chance of consolidating their leadership. The roving prophet relies mostly on a small core of faithful followers residing in the same ward or chiefdom, some of whom occasionally accompany him on his travels.

The general pattern of procedure during such a wizard-hunt is as follows. A kraalhead of a village community troubled by the possible threat of wizardry, especially after a series of mishaps or unexpected deaths, sends an emissary to the prophetic wizard-hunter. In some cases the prophet's visit is preceded or followed up by the sending of a delegation to a traditional diviner to cross-check the information to be obtained or already obtained. The prophet spends a few days in the village. He is entitled to a so-called travelling allowance, paid by the villagers. The amount depends on the gravity of the situation rather than the distance travelled. He also collects a small fee from the adults for his revelatory services. Going from one homestead to another, the prophet spends

hours interviewing the inhabitants of the village. Depending on the situation, he prophesies, cajoles, threatens, accuses or makes suggestions in the name of the Holy Spirit to obtain the necessary information from the villagers. I have even observed such a prophet making lengthy notes on his findings and giving each 'interviewed' adult a slip of paper containing key-words which he or she has to produce during the final act of the 'hunt' that is, during the baptism in Jordan. One or two village court (*dare*) sessions may also be held to discuss the issue at stake. By the time that the prophet requests the whole village community to gather at the nearest dam or river, he is familiar with the current views and suspicions of most of its members. He also knows a great deal at this stage about minor household conflicts or rivalries between the members of different homesteads, which enables him to interpret the information obtained.

The baptismal ceremony that follows usually lasts the best part of a day. Each villager must pass the 'wizard-finder', now dressed in a long white robe and standing knee-deep in the water at the spot where the people enter Jordan. Public confession of sins is followed by spells of prophecies during which the prophet prompts each individual to admit the hidden sins not yet mentioned. It is his task to detect thieves, adulterers and in particular witches or sorcerers and to stop them from being baptised if they refuse to admit their guilt. Standing behind the prophet, his assistants conduct the actual baptism amid the singing of Apostolic songs. Prophet Joshua is often accompanied by two or three of his wives, who stand on the opposite bank during the whole ceremony to 'receive' (*kugamuchira*) those who have successfully passed the test and to lead the singing. The village elders and kraalhead listen intently to the confessions, because villagers, in their anxiety to avoid being branded as wizards, often reveal numerous 'secrets' concerning their private lives. Villagers are seldom physically forced to participate in such proceedings, although in one particular village baptism near Pamushana Mission in the Bikita district several informants reported that a few reluctant Mission Church members were forced with axes to enter Jordan. Generally people agree to undergo the test regardless of their denominational affiliation, lest they arouse the suspicion of other villagers and prejudice their future position in the community. Towards the end of the baptismal ceremony a number of villagers, mostly women who have failed to pass the test, are seated in a group on the 'wrong' side of Jordan. If the prophet is still not sure whom to point out, he may conclude with a general verdict, by pointing at the group and saying: 'Look, there are your witches!' He may also distinguish between those who are considered to possess relatively harmless medicines and the dangerous *varoyi*, who are capable of malicious deeds. A verdict is sometimes omitted completely, the village elders having been provided with sufficient indications in the course of the ritual to draw their own conclusions. This is the safest approach for the prophet who wishes to avoid the risk of being prosecuted. Strictly speaking, the prophet's task terminates

at this juncture, and he leaves the village *dare* to decide what should be done with the guilty party.

The activities of two of the 'roving prophets' who are well known in the Gutu district are worth describing in order to assess the impact of such wizard-hunts on village communities. Prophet Mufeyi lives in Buhera and Prophet Mupumhi in the south-eastern part of Gutu.⁴⁰ Both of them travel far and wide. Yet their main field of action lies in the Buhera, Gutu, Bikita, Zaka and Victoria districts.

Our first case study concerns the predominantly Hera village of Kraalhead Zeka in the northern tip of Chingombe. In November 1965, two children of Prazen, a Maranke Apostle and son-in-law of Kraalhead Zeka, died on two successive days. These children belonged respectively to Prazen's first and second wives, and the nature of their deaths aroused suspicion. The women accused each other of witchcraft, one of them alleging that she had found the hand of her deceased child after it had been used as a potent medicine by the other. Prazen obtained Zeka's permission to call in the aid of an Apostolic prophet. On 24 December he arrived at the village with Prophet Mufeyi from Buhera. As he himself said: 'It has to be a prophet from afar, who does not know the people of our village.' On 26 December Zeka summoned all the villagers to Jordan. Since his own daughter had become a suspect, he insisted that every single villager participate in the ordeal to 'avoid mistakes'. He himself, as a backslid DRC member and part-time *nganga*, was the first to be baptised after he had produced a sable-antelope horn filled with medicine to be burnt by the prophet. Zeka's children passed through Jordan without trouble, but his wife, according to Mufeyi, had failed to confess all her sins and was prevented from passing through the river. Prazen's suspicion (which also involved his mother-in-law) that his wife – Zeka's daughter – was a hereditary witch was therefore more or less confirmed. But both his wives, surprisingly enough, passed the test. Neither did the other Apostolic and Zionist families experience much difficulty in being baptised. Baptist Marire, himself a village member, actually assisted Mufeyi in baptising the villagers.

In addition to Zeka's wife certain villagers were not baptised: the wife of Manjojo, who had refused to produce all her medicines; the second wife of Simon Nyamadzau, who confessed that she was a witch and that she had bewitched (*kudyisa*) Patricia, the daughter of Simon's first wife in the effort to make her a *muroyi*⁴¹ (she failed to pass through Jordan because she refused to produce her malignant medicines and familiars [*zvidoma*] to be burnt in public); female *nganga* vaGhoni, one of the most widely reputed diviner-healers in Chingombe, who was not incriminated in connection with Prazen's children but who had 'refused to reveal her strong medicines to the prophet'; *nganga* Hapagargwi, who was accused of having set a foot-trap (*chitsinga*) for Baptist Marire, in other words, of practising sorcery; Sunurai's two wives, one a Wesleyan and the other a *Chibarirwe* member, who were both accused of using bad medicines;

and Dzingirai's wife, who had made no effort, as most of the others had done, to produce at least some of her medicines, but had flatly refused to cooperate. This latter woman was regarded as 'really bad' (*wakashata chose*).

During the entire procedure Prophet Mufeyi refrained from directly accusing anybody of the deaths of Prazen's children. He had collected sixpence from each villager and promised them that he would be back within a few days to continue his 'investigation'. He never returned. The village court congregated and discussed the whole matter, without achieving much more than extending warnings to some of the villagers who were regarded as a threat to the community because they possessed bad medicines. Prazen, although his wives had passed the ordeal, made them return to their parents on the pretext that he considered them capable of poisoning him as they had poisoned his children. Within a few months he had started negotiating for a third wife.

The village baptism, which Apostle Marire afterwards called a failure, nevertheless had direct or indirect repercussions for some of the village members. Four days after the ordeal, Simon Nyamadzau and his whole family went to Minister Bracho, the senior ZCC leader in Chingombe, to check the truth of Mufeyi's revelations. The Zionist prophets assisting Bracho confirmed the Apostle's findings by suggesting that Simon's second wife operated at night as a witch. Patricia, who admitted that she had been given medicine by this woman in order to become a *muroyi*, had to drink salt water prepared by the Zionists to vomit the *uroyi* from her stomach.

Kraalhead Zeka, who was known to envy vaGhoni for her success as a *nganga*, exploited the suspicion cast on her by Mufeyi to make her existence in the village less secure and less pleasant than before. A few months later the old woman moved to another *nganga* in a neighbouring chiefdom, where she was treated regularly (the symptoms were those of rheumatism) to safeguard herself against medicinal attacks from her home village. When I left the chiefdom, she was still not sure whether it was advisable to return to her solitary existence at her homestead. After the village baptism some of her neighbours started to regard her as a dangerous woman with powerful malignant medicine, and she could no longer count on their support if Zeka decided to have her expelled officially.

The wife of Dzingirai was probably the hardest hit by the ordeal. By categorising her as 'really bad' the prophet had confirmed the suspicion held by several villagers for some time. They had found a scapegoat whom they could now 'legitimately' blame for many of their misfortunes. Accusations that were formerly of a secret nature or were based on mere suspicions could now be vented in public since they were more or less sanctioned by the prophetic revelations. In this respect the village baptism obviously served the purpose of bringing brooding tensions to a head. Dzingirai's wife was not cast out of the community, but her social status grew progressively worse after the ordeal, until she became

the victim of a serious assault eight months later. On 25 August 1966 one of the male villagers – a backslid Ndaza Zionist – openly accused Dzingirai's wife at a beer party of having bewitched him, as a result of which his leg would not heal. He then beat her up savagely in the presence of several other villagers and left her next to one of the huts in an unconscious state with serious head injuries.⁴² That nobody tried to stop the assault seems to indicate how far this 'witch' had sunk in the esteem of her fellow villagers. When she returned from hospital, she resumed her isolated existence in Zeka's village.

The second case involving Mufeyi concerns the village of N in the Muniyikwa chiefdom: Kraalhead N died in December 1965 after several weeks of stomach trouble. His younger brothers and the village elders decided to call in Mufeyi's aid because they suspected that the kraalhead, a former Maranke Apostle, had been poisoned (*kudyiswa*). Apparently it was decided beforehand by the village *dare* that the culprit pointed out by the prophet would be driven from the village. Mufeyi spent three days in the village listening to preliminary confessions and destroying such medicines as he could lay hands on. It was a kind of perpetual purification rite, in preparation for the final ordeal in Jordan. The wives of DRC teachers produced all the beaded doilies they possessed, to be burnt by the prophet, since beads, associated with medicines and *shavi* spirits, are signs of wrong conduct (not necessarily, however, of witchcraft). To avoid the risk of being suspected of witchcraft, these women even produced simple ointments and pills, such as Vaseline and quinine. The wife of a Roman Catholic teacher had her rosary and pictures of Mary destroyed. Only a picture of Jesus on the cross was left untouched by the prophet. The wife of the deceased, in turn, was placed in a precarious position by the prophet's outright refusal to have her cook his food.

On the morning of the baptism at the Devuli river, which lasted from 10 a.m. till sundown, Mufeyi opened the proceedings by telling his experiences of the previous night. He alleged that two women had visited the hut in which he was sleeping to bewitch him and prevent him from revealing the truth about them the following day. Through the Holy Spirit he could fight them off. He did not mention their names, but the villagers already knew that at least two women were to be branded by the prophet as witches.

The younger brother of the deceased, N, who had succeeded to the position of kraalhead, was accused of hiding some bad medicines, and he forfeited the face-saving baptism. The deceased's wife also failed to pass the test, but it was not alleged that she had caused her husband's death. Her 'sin' was the, preparation of a love potion (*muphuwira*) for her husband while still alive – a serious abuse according to Apostolic laws against the sanctified love between husband and wife. Several women were turned back by the prophet to go and fetch medicines and ornaments which they had kept hidden. A DRC teacher, who had been away from the village for several months, refused to be baptised

on the grounds of his absence during N's illness. When the new kraalhead tried to force him to enter Jordan, the majority of villagers sided with him, and he was exempted from participation.

That evening Prophet Mufeyi classified the villagers into four groups:

- the real *varoyi* (five women and one man – all of them non-Apostles)
- a group of women who regularly prepared love potions for their husbands
- the respectable people, who occasionally made use of 'weak' medicines, not endangering others
- the *good* people, who passed Jordan without trouble.

Having ordered the villagers to be seated in their groups, Mufeyi turned to the first group and pointed out a man, the deceased's sister's son (*muzukuru*), who was known to have been at loggerheads with the deceased over land; and a woman, the wife of a 'foreigner' (*mutorwa*), as the persons responsible for N's death. Mufeyi sensed that the new kraalhead and village elders intended to take drastic action, which could ultimately cost him some time in jail if the matter were reported to the authorities. He therefore warned the kraalhead not to chase the culprits away until he himself had returned two weeks later to reveal in what way the two *varoyi* had caused the deceased's death. Through these delaying tactics he obviously tried to dissuade the villagers from taking action at a stage that they were prone to irresponsible excesses. Early next morning Prophet Mufeyi returned to Buhera.

The village court waited for a full month. Several messengers were sent to the opportunistic prophet, but to no avail. It was rumoured at the time that Mufeyi had planned to return, but that on the way to the village he had been warned about the anger of the 'group of *varoyi*', and had turned back. A delegation was therefore sent to a *nganga*, who duly confirmed most of the prophet's findings. The court decided to give the two *varoyi* responsible for N's death a chance to reap their crops, after which they had to leave the village. Consequently two families migrated: the sorcerer, N's *muzukuru*, with his wife and children, to another village in the same chiefdom, and the witch with her husband (who was permitted to stay if he chose to do so) to the Munyaradzi chiefdom. Thus the revelations of Prophet Mufeyi had considerable effect on the lives of several villagers. In his comment on the Jordan ordeal, in which he had refused to participate, the DRC teacher stated: 'The prophet was favouring the five Apostolic families in our village. He referred to the non-Apostles as heathens [*vahedeni*]. His aim was to "buy" people for the Apostolic faith, but he was unsuccessful because none of the non-Apostles who were baptised actually intended to become members of that church. He does not have the Holy Spirit [*Mweya Mutsvene*]! What he says sounds biblical, but in reality it is similar to *shavi* practices ... it is not of God.'

This comment reflects the general attitude of Mission Church members, whether they feel obliged to participate in wizard-finding ordeals or not. They react to the simplified classification of villagers into two main categories, of Apostles and Zionists as 'Christians' and the members of all the other Independent and Mission Churches, together with the traditionalists, as 'heathens', a classification conveniently adopted by the prophets as a premise for their claims that they have 'Christianised' the greater part of such a village community. It is evident, however, that the recruitment value of this ordeal-baptism is negligible. Most non-Apostolic villagers who subject themselves to this type of baptism are more interested in the revelations of the prophet than in church membership. Few of them attend Apostolic services regularly after being 'recruited' under those circumstances. Some of the younger people may be sufficiently impressed with the charismatic qualities of the prophet to be swayed in favour of the 'real' faith he represents. Particularly in villages with a strong faction of Apostles, the chances are that a number of people who have considered affiliation to this church for some time are finally convinced during such a spell of communal build-up of tension, followed by the often impressive and cleverly staged pressure release of the prophet. In neither of the two above ordeals did any of the non-Apostolic adult villagers regard their baptisms as an initiatory rite of permanent significance. Still, a few of them stated that they had decided to attend Apostolic services once in a while. It seemed as if the local Apostles, with the exception of a few sceptical members, were the only people who were really impressed by what they considered a 'rapid growth in members' of their church.

Members of Mission Churches, whose leaders take a serious view of such baptisms, are usually more directly influenced in their religious lives than others. In the above villages it so happened that the Ethiopian-type Church members regarded their 'baptisms' as part of an unavoidable situation. Their superiors took this as a matter of course and did not even contemplate restrictive action. The Roman Catholics involved, it was reported, had to confess their sins to their superiors, and the unfortunate Dutch Reformed Church members were disciplined for periods of three to six months after the merits of each case had been discussed at the Alheit Church Council. In the case of DRC members being baptised, much depends on the personal views of the overseer (*mutariri*) and the status of the members. Should a female church member be forced against her will to comply with the kraalhead's demands, the *mutariri* may well decide to turn a blind eye to the issue, whereas the baptism of a church elder or evangelist is mostly reported in due course to the church council as an unpardonable offence.

In the Pamushana Presbytery (Bikita and Zaka districts) DRC officials in recent years have been alarmed at the way in which church members succumb to the pressures to which they are subjected during wizard-finding village baptisms. Mupumhi, the 'roving prophet' from Gutu, has become a popular wizard-finder

in these regions and reports on his activities have repeatedly been made to the local church council. In 1965 two of his wizard-hunts, at the villages of Murwira and Jarawaza in Bikita, and one at Mutzambga at Zaka, involved a number of prominent DRC members.

At Murwira, a predominantly Rozvi village, six adult DRC members and their children were baptised. A few gallons of cattle-dip had been stolen, after which one of the village elders died. The possible connection between these two occurrences induced the villagers to call in the aid of Prophet Mupumhi. Ward headman Murwira and Chief Jiri were both informed and gave their consent to this. On the day of the ordeal, Murwira announced that he would expel any villager who refused to participate. In addition to three other DRC members, Evangelist Daveson⁴⁵ was the only male villager who refused to enter Jordan after he had successfully passed the public confessional. He deemed it wise, however, to have his wife baptised together with the other villagers, lest she be 'tagged' as a witch. A report on the baptised DRC members was sent from Pamushana to Morgenster Mission for discussion in the Presbyterian Committee. The extenuating circumstances were taken into consideration, but disciplinary measures, lasting three or six months per person, were maintained all the same.

During a wizard-hunt at the Mutsambga village in Zaka, two DRC elders were baptised, and at Jarawaza one elder was immersed in Jordan after he had publicly confessed to having committed adultery with the kraalhead's wife. In the first two cases a full year's church discipline (*shamhu*) was applied and in the latter a year and six months. An old female member of the DRC who had refused to be baptised a second time had her hut burnt down the following night. She reported the matter to the kraalhead, who could not be relied upon under the circumstances to take any action, since he himself supported the villagers who were trying to oust the old woman from their community. This case was not reported to the police. Revd Brand, who was at Pamushana at the time, suggested that the woman refrained from doing so, lest she should prejudice her position in the village further and evoke even more drastic reactions from her neighbours.

The three baptised elders appeared before the local church council at Pamushana and the whole issue was discussed at length. It appeared that the African minister was the least inclined of the council members to accept the excuse that pressure had been brought to bear on the church elders, and he proposed that the full measure of church discipline should be applied. He regarded participation in such baptism-ordeals as an offence similar to paying the traditional *nganga* a visit with the aim of eliciting information through divination (*kushopera*). There is little doubt, however, that the elders had been driven into extremely difficult positions. They knew full well that they were bound to lose their influence and cherished positions of leadership in the Mission Church if they subjected themselves to the prophetic ordeal. Yet the possibility

of being branded as scapegoat and of eventual expulsion from their village communities if they did not comply with the demands of the occasion seemed to them real enough and the greater evil at the time. Revd Brand observed, for instance, that throughout the discussion of his case in the church council one of the elders seemed to suffer from tension brought on by acute fear, the origin of which lay in the complicated circumstances in his home village.

Several coercive forces become operative in such an ordeal. In addition to the dominating fear of losing a position of security in the village society, there is the widespread belief in the magical quality of the water of Jordan, especially prepared by the prophet, which induces people to confess private matters which they would otherwise have kept to themselves. It is feared that some future divine punishment may be incurred if one enters the 'holy water' without confessing all one's sins. This may well be one of the motivating forces that helped to elicit a confession of adultery from one of the DRC elders while in Jordan.

Not everybody baptised in such a large-scale ordeal is prompted by these fears. Outsiders from neighbouring villages often seek aid from the visiting prophet and are only too willing to meet his requirements if they think the revelatory prophecies might help them to achieve their aims. During the preparatory stages of a village baptism in Chingombe in December 1965, Prophet Mupumhi, for instance, agreed to help several people from neighbouring villages. Among them were a Church of Christ school teacher (qualifications: Std 6 and three 'years' training at the Nhowe Bible College), a prominent *Chibarirwe* office-bearer and the eldest daughter of his polygamous household. The school teacher (A) hoped to recover his property stolen from a bus in the tribal area a year previously, the *Chibarirwe* official (B) wanted the prophet to help him search for the money his father had hidden in a mountain before he died, and his daughter (C) was seeking a cure from constant illness. On the day of the baptism A, B and C were subjected to the same treatment as all the others. Mupumhi told them that they first had to become 'real Christians' before he could help them. Teacher A and his wife had considerable difficulty in passing the 'test'. A dispute between A and his kraalhead was reviewed in great detail during the confessional on the banks of Jordan, and his wife was sent back home to fetch all her beaded doilies for the prophet to destroy before she was baptised. In return for 'becoming a real Christian', teacher A was told by Mupumhi that part of his property had been sold between the Devuli river and Basera township; the remaining clothes had been taken by the thief to the Mazuru chiefdom. The prophet even mentioned the supposed thief's name. B had to hear from the prophet that his old mother was a witch, that his second wife was her accomplice, and that the two of them were responsible for C's illness. The prophet visited his homestead towards the end of his stay in Chingombe, but failed to help B find the 'treasure'. Yet he provided C with some peace of mind in 'return' for the trouble she had

taken by safeguarding her hut against future attacks by the witches. The interior was sprinkled with holy water to prevent the paternal *mbuya* from sending her familiars at night to bewitch C and cause her to become a witch as well.⁴⁴

Prophets usually get away with direct and indirect imputations of wizardry. Well aware of the frequent occurrence of baptismal ordeals, the administrative authorities leave the prophets some latitude for their practices. But once it has been established that there is a causal relationship between the imputation of wizardry and subsequent punitive action undertaken against the so-called wizard, severe sentences of punishment are imposed on the prophet. Several ordeals have harmed people accused of wizardry. Yet that none of the accusations made by Mufeyi and Mupumhi led to any form of prosecution seems to indicate that the authorities may be unaware of the connection between certain misdeeds and wizardry accusations, that some of the less sensational ordeals in remote areas escape their notice because they are not reported, or that the punitive action undertaken in a number of cases was simply not severe enough for restrictive action to be taken.

The following two court cases arising from baptismal ordeals and treated as contraventions of section 3 of the Witchcraft Suppression Act (Daneel 1971:467) illustrate the circumstances that led to prosecution:

Case 1

Prophet Philip Tasaranarwo of the AACJM, a resident of Kraalhead Gwamure's village in Chingombe, was sentenced to nine months' hard labour by the regional court at Fort Victoria (on 24 August 1965) for accusing Chiramwiwa of having used non-natural means to cause the death of Shuvai's children. The baptismal ordeal in this case did not concern a full village baptism, but the subjection of a delegation visiting the prophet to the Jordan ceremony. Chiramwiwa's account in court summarises the sequence of events during the ordeal:

On 11 November 1964 at 8 a.m. Kraalhead Musengiwa came to see me at my hut. I then went with him, Chaipa [husband of Shuvai], Marita [another suspect] and Shuvai [mother of the deceased children] to the accused. He lives at Gwamure's kraal. Musengiwa and Chaipa spoke to the accused and asked him to prophesy. They started singing and praying. Accused led me away from the group – about 75 yards. Accused then said to me: 'It is true, you are the witch!' Then he went back to the group. At this place there was a pool of water [Mupindimbi dam near the north-eastern border of Chingombe], and there were some people in the water. I was ordered by the people in the pool to get into the water. I went in and when I had entered waist-deep, accused said I was not fit to go any further and told me to get out. I came out and sat down near the pool. Accused told the group of people around the pool that I was a witch. I denied this allegation. Accused then ordered me to stretch my legs, which I did. Accused came to

me and lifted my dress and put in a stick [Apostolic staff] which he had in his hand. He put the stick under my dress and pulled it out again. Accused then started rubbing the stick with his hands. He showed me something I cannot describe [during his witness the kraalhead referred to this object as a piece of meat] and said: 'This is the medicine I have taken off you!' He told the others: 'This is the medicine that killed Shuvai's children. If you, Chiramwiwa, eat this medicine you will die.' To show the group that I was innocent I chewed it up and swallowed it. Accused said to the group: 'Next week on Tuesday she will die. If she does not die, her belly will swell up.'

As we walked away in a group, Shuvai clouted me with her flat hand. She slapped me on the cheek and we struggled together. She bit off my left ring finger. She shouted and called her husband. Chaipa came and struck me with his fists on the right side of my mouth. He struck me four blows. The accused stopped Chaipa from further assaulting me. Then we went home together with Kraalhead Musengiwa and Marita. These blows of Chaipa were hard; each time I fell and got up again.

Kraalhead Musengiwa testified that the victim's finger had been bitten off. He also stated that she did not fall ill or have a swollen belly, in spite of the prophet's prediction. The reason he gave for the delegation's visit to the accused prophet was that Chaipa's wife, Shuvai, had never given birth to a live child and that they wanted to know the cause of this. It is interesting to note that the delegation first went to Prophet Jaka (the medicine-finder mentioned above) and that he had sent them to Prophet Tasaranarwo after refusing to get involved in an issue which seemed to demand a direct accusation of witchcraft. An ambitious young prophet was more likely to chance the risks involved, in order to widen his own sphere of influence and that of his church.

Case 2

This case concerns a village baptism in the Munyikwa chiefdom east of Chin-gombe in the Gutu district in June 1966. Prophet Joshua, a Maranke secessionist and reputed wizard-finder, brought to a head the tension that had arisen after the death of a certain Manjonjo at the Nyasanga river. The wary prophet had managed to confine his diagnosis to hints and suggestions. It was therefore not he himself who was prosecuted, but Femberwi, the wife of the deceased Manjonjo. She had vented her feelings at Jordan by accusing Agnes, another female resident of the same village, of bewitching (*kudyisa*) her husband with poisoned beer. She was sentenced to six months' hard labour with a suspension of three months for three years.

Witness Chivorvoro, one of the villagers, gave the most detailed account of the sequence of events after the death of Manjonjo:

In February 1966 I received a report from the accused [Femberwi] and went to the hut of deceased. He was sick and complained of his stomach. He

died the following Sunday. A week later they [the villagers] decided to consult a witch-doctor [nganga] about the death, to find out its cause. When the cause is ascertained, the personal possessions of the deceased can be set out in front of the relatives [for distribution]. Five of the inhabitants, including the accused, went to the witch-doctor who lives in the Chipinga area [which is a considerable distance from Gutu]. On their arrival the witch-doctor produced bones which he held in his hands. We were told to pick up the bones and throw them down. Addressing the accused, who was holding the bones, the witch-doctor said: 'You, I can see a tin of beer in your hand. What did you do with the tin of beer?' The accused said: 'Yes. I know about a tin of beer which was given to me whilst I was working in my lands. I took it and gave it to my husband. It was given to me by the mother of Rosie [Agnes].' The witch-doctor is a stranger and had no information relating to our kraal. We went back and reported to the kraalhead. He called a meeting to hear the results from the witch-doctor. He later called Joshua to find out who had caused the death of the deceased. *All members of the kraal went to the baptismal scene near the kraal* [my italics]. Everyone had to confess their sins before entering the water. Agnes went before the accused. She said she had given beer to her son's child, while her daughter-in-law was away ... Accused said: 'I was given a cup of beer in the land and I gave it to my husband. The beer did not taste good and he tipped it out.' Accused said that Agnes gave her the beer. She said Agnes was a witch ...'⁴⁵

According to Agnes, the imputed witch, the accused called out to Joshua while he was listening to Agnes's confession: 'You are about to baptise the one who gave me the beer which caused his death.' She denied this and refused to be baptised. Under cross-examination she stated: 'In confessing my sins I did say that I had given a "heart" [meat] to my son's child, and that this child had died ... I said this to the prophet, Joshua, because he asked me to tell him everything. I was worried because I thought that my doing so might have caused the death of the child.'

Headman Ziwegwa explained to the court the way in which Africans would interpret these events: 'If a witchdoctor said: "I see a cup!" this has no significance, unless the context indicates otherwise ... If a person said she had given "heart" [meat] to her son's child and this child died, people would think she was a witch because of her confession [and] ... because it is unnatural to be feeding another person's child. If a person, hearing this, said that she had been given a cup of beer which she gave her husband, who subsequently died, it would indicate that the giver of the cup of beer was a witch.'

From the African point of view the roles played by Tasaranarwo and Joshua during these two ordeals were essentially the same. Owing to different circumstances one prophet failed to elicit a confession, whereupon he made a direct accusation in accordance with the suspicion of the visiting delegation, while the other was clever enough (and probably fortunate enough) to elicit a confession that spoke for itself. In both cases the prophets were instrumental in



Plate 31: Regular prophetic control of wizardry: male and female Apostles pass the prophets before they commence with afternoon service (top and middle). Final trial of suspect witch who had spent the night in the 'witch camp' after being apprehended at the Apostolic 'gate-entry' procedures, preceding holy communion (bottom)

the imputation of witchcraft and in both cases they effected a cathartic release of brooding tensions. Had Tasaranarwo foreseen the dramatic development of events that was to follow the ordeal, he would probably have expressed his prophetic verdict in less direct terms. And yet, if we consider the numerous accusations actually made during prophetic ordeals, a number of which have serious consequences for the imputed witches or sorcerers while the prophets do not get into trouble,⁴⁶ it is reasonable to assume that Tasaranarwo, during the ordeal, considered himself to be 'doing his duty' as he had done before, with only an off-chance that the witch might ultimately be driven in desperation to her last resort: the district office. In the second case, no mention is made of an assault. The threat of punitive action against her may have caused Agnes to report her predicament at the district office soon after the village-baptism.

The outcome of a baptismal ordeal is hardly ever predictable. In the effort to recruit more followers and with the conviction that he is fighting evil through the exposure of wizardry, the prophetic wizard-finder nevertheless ventures to walk the tight-rope in the name of the Holy Spirit, whenever the occasion, and possibly the burden of a growing prestige, demands it.

Prophetic control within the churches

Several members of the Spirit-type Churches who emphasised the work of the Holy Spirit through the prophets, whether they had personally experienced it through a special calling, healing treatment, or in the form of protection against vengeful (*ngozi*) spirits and wizardry, expressed great appreciation for the prophetic control of wizardry activities. Such appreciation is closely related to the ideals of sanctity and purity, as inspired by the biblical message, and also to the traditional preoccupation with divinations in the effort to determine the causes of illness and death and to do something about them. Thus it is frequently stated in both the Apostolic and Zionist circles that the church community can only present itself as a ritually sanctified (or holy) body before God through the work of the Holy Spirit which reveals (*kubudisa* brings out) such grave misdeeds as wizardry, adultery and theft. Through such revelations the prophets can elicit public confessions from the evildoers, which are regarded as an absolute condition for joining the holy people of God in ordinary worship or Holy Communion.

Others again explicitly state that the prophecies, which closely resemble the divinations of the traditional diviner, constitute a major attraction of these movements. To them, the prophetic movement in some respects resembles a 'protective institution'. For although it is recognised that the majority of wizards, even within these churches, are never completely cured, there is some consolation in the knowledge that the prophets know who the wizards are and that they reduce the inclinations and powers of church members who perpetrate

such evils to a minimum through repeated exposures in public. 'By catching the witches at 'the gates' [of the sacred Church enclosure], commented a Zionist bishop, 'we prevent them from practising *uroyi* "strongly" [that is, regularly].'

In practice, there are essentially three stages of prophetic control: the initial check on all newcomers before they are baptised; the regular exposure of wizards during church services; and the all-important 'gate test' preceding the use of the sacraments during the annual *Paseka* festivities.

Initial check on neophytes

Each neophyte is subjected to one or several diagnostic prophecies before he or she enters Jordan to be baptised. Some females are known to be self-confessed witches. In such cases the prophecies serve to determine whether they really intend to stop their practices or whether they are withholding some of their malignant medicines or familiars for future use as church members. Generally the pre-baptismal prophecies are directed at determining *all* the hidden sins of converts, with the detection of secret wizardry practices as one of the major objectives. The self-confessed witch who arrives at Zion City or any of the other regional church centres with the wish to become a member is then sent back to her homestead in the company of a prophet, who must burn all her devices before she qualifies for baptism. If she is judged to be well intentioned, she may be baptised first and then sent back to her home district where the local church officials destroy such articles as she has been using.

A demonstration of right-mindedness and a willingness to subject oneself to the revelatory scrutiny of the prophets is of primary importance during this first phase of initiation into the new group. Even if some of the medicines are left for future destruction, the neophyte must at least be willing to admit their existence. Those who are unwilling to commit themselves to a full prophetic spell, or who refuse to confess the use of black magic, as revealed by the prophet, are in fact rejecting the absolute authority that the prophet tries to establish, and they can expect to be turned back at Jordan. The amount of pressure exerted by the prophet during the pre-baptismal confessional depends to a great extent on the status of the neophyte. If the prophet knows, for instance, that a woman has turned to his church in an act of desperation after being branded a witch in her village, he may subject her to a severe prophetic test. Having turned to the church as a last resort, and being in need of the acceptance and understanding she expects from the new group, such a woman is liable to reveal much of her private life. Thus the prophet exploits the fact that she is not in a bargaining position. On the other hand, the prophet will refrain from pressing the confessional too far when he deals with independent characters who are less in need of the church as a social anchorage and who may easily turn to another church if not treated with greater diplomacy.

To the women of rural villages who are not members of the resident patrilineages and who are prone to become the victims of witchcraft accusations during critical periods (Daneel 1971:169), the prophetic movements can be a refuge. Vulnerable as they are to social injustice once they have become suspected of practising witchcraft, they turn to the prophet or, as often happens, are made to join a prophetic group by their husbands. Once in a while, such a woman's innocence will be established, or else she will confess to be a witch and subject herself to regular prophecies, thereby safeguarding herself against expulsion from her village. The prospect of a cure, or the reduction of her nocturnal activities to a minimum by the prophet's regular control, often induces the husband to continue to accept her or at least tolerate her in his home.

This point, as well as the kinds of confessions elicited by prophets during the pre-baptismal check, is best illustrated by the initiation of four so-called witches in the *Ndaza* Zionist movement in August 1966. A series of unfortunate events in the village of Mukungu (Mazura chiefdom) had led to allegations of witchcraft by members of the dominant patrilineage against four women of other lineages. As a result, their social positions become unbearable, and they sought the aid of the *Ndaza* Zionists (David Masuka's Zion Apostolic Church) during a large meeting near Bishop Kuchekenya's homestead in Chingombe. Through rumours and gossip the *Ndaza* Zionists were fully aware of the fate of the four suspect-witches from Mukungu. Consequently the topic of witchcraft featured prominently in the sermons preached each day during the six-day conference. Indirect and direct promptings to get rid of their bad medicines, to repent and confess all their sins were repeatedly directed at the 'witches', in order to prepare them for Jordan. One preacher, for example, was referring to the witches when he said: 'A leopard and a goat do not live together. If you people don't follow the laws of the Church, you had better leave.' Another was more straightforward during his sermon:

Have your meat supplies run out, that you want to kill your children and eat their flesh? Do you want us to subject you to a poison ordeal, to see if you are witches or not? He who wants to be taught should know! It is only a fool who goes about naked [that is, it is foolishness to practise witchcraft]. A good person is the one who obeys the laws [of this Church]. You women from Mukungu, you take your witch medicines with you to sow disunity in the Church. When the sun went down last night we saw an owl which glowed like fire [a witch familiar], and we killed it. So, in what way did you profit from it? Have we not destroyed many of your devices?

'You prophets, what are you afraid of? [indirect reference to the Witchcraft Suppression Act]. Where were you when our father David Masuka caught the *varoyi*? If we are detained for doing so, we will make use of the opportunity to witness on his [David's] behalf! Peace to Zion!

Through these sermons an atmosphere of expectancy was created and numerous spectators, both Zionists and non-Zionists, turned up at Jordan (Zimbizi dam) on the last day of the proceedings to witness the reactions of the neophytes, especially the 'witches', to the final persuasive prophecies. Representatives from the Mukungu village were also present to watch the proceedings, and obviously to note the confessions made by the potential outcasts from their community. Under pressure of circumstances and also through inner conviction, the following confessions were made by the four witches.

Mai Ester: 'I have witchcraft medicines [*mushonga youroyi*] which were given me by my grandmother's spirit, as well as an hyena, an owl and two *zvidoma*.⁴⁷ I refused to operate through a snake. They [the other witches, or her familiars] asked me why I wanted to join Zion. I replied: 'I don't want to practise witchcraft any longer but want to be a believer'. I want to stop it altogether.'

Mai Simon: 'I was given *uroyi* medicines by my father's wife and by my *vate* [paternal aunt]. My aunt said: 'Give me your child to eat because you now have many children.' But I refused. They gave me all the means with which one can bewitch others: a hyena, an owl, three *zvidoma* and a snake.'

Mai Piwai: 'My mother [that is, her spirit] called me one night and said: 'Mai Piwai, don't you hear me?' As this demon of witchcraft took hold of me, I ran out of the house. In front of me I saw the grave of my mother's brother, so I took his head with me; I have a hyena, an owl and a snake. I have no use for these things any longer. I now want Mwari only because the things of this world have caused me too much trouble.'

Mai Ronika: 'I ate the child of my mother's brother. We have lately been planning to eat the child of my sister, but have not yet been able to find the proper entrance to her house. I have four *zvidoma* and one hyena. The snake which I hoped would stay in my house was killed. Now I want to leave the things of this world and enter Zion. I will hand over all these things to you prophets. You must bum them all! I really don't want it any longer. I was originally given *uroyi* without knowing what it was. That is one of the reasons why I fear to return to my home, because they [the witches] will go on instructing me in bad ways.'

After this demonstration of willingness to subject themselves to the prophets' control, and having produced some of their medicines to be burned, all four women were baptised. Unfortunately I have not been able to establish what happened to these women after their baptisms, back at their husbands' villages. Judging from other case studies, it is likely that they were not driven from Mukungu's village community and that church membership actually improved their social status. Their ready confessions and their claims to being hereditary witches (*varoyi vokumutsa murimo*)⁴⁸ and therefore of having been drawn into the circle of evildoers by related spiritual agents beyond their

own control pleaded in their favour. Had they been voluntary witches (*varoyi vokutemerwa*), with 'uroyi in their bloodstream', the Zionists might have proved more reluctant to accept them because they would then have belonged to the category of 'incurable' and less controllable witches. Although the hereditary witch is generally regarded as the more formidable person, the compelling spiritual agency can at least be driven off through prophetic intervention from time to time, if not permanently. Moreover, the first 'exorcism' can be effected right at the outset during immersion in Jordan – even if the ceremony is not accompanied by the emotional outbursts normally characterising exorcistic spells – since the power of God, closely associated with the pool of water and superior to any *uroyi* power, chases these demons away.⁴⁹

No visible witch familiars of the type mentioned in the confessions were destroyed in public directly before the baptism of the four witches. It was claimed by the preachers, as in the sermons mentioned above, that some of these familiars had been destroyed in the preceding days. One of the reasons that people 'who do not see through the Spirit' cannot witness the destruction of these familiars is that they only observe the medicinal objects representing the predominantly psychic (but also regarded by some prophets as real and natural) creatures. To the prophet possessed by the Holy Spirit, these beings take on real shape, and they often give vivid accounts of how they have burnt such 'animals'. In this connection Bishop Mattheo Forridge, leader of a secessionist Zionist group (Daneel 1971:313), said: 'When the *varoyi* give us their hyenas and owls to burn, it can act as gunpowder and cause a loud explosion; therefore you must always [for safety's sake] stand on the wind-side of the fire when you burn a *muroyi's* medicine.'

Regular exposure during church services

The first confession of the neophyte at Jordan is only the beginning of a pattern of regular public confessions. Every Saturday or Sunday members who participate in church services must pass the 'gates' to the sacred enclosure – usually an open space beneath some trees ringed by a low stone wall or a few bricks widely spaced in a circle – where such meetings are held. These 'gates' symbolise the gates of heaven. They are formed by one or more pairs of prophets facing each other, prophesying, intermittently speaking in tongues and encouraging each passing individual to confess briefly his or her sins. Confessionals of this nature are brief and to the point. Yet they are effective as a demonstration of control by the Holy Spirit and as a means of subjecting unruly church members or even office-bearers to a supernatural authority represented by the prophets. In the Zion Christian Church, where group control centres on the overriding authority of one man, there seems to be less need for this regular 'passing of the gates'. The absence of a similar rigid regimentation from above in most *Ndaza* Zionist

and Apostolic groups possibly stimulates this kind of group control at a lower level in the leadership hierarchy.

There is of course good reason for keeping this regular check on church members, because the 'demonic spirits' of the hereditary witches may have returned to their hosts in the meantime, or members who have never indulged in the perpetration of evil may have succumbed to the temptation of resorting to bad medicines from a sorcerer in order to fight their enemies. During the first few weeks the newly baptised 'witches' or 'sorcerers' are subjected to longer and more penetrative prophecies than normally take place, to make them yield all their medicines or to determine whether a spell of exorcism is needed. Sometimes prophets will block the way of those members (mostly women) who are reluctant to confess, and they continue their prophecies and proddings for the full duration of an afternoon's service (from approximately 2 o'clock to sundown). Especially if a female church member has had a complicated childbirth or experiences trouble in suckling her child, whether she was regarded as a witch in the past or not, the prophets are likely to subject her to pressure to elicit a confession of witchcraft. Women who confess to having bad medicine at home are sent back to fetch it if they live near the meeting-place, or else they remain seated at 'the gates' and listen to the sermons, after which a prophet accompanies them to their homesteads to destroy their medicines.

The hereditary witch who confesses to being bothered by recurrent visitations of the spirit or spirits concerned is allowed to enter the sacred enclosure during the service. Sometimes she becomes possessed without warning during the service or else special songs will be sung towards the end of the meeting to bring on a spell of spirit possession, whereupon the prophets drive the spirit off with the laying-on of hands and the sprinkling of blessed water. Exorcistic treatment of this nature is regularly applied to young women as soon as they start confessing the call-dreams believed to be caused by the spirits of their maternal grandmothers, who practised witchcraft while alive. These potential witches, who have not yet responded to the call of their *mbuya* spirits and are therefore still uncorrupted, stand the best chance of being effectively safeguarded against the temptations caused by the demons. Bishop Kuchekenya's younger daughter, for instance, after her puberty experienced regular call-dreams from her maternal grandmother, who used to be a notorious witch in Chingombe.⁵⁰ At each Sunday service the local prophets subjected her to a spell of exorcistic treatment, until the *mbuya* spirit stopped bothering the unfortunate girl. Instead of becoming a witch, she eventually turned out to be a prophetess of standing in her father's congregation.

The necessity for regular in-group control is also explained by the existence of modified wizardry beliefs within the context of the prophetic church, in addition to and based on the traditional set of beliefs. The Zionist prophet Potai (ZCC), a specialist in wizardry beliefs, regarded regular prophetic control as

indispensable because 'Zionists bewitch Zionists'. 'We are less vulnerable as Zionists to non-Zionist *varoyi*,' he suggested, 'because they do not know the method of using holy water and cannot enter our homesteads. But the Zionist witch uses the water originally blessed by Mutendi to get at other Zionists. The *muroyi* sprinkles this water as she goes to the house of the victim; it enables her to enter the house. In the same way as the guardian spirits open the door [of their descendants, for the witch to enter], the "spirit of Mutendi" is requested to open the door.' The rationale behind this statement is basically the same as in the traditional thought structure. Wizardry is to be expected within the in-group where people know each other well and where close interrelations generate tension and friction: the in-group in this case being the church. Furthermore, the idea of an aggrieved guardian spirit permitting the *muroyi* to enter the house is transferred to the main leader of the church. Instead of the motto being 'secure the homestead against witch attacks by meeting the requirements of the ancestors', it now becomes 'obey Mutendi and he will prevent witches from entering your house'. Obeying Mutendi implies, among other things, that one should 'pray strongly' to God. In the place therefore of the *nganga's* counteracting magic and propitiatory rites in honour of the ancestors comes a greater dependence on a personal God, the use of power-laden objects provided by his servant (Mutendi) and the revelations of the latter's prophets as safeguards against witchcraft.

In addition to the new notion that wizards from within the inner circle pose a threat through the misuse of the otherwise beneficent holy water, another idea has developed within the church context that necessitates prophetic control. It is generally believed by Zionists that a human being has two angels (*angerosi*). The good angel is one's guardian spirit and stands in relation to God, while the bad angel is from the devil; the good angel is the modern equivalent of one's 'small' shadow and the bad angel of one's 'big, black' shadow (Daneel 1971:97). If a person does not pray strongly, the bad angel overcomes the good one and enables the devil to play havoc with one's life. The Zionist *muroyi* will make use of this devil's angel if he or she wants to cause harm to a fellow church member. Thus the Zionist equivalent of the traditional saying 'you must know a person's clan-name [*mutupo*] before you can bewitch him' (that is, you must know how to approach his ancestors in order to get their permission) is 'you must have access to a person's angel if you want to cause him harm'. Here, then, we find another reason that the Zionist regards himself as less vulnerable to non-natural attacks from outside. His non-Zionist adversary does not know how to use the 'holy water', nor is he (or she) likely to attain access to his angel. On the other hand, the threat from within is to be countered through intensified prayer by the individual believer and regular revelations by the Holy Spirit at meetings, which keep those members in check who are inclined to misuse their intimate knowledge of the in-group.

The 'gate test' during Paseka festivities

The most spectacular form of wizard control in the Spirit-type Churches can be witnessed during the preparatory confessional preceding the much-coveted use of the sacraments. At Zion City, holy communion is celebrated on the last Sunday night of the *Paseka* festival. The confessional takes place from sundown until midnight. A group of six prophets, selected by the church council, line up in front of the church building after having confessed their sins to one another and sprinkled themselves with holy water to cleanse themselves of sin and prejudiced thoughts that might obstruct the work of the Holy Spirit. Long queues of men and women await their turn to pass the three pairs of prophets. All of them have confessed their sins to one of the appointed evangelists or ministers before they pass the prophets on the way to the church entrance, where they undergo the foot-washing ceremony. The prophets detect the hidden sins, especially of the *varoyi*, adulterers and thieves. These persons cause the Spirit to protest with loud shouts and vigorous body-shaking of the prophets, one of whom grabs hold of the 'sinner' and casts him or her out of the queue. Such 'outcasts' are then redirected to a group of ministers sitting some thirty metres away at the foot of a ridge, where they listen to the confessions of those who failed the prophetic test. Some church members are turned back by the prophets several times before they eventually pass the test or turn back to the compound of their own free will.

This 'gate test' has its entertainment value, since the prophets sometimes literally hurl people aside to demonstrate the disapproval of the Holy Spirit. The witches who refuse to confess in particular are treated roughly, usually to the amusement of the church members who stand and watch the procedures. An element of ridicule manifests itself on these occasions. A significant distinction between the Apostolic gate test (to be discussed below) and that of the Zionists is that the Zionist prophets at Moriah make no direct accusations of wizardry at this juncture. They profess to 'see' the witches and sorcerers clearly, but they do not reveal this to the public during the test. By turning the wizards back, they induce them to confess their evil practices themselves. For the witch, it is absolutely essential to make a clean breast of her activities if she is to participate in the Holy Communion, lest she brings down God's judgment on herself. In this respect the prophets see their task as beneficial to the witches, even if some of them are ultimately withheld from using the sacraments.

Prophets Potai and Pianos, two senior prophets of the Gutu district often selected at Moriah to serve at 'the gates', estimate that about 50 to 70 *varoyi*, mostly women, are normally sought out from the group of 2 000 to 3 000 participants. Potai admitted that a number of witches are known to the prophets through rumours and gossip, but maintained that there are also direct revelations of the Spirit to prophets that enable them to detect *uroyi* in people whom they do not know at all. To see whether the Holy Spirit really works through a young

prophet, the old hands often allow a so-called witch to pass them and then watch the reactions of the young ones.

People who are caught regularly by the prophets will sometimes leave the prophetic movement and join one of the Ethiopian-type Churches. As a rule, however, the uncured wizards stay on in their churches, even if it implies an irregular participation in the holy communion. The sorcerers and the voluntary witches who are reluctant to confess their use of *uroyi* medicines in particular are apt to be excluded regularly from participating in the Lord's Supper. Yet they retain their membership! As the prophets say: 'We don't chase the *varoyi* away; it is contrary to the new law of love.' The ZCC prophets in Chingombe, for instance, could name at least ten wizards among the established ranks of their three local congregations. One of them is the third wife of the most senior church official in the area. She is regularly caught at 'the gates' because her deceased *mbuya's* spirit, operating through a *shavi youroyi*, keeps urging her to practise witchcraft. She confessed to the prophets that she has 'eaten' her two children. She is not allowed to cook food for her husband, but he refuses to divorce her because, as he himself says, 'I must set an example to the other church members.'

Even Bishop Mutendi is considered to have three witches in his own household. They are his older wives, who are past the child-bearing stage and are known to be envious of the younger wives. One of them lost all her children while young. She is also held responsible for the death of one of the church leader's former wives. The other two have confessed attempts to *roya* their husband's favourite wives. These three women are not allowed to enter Mutendi's living-quarters, which is interesting, since it is an acknowledgment by the 'man of God' that he himself, in spite of all his mystical powers, can be bewitched. Owing to the bishop's persistent efforts to mould his household into a harmonious whole and demonstrate to his followers how a Christian family unit should be kept together, the private squabbles between his wives are not publicised. A private 'gate test' was therefore introduced in the vestry of the church, which means that mutendi's wives and children, before holy communion, are subjected to a face-saving prophetic scrutiny by two reliable acquaintances, out of sight of all the other church members. Considering that even respected tribal authorities such as senior chiefs have to pass 'the gates' in front of the church, this special privilege allotted to Mutendi's household highlights the sacrosanct character of the 'man of God's' inner court and all that goes with it.

There is little difference between the preparations of the Mutendi Zionists and the *Ndaza* Zionists for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. In both cases the 'gate test' and foot-washing precede the use of the sacraments. Unlike the three pairs of prophets at Zion City, the smaller groups of *Ndaza* Zionists usually use only two prophets at the gates. Sometimes an open-air shelter is provided to represent the church building, with real 'gates' made of branches and leaves.

The *Ndaza* confessional deviates from that of Zion City insofar as confessions are made directly to the prophets at the gates. Yet the same hesitancy to level direct accusations of wizardry at suspect members marks the activities of these prophets at the gates. It is rather a matter of hinting that the suspect person has not yet produced all his/her medicines to be burnt, or that she is plagued by a demon, than stating outright: 'You are a *muroyi*!' Even the confessions may be veiled in vague terms, but those who understand the meaning of such terms know who the wizards are.

More impressive than the Zionist 'gate test' is the prophetic control of the Maranke Apostles towards the climax of their two-week *Pendi* (Pentecost) festival in July. On the last Sabbath, towards sunset and after the major service has taken place, a large confession fire is lit. Hundreds of people start running around this fire, loudly shouting out their sins to others who press in on them in a tightly packed circle. This is the opening act of *kupinza magede* (to pass the gates, literally, to 'insert the gates'), a vigil of more than twelve hours lasting right through the night in preparation for the main communion services. The sins that are confessed during this performance are those that have been committed after 1 July, the date on which the Apostles commence with certain strict rules, such as fasting, men and women staying apart and long hours of prayer. Persons who confess their sins freely are likely to pass the 'gates' without much trouble. The whole ceremony around the fire is highly entertaining. Girls and young women run around shouting into the ears of some church officials that they have done this or that (often minor sexual transgressions such as *gwiti*, that is, sexual play between boys and girls), while the men shout words such as 'anger' (*shungu*), 'adultery' (*upombwe*), and 'jealousy' (*godo*). Everyone seems to enjoy this occasion immensely. Owing to the general and random release of emotions, a high pitch of communal excitement is achieved. Some of the evangelists and baptists standing around the fire quicken the pace of events by encouraging the running confessors to spell it all out.

Hundreds of prophets meanwhile pass the 'twelve gates'⁵¹ of the *Pendi* enclosure (a pole and reed wall enclosing several hundreds of square yards, large enough to accommodate up to 20 000 people) where they confess their sins to the most senior prophets. Those prophets who are revealed to have committed serious sins, for example adultery, in the not-too-distant past are not allowed to enter the enclosure at this stage, since their 'weakness' might cause them not to 'see' the sins of others. Inside the enclosure the leading prophets, such as Judah, Johane's third son, and a few close associates, brief the prophets on their important task at the 'gates'. Great emphasis is placed on the responsibility of the prophet to prevent his fellow Apostles from 'passing the gates' without being ritually purified. Then the prophets are divided in teams of twelve per gate. The teams have to work in relays right through the night. By the time they take up their positions at 'the gates' – six pairs of prophets in each narrow

passage, flanked by reed walls representing a 'gate' – long queues of people, coming from the confession fires, have lined up in front of the enclosure.

Amid the noise of prophets speaking in tongues, people shouting at the confession fires and relay teams of Apostolic choir members (*Hakirosi*) singing their rhythmic chants in the background, a slow 'trickle' of church members start to pass the gates. A sinner who has hidden a major evil (wizardry, adultery, theft, straightforward murder or the use of curative medicines generally) may cause all twelve prophets at the gate he approaches to react simultaneously with shouts, snorts and bodily contortions, or else he may pass several pairs of prophets successfully, suddenly to be stopped near the end of the 'gate' for some undetected sin. In some cases the 'sinner' is subjected to persuasive (sometimes bordering on coercive) prophecies for the better part of an hour before the prophets have elicited an appropriate confession. Those who refuse to confess the misdeeds that they are accused of are led away to one of several 'church courts' conducted by 'judges' (*vatongi*) and evangelists seated around *dare* (court) fires.

Those who are caught for not confessing wizardry or adultery are 'driven' into the 'camp of the wizards' (*musasa wavaroyi*), where they are watched by several guards. Witches who confess their evil ways in accordance with the prophecies are allowed to pass the gates, but those who still have familiars or possess medicines must turn back. The accusations of witchcraft are much more direct than with the Zionists. Planting their staves in front of a suspect witch, the prophets will dance up and down, making pointed remarks, for example 'I see a hyena leaving your door' or 'I see *mushonga wouroyi* in your hands' in between spells of speaking in tongues. Participant villagers from outlying districts often close in on the gates to listen to the prophetic revelations about people that they themselves suspect of being *varoyi*. To be taken to the wizard-camp in front of fellow villagers is a shameful matter. It is therefore to be expected that some of the accused will confess 'sins' they have not committed in an effort to avoid being stigmatised. In this way, the headstrong, the anti-social or the very rich Apostles are cut down to size by their fellow members. The prophets are fully aware of the external pressures that are brought to bear on women accused of witchcraft. Prophet Maisiri from Buhera, for instance, commented: 'The reason that the women confess [*uroyi*] is that the people at her home village will hear that she has been 'caught at the gates'; they will hate her and set her hut on fire if she shows no [appropriate] signs of remorse and a determination to stop her evil deeds. She knows that she will ultimately be killed. So she is compelled to yield her bad medicine to be burnt. As long as they [the witches] remain Apostles, the others will leave them in peace.'

Here, then, we have the dilemma confronting Apostolic women accused of witchcraft. They are accused in the name of a supernatural agency that is not supposed to 'make mistakes', and there is little else they can do but confess.⁵²

Once they are stigmatised, they are more or less forced to subject themselves to the strictures of the Apostolic in-group, since they are safer in their villages if the rest of the community believe them to be under constant prophetic control.

Well aware that the prejudices of some prophets, or the eagerness of others to prove their charismatic qualities, can lead to the wrong people being put into the 'wizard-camp', the church leaders give the 'culprits' a last opportunity to confess their sins. On Sunday morning all the varoyi and adulterers are taken from their 'camp' to an open clearing, where they sit down amid a horde of spectators.⁵³ Several prophets and other church officials are chosen to deal with these cases. It was my impression that the elderly men, who are more likely to achieve compromise solutions, are chosen for this task.

Each person who has spent the night in the *musasa wavaroyi* has his or her case (at least 80 per cent of them are women!) tried in the presence of a secretary (*munyori*), a prophet and a church official from the same area. The *munyori* records the prophetic verdict that was given at the gates. He reads out an abbreviated background sketch of the case to the other two leaders. Many of these cases are of course well known to the local leaders of outlying congregations, and they may add some more information. Leaning on his staff, the prophet confronts the 'sinner' with yet another spell of revelatory prophecy. There are stereotyped lines of approach that the prophet follows. He elaborates on what he knows about the accused. His opening gambit at this last-minute 'trial' seldom includes a straightforward accusation, but rather indirect suggestions, for example that he 'sees people back at the home village who suspect accused of having bad medicines'. If the accused admits this, the prophet knows that he is dealing with someone who is probably plagued by a guilt-ridden conscience owing to wizardry that the person believes himself to have perpetrated, or because of strained relations resulting from a brooding hatred or other unfortunate circumstances. From this vantage point the tentative prophecy narrows down gradually. Suggestions and insinuations culminate in a final accusation, camouflaged as it may be in a flurry of phrases. The authority of the Spirit is seldom disputed, and the two leaders assisting the prophet during this last 'trial' often urge the accused to make a full confession.

The more tactful prophets often seem to find some sort of compromise between the radical revelations initially made at the gates and the evasive answers of the accused, so that eventually a confession can be elicited that is vague enough to save some of the prestige of the one accused, without, however, contradicting the initial prophecy.

One of the cases that was dealt with by Prophet Maisiri (quoted above) in July 1966 concerned a certain woman, *Mai J*, who was caught at the gates for witchcraft and the use of a love potion (*muphuwira*) to retain the love of

her husband. In reply to the prophet's promptings *Mai J* made certain vague references to a spirit visiting her. She did not admit that it was her *mbuya's* spirit or that she was a *muroyi*. So the prophet gradually shifted his focus to the *muphuwira* issue, where he had more success in eliciting a full confession. On the grounds of this confession *Mai J* was 'acquitted' and allowed to participate in the holy communion.⁵⁴ In *Mai J's* case the compromise, which saved the face of both the original accuser and the accused, consisted in upholding the term *uroyi*, but narrowing its content down to cover a minor offence to which she could admit. These last-minute 'trials' are ostensibly aimed at assisting the major culprits to gain entrance to the sacred enclosure. In reality they serve a double purpose: to prevent the Spirit's authority from being ridiculed; and to save the church from losing those members who react sharply to the relentless harassment of its prophets.

Conclusions

We have distinguished two recruitment techniques dealing with and based on wizardry beliefs and practices. Of these the first, which was concerned with the prophetic detection and removal of *uroyi* medicines, proves to be the most successful as a means of acquiring a stable following. In the *Shinga Postora* it was moulded into an effective device with which to attract new members during the movement's first phase of expansion. Here, a definite cycle of events emerged: a summons of the reputed prophet to a village whose members believed themselves to be threatened by wizards; a religious service at the village attended by members of the new movement and most of the villagers; the detection, removal and destruction of malignant medicines as part of the ritual proceedings; and baptism of villagers convinced by the prophet's message and liberating activities. This leads to new invitations by other villagers and a repetition of the entire procedure. Judging from the service at Kraalhead Murambasvina's village, as described above, the sermons on these occasions contain mainly propaganda for and justification of the new movement, an exposition of church laws, summons to conversion, and solutions to the threat of wizardry generally, or with reference to a particular case. Subsequent baptismal ceremonies usually include detailed instructions about the 'ways of the new church'.

The second recruitment technique, though less directly effective than the first as a church-expanding device, is usually as spectacularly arranged. Baptism in Jordan in this instance serves as a kind of wizard-detecting ceremony. Roving prophets who use this technique supplement or replace one of the cardinal functions of the traditional *nganga* – the detection of wizardry. Recruitment of new followers during village baptisms does not always lead to lasting church membership. In certain instances church expansion is only a secondary or incidental aim of the prophet, who may be more concerned with his task of

combating evil powers in society, and sometimes with the bolstering of his personal reputation, than with the organisation of stable congregations. Prophetic wizard-hunts are controversial events that frequently evoke reaction from Mission Church members who are unwilling to subject themselves to the demands of the prophet. Some regard such occasions as a cheap way of winning new members and the cause of increased disunity in society. Yet the prophet's service to the village community, insofar as it brings brooding tensions to a head, has a cathartic and salutary effect. Many Africans therefore evaluate this practice positively. Moreover, the wizard-hunt, through preaching, baptismal instructions, prophecies and singing, has distinctly Apostolic or Zionist features, with the result that it does function as a propaganda device that forcibly demonstrates Spirit-type practices to an entire village community, whatever the direct outcome in terms of accelerated church growth.

Finally, I have described the prophetic practices dealing with the control of wizards, the prevention and eradication of wizardry practices *within* the ranks of the Spirit-type Churches. These practices demonstrate the continual concern of prophets with wizardry, that the way in which they take the deep-seated wizardry beliefs in African society seriously and confront the evil forces with the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus the image of the prophetic movement as an institution that provides protection against *varoyi* and that can even cure witches, or at least check their nocturnal activities, is enhanced. To the suspect witch who is in danger of losing her social status in a particular community, to the wizard who has already become an outcast from society, or to persons who believe to be seriously threatened by evildoers, the acquirement of membership in a Spirit-type Church sometimes seems to be the only solution. Prophetic accusations of wizardry within the in-group can be severe, humiliating and are not always free of discrimination against the less popular members. But the reconciliatory aim of such activities should not be overlooked, for the wizard is seldom totally rejected or maltreated in the church group. On the contrary, the *muroyi* is urged to improve his or her conduct, while the rest of the congregation may be urged not to indulge in hypocritical judgment, but rather forgive and support the culprit in a Christian spirit. Whereas the traditional imputation of wizardry led to the killing or expulsion of the scapegoat, the prophetic accusation and 'punishment' (prohibition of participation in the Lord's Supper) are less drastic and serve the purpose of group solidarity – the affiliated wizards included. This important deviation from the traditional system points to a realistic confrontation of the old order with a new message. Through these indigenous practices, incorporated and transformed in church life, the Christian witness acquires a meaningful dimension, which appeals especially to the afflicted members of African society.

Exorcism as Combating Wizardry: Liberation or Enslavement?*

Exorcism forms an integral part of the healing ministry adopted by many of the established and Independent Churches in Africa, particularly the prophetic movements of the Zionist and Apostolic type. Compared with the more common faith-healing activities, which combine direct pleas to the Christian God on behalf of the afflicted with a wide variety of symbolic activities – from laying-on of hands to sprinkling with holy water, the touch of a holy staff or the protective adornment of holy cords – exorcism represents a more dramatic act of spirit expulsion. Instead of praying to God, the priest, prophet or healer, acting as exorcist, commands the spirit invading the afflicted person to depart. Thus the ritual is a symbolic manifestation of God's power over the possessing spirit.

African cosmology is characterised by a preoccupation with the spirit-world in the form of ancestor veneration as a means of safeguarding social stability and the disruption of socio-cosmic harmony by spirits of evil intent. Against this background, exorcism appears in many instances to be an effective means of communicating the Christian good news of Christ's Lordship over all principalities and powers in the universe. At all events, many church leaders use exorcism as a pastoral instrument to combat wizardry beliefs, the accompanying fears and the antisocial forces thought to be at work. In addition many Africans witness about liberation and relief once they have undergone exorcist treatment.

A perusal of current theological viewpoints indicates, however, that scholars are by no means unanimous in their evaluation of the pastoral value of exorcism in the church of Africa. Broadly speaking, a distinction can be made between those church leaders and academic observers of African Christianity who either practise or theoretically support a ministry of exorcism and those who oppose it or are highly critical of its seemingly negative implications. The former emphasise the liberating value of a ministry that appears to confront the existential needs and fears of people in a ritually understandable and therefore psychologically and religiously satisfying manner. The latter are sceptical of the long-term impact of a practice that is considered counterproductive in that it reinforces the traditional cosmology – and therefore enslaves people to the world of demons, wizardry beliefs and fears – without providing a realistic Christian solution.

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In this chapter I shall first consider a few of these contrasting theological viewpoints in an attempt to establish a theoretical framework within which to interpret the exorcist ministry of Zimbabwean Independent Church leaders that I am currently studying. Then I present a brief sketch, based on a recent survey of what could be called a Christian wizardry eradication movement. This case study concerns the exorcist work of Bishop Nyasha as a leader of the Pentecostal Church (popularly known among the Shona as *Pentecosta*) – a Shona Spirit-type church with Zionist and Apostolic features, but focusing on the expulsion of wizardry or wizardry-related spirits.⁵⁵ The headquarters of this church is in the Chingombe chieftdom in the Gutu district, the area where I studied Prophet Alison Mutingwende's *Shinga Postora* (Courageous Apostles) movement in earlier years (Daneel 1974:266–76). Because this latter movement also focused on wizardry eradication, some comparative observations will be included merely by way of clarifying the salient features of the Pentecosta's pastoral ministry. Basically, however, this chapter attempts to interpret and evaluate exorcism in one Independent Church in the light of recent theological considerations.

The length of this chapter allows only a cursory treatment of relevant theories and a much abridged description of essentially novel and provisional empirical data from a research project still under way. Hence a word of caution: what follows is a preliminary and in many respects impressionistic excursion into a complex and sensitive field. If nothing else, I trust that my treatment of the subject will illustrate the relativity, if not futility, of our neat Western theories when confronted, in practice, with the belief systems and stark pastoral realities of Africa. Whatever our theoretical constructs, the enacted theology of the African Independent Churches is a vitally significant component of a developing African Christian theology. In this respect Bishop Nyasha's ministry of exorcism is noteworthy, being one more instance of intuitive, spontaneous or dramatic representation of the gospel at the cutting edge of existential confrontation between the Christian message and evil (as defined in African cosmology).

Theological viewpoints

Support for and practice of a ministry of exorcism

Dr A. O. Ingenzo of the University of Nigeria calls for a more dynamic and contextualised form of Christianity in Africa, particularly as far as the 'mainline' churches are concerned. He argues strongly for a ministry of exorcism on the grounds that 'exorcism has succeeded in bringing relief to some affected people, whereas other methods have apparently failed' (Ingenzo 1985:179).

In the Roman Catholic Church, two of the best-known examples of African leaders engaged in the exorcism of evil spirits are Emanuel Milingo, former Archbishop of Lusaka (Zambia) and Fr M. P. Hebga, a Jesuit priest in Cameroon. Against

the background of diverse studies in theology, psychology, philosophy and the social sciences, Fr Hebga has systematically investigated various stereotypes of spirit possession and has developed a pastoral ministry to deal with such cases. According to Lagerwerf, Hebga's exorcist ministry includes 'ongoing and powerful praying of the minister and his co-workers (prayers of the Roman ritual prove themselves especially effective), reading of certain passages from the Bible, invoking the archangel Michael or other saints, administering holy water, touching the body of the possessed with a crucifix, discussions with and rebuking of the spirit(s), and in general a sympathetic and caring attitude towards the possessed' (Lagerwerf 1985:67).

Fr Milingo developed an astounding ministry in Lusaka in the 1970s, drawing vast crowds to his healing sessions. Accused of unorthodoxy, neglect of his episcopal duties and dishonesty, he was summoned to Rome for intensive investigation. This led to his resignation from his see in 1982. His subsequent duties as Special Delegate to the Pontifical Commission on Migrant Refugees and tourism do not prevent him from giving pastoral service to hundreds of supporters in Rome and from celebrating a monthly 'healing mass' on behalf of thousands of people. In his book, *The World in Between* (1984), Fr Milingo develops a simplified demonology as the cause of much of the human suffering he has encountered in his ministry. He illustrates his convictions about the reality of Satan and demonic powers with references to the Church of the Spirit, a movement which allegedly receives spiritual powers from the devil; has pacts with the devil, contracted by individuals who have despaired as a result of their disappointment with human life and society; and communicates with evil spirits who have the gift of revelation. Milingo considers many religious ministers incapable of acknowledging such reality because they have become 'spiritual diplomats' who have somehow accepted a form of co-existence with the enemy, the devil. 'They say he is not there and when they are told that he is there, they tell the possessed that they should believe he is not there (Milingo 1984:52). Needless to say, Milingo calls on fellow believers to stop being spiritual diplomats and to engage boldly in the fight against Satan. In his own ministry of exorcism or deliverance he is convinced he shares the power and authority of Christ the Messiah to cast out Satan or any evil spirits (Milingo 1984:119). His appeal to the church universal, therefore, is not only to preach the miracles of the gospel, but to deliberately invoke the healing powers given by Christ to his Church (Milingo 1984:103).

As regards prophetic exorcist activities in Independent Churches, I have pointed out the positive recruitment value of such pastoral practices for the Shona Independents in Zimbabwe. To numerous adherents of the Spirit-type churches, exorcism symbolises the liberating and protective function of the church. The built-in safeguards against possible misinterpretation of this ministry were described as follows:

The ritual context within which exorcism takes place is quite different from that within which the *nganga* (the traditional exorcist) operates. Here we have a group of people professing to be Christians who dance and sing Christian songs in the expectation of a manifestation of the Christian God's delivering power. The act of driving out the inhabiting and unwanted spirit is usually performed in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Prophets generally recognise that the act of expulsion does not imply a self-willed manipulation of divine power and that God Himself is the final authority who decides whether their dramatised and symbolic action will be successful. Some of them admit failures, often with reference to God, who willed otherwise. Then there is also the accompanying pastoral care and the insistence of prophets that afflicted persons themselves should pray perseveringly to be rid of troubling spirits. Thus we have a group-integrated technique with interaction between participant, congregation, exorcising prophet and praying patient – all of them in joint action and depending on the great Deliverer of evil powers (Daneel 1974:342). Because of these decidedly positive features of prophetic exorcism, as well as a persistent need for contextualised pastoral care in the face of the high incidence of spirit-possession observed among the Shona, I supported J.V. Taylor's (1963:211) call for 'the development of some properly safeguarded ministry of exorcism' in the church of Africa.

In the field of wizardry, the weaknesses of a prophetic ministry of medicine-finding, wizard-detection and the exorcism of *uroyi* spirits were pointed out. Some prophets, for instance, concentrate on the recruitment value of their services to such an extent that they neglect pastoral care of their flock. Others exploit the fears of people who feel threatened by the powers of wizardry. In some cases the discriminatory and stigmatising effect of exposing potential or practising witches overrides the Christian spirit of love and sympathetic understanding, with detrimental implications for the social status of the woman concerned. It was felt, however, that the positive features of the prophetic campaign against wizardry practices preponderate, in that the message of God's protection and liberation is convincingly carried into a realm frequently dominated by stark terror. The Christian message of reconciliation, moreover, is conveyed to the wizards – the outcasts and misfits of society – in a manner that provides new hope of social rehabilitation. This is in direct opposition to the traditional belief: once a wizard, always a wizard – which assumes the incontrovertibly evil nature of whoever is branded a witch or sorcerer in African society (Daneel 1974:343–7).

Criticism of exorcism: preference for a paradigm shift

Shorter's (1985:95) reservations about exorcism as a pastoral tool in the church of Africa are closely linked with his views on the destructive impact of witchcraft theory and practice on African society: 'Witchcraft is a kind of penumbra of human wickedness, an inborn preternatural power to harm and kill enjoyed for

its own sake. To see all the misfortune, especially the more dramatic disasters, as traceable to human causes is intellectually satisfying. It also creates an illusion of control over evil forces, but ultimately it is not credible ... It entails unjust judgements.'

Shorter is particularly concerned about the misleading illusion of control over evil, the injustice of witchcraft accusations and the witch-finder's pretence of finally judging the witch. Witchcraft accusation, in his view, is a form of self-salvation or self-justification, a mechanism of evading personal responsibility for misfortune and sinful acts, at the expense of whoever is branded the common enemy of the community (Shorter 1985:96). The witch-finder usurps the position of God by acting as both judge and executioner. His or her accusations destroy the social personality of the accused. By implication all witchcraft-eradication movements, by their very inclusion of witch-finding and accusation practices, only serve to strengthen people's fear of witches and their acceptance of the underlying theory. They provide no viable solution or true liberation from an oppressive belief system.

Exorcism, in its popularised form in the Church of Africa, *can* include traditional aspects of witch-finding and accusations; *can* lead to indiscriminate attribution of misfortunes to evil forces, and hence to intensified exorcist procedures; and consequently *can* lead to aberrations similar to the European witch hunts. Shorter's reticence on this score is therefore understandable. He reminds us that although Christ practised exorcism for epileptics, he did not attribute every affliction to diabolical possession. Likewise, it would be wrong for the priest-exorcist to try to win over fellow believers to his views of demonic possession – a terrible prospect, considering the historical background of European demonology. Instead, Shorter (in Lagerwerf 1987:58) feels that the church should develop a more original and enduring ministry:

We should discourage interest in the spectacle of exorcism and dissociated personality in the normal context of healing and prayer over the sick. For the Christian African the world must be alive in a new sense, not with the self-orientated, depersonalising theories of African tradition, but with the knowledge that 'the world is charged with the grandeur of God' and that all natural human realities are communications of divine love and salvation in Jesus Christ.

In his recent book, *Jesus and the Witchdoctor*, Shorter's criticism of exorcism is directed specifically against the work of former Archbishop Milingo. He is convinced that Milingo imposes a medieval theory of European demonology on the traditional African spirit world. This imported theory has more in common with the *Malleus maleficarum* (hammer of the witches) – a notorious publication by two inquisitors in 1486, which deals with the massive witch-hunt in Europe at the time – than with African tradition (Shorter 1985:190). Milingo's ministry incorrectly and indiscriminately attributes diabolical possession to all

kinds of mental and physical afflictions (Shorter 1985:197). Repeated exorcism, Shorter insists, only serves to strengthen people's fears of demons and evil spirits. Hence the dualistic worldview of absolute good versus absolute bad is reinforced to the extent that the fear of demons overrides faith in the healing power of God.

Without totally rejecting exorcism, Shorter suggests that the solution to wizardry should be sought in alternative measures: first, a refusal to enter into discussion about the objectivity of wizardry beliefs; second, conscious relinquishment of the dualistic philosophy underlying wizardry beliefs; and third, transformation of the social world through socioeconomic development and Christian community building – that is, the creation of a setting that will dispel wizardry-related fears.

David Bosch distinguishes between two approaches to the combating of wizardry. The first accepts in essence the African traditional interpretive framework, while the second insists on changing this framework; in other words, it switches to a new paradigm. Like Shorter and Singleton (1980:23), Bosch (1987:52–60) opts for the second approach. He also refers to Andrew Wall's (1982:97–9) distinction: the first approach is based on the indigenisation principle, in which the Christian faith is incarnated in a particular culture; the second rests on the pilgrim principle, through which God in Christ transforms culture. Of course one immediately wonders whether these principles should be interpreted as mutually exclusive. Incarnation as envisaged by the indigenisation principle in fact includes Christ's transformation of culture. In practice at least, indigenisation seldom involves a straightforward and passive adaptation of the Christian faith to indigenous culture. It seems to me, therefore, that we have here two principles with a considerable degree of overlapping, displaying different emphases rather than absolute antithesis.

This aspect is not sufficiently recognised in the categorical theoretical distinctions between the two. Bosch, for instance, classifies both the confession of witchcraft practices (described with reference to the *Shinga Postora* movement) and exorcism (mainly with reference to Milingo's ministry) as belonging to the first approach. Thus the impression is created that these practices merely accept the traditional cosmology and make no real contribution to a final solution, a paradigm shift. Interpreted in Shorter's terms, as Bosch appears to be doing, these practices serve to perpetuate and entrench instead of supplant the traditional paradigm. He does not sufficiently consider the possibility of exorcism – and not only Milingo's kind of exorcism along European demonological lines – changing the traditional worldview; of exorcism being instrumental in bringing about a paradigm shift. Bishop Nyasha's ministry of exorcism, the case study to be discussed below, suggests that a fundamental reshaping of society is attempted and that many of the features of an alternative interpretive framework, as proposed by Bosch, are integral to this ministry.

What, according to Bosch, are the requirements for a paradigm shift? First, Christians should help their community liberate itself from the scapegoat theory by invoking the message of Christ, the one true 'Scapegoat' who carried away the sins of this world once and for all. Second, Christian teaching should emphasise the co-responsibility of all individuals for what goes wrong in society, lest the tendency to blame a wizard for such misfortune encourages a superficial understanding of conversion. Third, a new understanding of human suffering should be fostered in order to change the philosophy that links suffering with evil and consequently imputes the practice of wizardry to the ill deeds of others. Fourth, a fundamental change in attitude towards magic is required. Healing, reconciliation and mutual service should replace the search for and elimination of the alleged human causes of misfortune. Fifth, the Christian message should be proclaimed that evil has no future. The future lies with God. Satan and all manifestations of evil can therefore only be seen as conquered in advance by God. In this respect Bosch (1987:58–9) indicates that the church in Africa has not always managed to communicate the message of an ever-present God. The more remote God appears to be, the greater the need for magic to counter the destructive forces of evil.

However much I agree with these requirements for a paradigm shift, the question remains how one is to convey this message effectively in a society that still by and large applies the scapegoat theory, where the belief in magic is still rife, and where one is confronted constantly with outcasts, misfits and marginal figures – those already accused and stigmatised, in search of a cure or a lasting solution. What do you do with the afflicted members of families who for many generations have had a tradition of inherited wizardry? When such individuals fall ill and have dreams that are interpreted by society as call-dreams to perpetrate wizardry, they are at once stigmatised in their neighbourhood. In their appeal to the church for a solution, do we avoid talking about the objective reality of wizardry as it features in their lives for fear of giving credence to such beliefs, as Shorter would have it? Or do we confront those beliefs with the message of the one Scapegoat, Christ, and exorcise the invading spirits as part of the solution to a tradition-based problem, despite the risk of misinterpretation in certain quarters? Bishop Nyasha's ministry offers a specific response to this question.

A case study in Zimbabwe: Bishop Nyasha's Pentecosta Church

Origin and organisation

Bishop Nyasha has been an active member of the Church of Christ in the Chingombe chiefdom (Gutu district) since 1965. Known for his gifts of healing, he played an important role in the healing ministry of his church during the war years. In the late 1970s, when the local church minister left to take up residence

in Masvingo for security reasons, Nyasha's leadership became even more firmly established. He appointed a core group of young men who assisted him with faith-healing practices, similar to those of the surrounding Spirit-type churches – the Zionists and the Apostles. After Independence the local minister's return in 1980 brought him into conflict with Nyasha, who was expelled from the Church of Christ because his healing ministry was considered controversial. It seems more likely, however, that the real reason for his expulsion was that he had established himself as a popular leader and thus posed a threat to a minister who had lost stature by forsaking his parish in a time of crisis.

For some time Nyasha participated in and considered joining either a *Ndaza* Zionist group, Mutendi's Zion Christ Church or Maranke's Apostolic movement. Then his young assistants from the Church of Christ urged him to establish a new church. They spent night-long vigils with him, praying and fasting in the surrounding mountains, until he had a vision that convinced him that he had to start the Pentecosta Church. He acted upon this inspiration immediately and baptised his former Church of Christ supporters – Charles Munyede, Shepherd Chimutso, Felix Manyenzi, James Matimbira and Wellington Mukuya. His own principal leadership was confirmed by Bishop Matthew Forridge of the Zion Christian Church of Christ, together with myself, one of the founder members of *Fambidzano* (the Shona Independent Church Conference) and one of the staunchest ecumenical figures in the district. According to Nyasha, Bishop Forridge said after an ordination ceremony: 'Go now! Build your church in accordance with your own convictions and insights. I have authorised your divinely inspired leadership.' Thus the Pentecosta Church was founded in 1980, with Nyasha as bishop and his fellow healers as senior dignitaries in different congregations. Focusing its ministry mainly on healing through the exorcism of *uroyi* (wizardry), *ngozi* (vengeful) and *shave* (alien) spirits, the new movement gained some 1 000 followers during the first five years of its existence. Nine congregations were established, the centres being Chingombe, Muchekayaora, Charumbira, Chitsa, Wadzenenga, Minda-mirefu at Chigukune (all in central and eastern Gutu), as well as Harare, Kwekwe and Shenjiri. Bishop Nyasha's residence in Chingombe is church headquarters, popularly known among the *Vapentecosta* as 'Jerusalem'. Each congregation has its regular worship, led by a hierarchy consisting of a minister, evangelist preachers, overseers and deacons, and its own court (*dare*) responsible for disciplinary matters. Because a high percentage of the church's membership consists of adult women – former prospective or active 'witches' who have found refuge in this movement – the women's association constitutes an influential sub-unit, in charge of Bible study, prayer meetings and practical services rendered to needy women.

The church's annual programme includes three Paschal celebrations: one in January; the big one in May when the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is celebrated; and the October 'seed conference' (*ungano yembeu*) when the seed to be

planted by the overwhelming majority of peasant church members is blessed by the bishop to secure good crops. Each of these mass meetings includes the climactic sacrament of holy communion. In style of worship and organisation, therefore, the Pentecosta closely resembles the Shona Independent Churches of the Spirit type. In addition, the movement has a theology that emphasises the message of salvation provided by a triune God, 'Jordan' baptism, faith healing and speaking in tongues. Thus most of the works of the Christian Church (from a Reformed perspective) are in evidence. Despite the indisputable 'wizardry-eradication' features of Nyasha's ministry we are faced here with a fairly stable and growing ecclesiastical institution.

Historical and socio-religious context

A number of factors have contributed to the Pentecosta's preoccupation with wizardry-related ills in society and exorcism as a predominant therapeutic practice. First of all, the war had given rise to uncertainty and social upheaval in Zimbabwe, an ideal breeding ground for heightened interest in and accusations of witchcraft (Bosch 1987:41). The need for security in a war-torn society had led to a renaissance of traditional religion. Scores of guerrillas and *mijiba* (members of the youth league) intensified ancestor veneration and relied on ancestral guidance for the strategic planning of their offensive. They received this instruction through the traditional spirit mediums (*masvikiro*), particularly during secret *pungwe* (political instruction) meetings. Wizardry allegations became the idiom for a massive purge to rid society of all collaborators who were considered a threat to the cause of regaining the 'lost lands.'

The cessation of hostilities at Independence left many people displaced or homeless. Suspicion of others and concomitant wizardry accusations persisted. The purge of unwanted elements in society continued, despite public attempts at reconciliation. Consequently, at the time that Bishop Nyasha launched his church, many people in rural society were suffering from the after-effects of war, many of them socially suspect or objects of revenge and therefore in dire need of a protective and stable anchorage. In the aftermath of war the uncertainty – caused by a radically changed administrative system, the removal of chiefs as tribal political and legal authorities, and the consequent relegation of the spirit mediums to a degree of obscurity, as well as the subdividing of districts and chiefdoms into wards – heightened feelings of anxiety and frustration. In addition, there was the trauma caused in marriages by years of forced separation, infidelity, illegitimate children, extramarital relationships, etc. – a trauma that very often found expression in wizardry allegations between spouses.

Nyasha saw the need of numerous women whose weakened marital ties and affected social status rendered them vulnerable to suspicion or accusations of practising witchcraft. In response he developed a ministry, focused not so much on the finding and accusation of witches and sorcerers as on counselling those

who had been afflicted and rejected. He carefully avoided direct accusations, which in any event would have exposed him to prosecution under the Witchcraft Suppression Act. Instead, he developed a sympathetic counselling technique that enabled women in particular to reveal to him the nature of their malady and the kind of social conflict they were involved in. Such confessions usually included admissions of actual witchcraft or the experience of call-dreams from deceased relatives who had been known to be witches. Nyasha's patients were therefore not only 'war casualties', but also the members of families with a tradition of *uroyi* involvement, suspect as a result of persistent affliction and the experience of call-dreams 'to lift the cooking stones' (*kumutsa mapfiva* – to inherit the practice of witchcraft from a deceased relative). Whereas traditionally established witches were thought to be incurable and evasion of call-dreams was considered fatal to potential witches, Nyasha (his name means 'mercy') propagated a message of hope and social rehabilitation in lieu of social ostracism or death. This was expressed in the integration of the liberated *muroyi* into the church.

Nyasha's ministry of exorcism is not an isolated instance. All the Spirit-type churches practise exorcism to a greater or lesser degree: Mutendi's ZCC through 'Jordan' baptism; the *Ndaza* Zionist groups by invoking spirit-possession in afflicted individuals, then tying them up with 'holy cords' and expelling the invading spirit(s) through direct commands; and the *vaPostori* by rotational movements of the possessed person's head (*kudzungudza*) and similar symbolic acts. Nyasha, however, belongs to a group of specialist prophetic healers who, over the years, have established a tradition of wizardry-eradicating practice. In the Chingombe chiefdom, for instance, the well-known Apostolic prophet Jaka Mukurumbera specialised in the detection and removal of evil medicine, transferred to victims of sorcery through poisoning (*kudyisa*), the foot-trap (*chitsinga*) and mystical propulsion (*chiposo*) (Daneel 1971:165; 1974:264). Elison Mutingwende likewise founded a new movement, the *Shinga Postora* (Courageous Apostles) on the basis of detecting and burning *uroyi* medicines placed by sorcerers or witches in the fields or homesteads of peasants (see chapter 10 above).

Nyasha's ministry differs from Mutingwende's in that it avoids direct accusations of wizardry; he merely baptises self-confessed wizards or whoever genuinely wants to join the church, thus playing down the coercive element. In contrast to Elison Mutingwende's recruitment strategy, Nyasha capitalises on the image of his church as a protective refuge for social misfits and outcasts (Daneel 1974:277) as a major attraction to prospective members. A significant difference is that Elison remained a roving prophet with little capacity for organising and stabilising the ecclesiastical structure he had founded. The eight congregations he established in 1966 remained small and eventually dwindled away, because his fellow office-bearers remained dependent on his anti-wizardry activities

to such an extent that they neglected to take responsibility for evangelistic outreach and pastoral care of their subordinates (Daneel 1988:188).

Nyasha, on the other hand, delegates evangelistic and pastoral responsibilities to subordinates much more effectively. This enables him to maintain a more consistent presence in the Gutu district than Elison had done, thus ensuring continuity of contact with those who need him. As a result he appears to be establishing a much more stable and diversified ecclesiastical structure than Elison had managed to do. It is likely, therefore, that as his church grows, he will adopt the same strategy as other well-known Independent Church leaders such as Bishop Samuel Mutendi: that of delegating prophetic and, in this case, exorcist duties to subordinate clergy with charismatic gifts as his own administrative and other official church duties increase.

At present Nyasha is still rendering a specialised service to his followers and to the surrounding Mission and Independent Churches. For it is obvious that people from the entire range of local ecclesiastical backgrounds seek his assistance, or eventually become permanent Pentecosta members.

One can say, therefore, that in the whole ecclesiastical framework of the prophetic type some kind of long-term solution to the problem of wizardry beliefs is being worked out. As the larger movements in post-independence Zimbabwe increasingly turn to educational, agricultural and community development projects – in other words, the kind of socio-economic change which, in Shorter's view, should lessen African society's preoccupation with wizardry – a specialised prophetic service, based on mutual interaction, continues to cater for those whose pastoral needs are still basically defined in traditional cosmological terms.

The Pentecosta ritual of exorcism

Counselling and confession

Long sessions of counselling and confession form an integral – often an introductory – part of Nyasha's ministry of exorcism. The bishop himself responded to the suggestion that his counselling sessions with women in particular could be a subtle process of witchcraft imputation:

We work with the revealing powers of God which are aimed at bringing hidden evil into the open. It is a matter of fighting darkness in the name of Christ's truth. I observe a person during discussion and go a long way round [that is, approach sensitive issues indirectly]. You cannot simply start by saying: 'Mother, you are a witch!' You talk with them [mostly afflicted women] about their experiences and encourage them to tell you about their dreams, their domestic circumstances and their motives for coming to the church to worship. I tell them that I can see that they love their husbands, that they want to avoid conflict with others and that they want

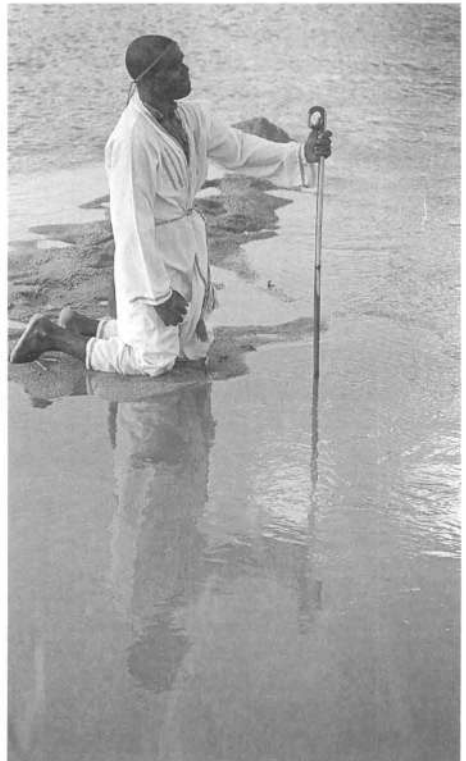


Plate 32: Bishop Nyasha observes the proceedings at the Bethesda pool prior to wizardry exorcisms (top). A *Pentecosta* prophet plants his holy staff in the sand of the Bethesda pool as affirmation of the presence of the Holy Spirit for the Baptismal exorcism (bottom)

stable homes with many children. They usually agree with this. I may then suggest that the patient is plagued by a spirit at home which prevents her from fulfilling her good intentions. In response she may explain the entire situation and herself name the plaguing spirit. When I subsequently suggest that she may be used [by a spirit], she could confess either the experience of bad dreams [that is, call-dreams] or the perpetration of evil under the influence of the *uroyi* spirit. The next step is to tell such a person that she will have to resist such evil herself. In just about every case the response will be: 'Yes, I want to be rid of such evil ...' Through eliciting this confession I am said somehow to have imputed witchcraft. But it is always a matter of people coming to us for assistance and themselves requesting a solution. Without the revelation of hidden evil and the decision of the afflicted person to resist it, a cure cannot be effected... This procedure is not against the government's ruling [the Witchcraft Suppression Act]. What the government is trying to prevent is the disruption of society caused by people who go around and make arbitrary accusations of witchcraft.

This statement reveals Nyasha's fairness towards patients in attempting to establish what they themselves consider the cause of their malady. Knowing that many women seek his assistance out of sheer desperation after having been branded potential or practising witches by society, he facilitates confession and emphasises the afflicted person's commitment to change. Although Christian terminology is used in categorising the intrusive spirit as an unwanted devil (*satani*) or demon (*dhimoni*), Nyasha is sufficiently conversant with all aspects of traditional cosmology to refrain from applying a simplistic demonology. Careful probing reveals to him whether the patient is beleaguered by *shavi* spirits, with a view to practising traditional medicine as a *nganga*; by a *ngozi* spirit seeking revenge for a murder committed by the afflicted person's relatives; by a neglected ancestral spirit (*mudzimu*) which merely urges sacrifice; or by a real *uroyi* (witchcraft) spirit – the patient's deceased grandmother, aunt or mother – who wants a living descendant to inherit and practise the profession of witchcraft. In addition, a distinction is made in the field of wizardry between male sorcerers, who use mainly destructive medicines, and female witches who either inherit their trade through spirit coercion, or are voluntarily drafted into 'guilds' of witches by the introduction of medicine into their circulatory system through incisions (*kutemerwa*).

As a champion of reconciliation between relatives, Bishop Nyasha also diagnoses the work of *mubobobo* spirits. He claims that such spirits destroy marital ties by invading the minds of married women to such an extent that they consider the possessing spirits to be their husbands. Having himself experienced rejection by his second wife for a certain period, he considers the spell cast by these spirits most difficult to break. The indications are that his prolonged spells of fasting and prayer on behalf of himself and his second wife, as well as his feelings of utter helplessness in the face of marital disintegration prior to reunion with his

wife, were decisive in the development of his ministry aimed largely at healing and strengthening marital ties.

Counselling itself may be repetitive. The bishop believes that he is guided by the Holy Spirit in his diagnostic probing until he and the patient reach consensus. In the event of the patient wishing to be rid of a possessing *uroyi* spirit, the divinely prescribed, infallible therapy consists of 'exorcism in Bethesda'.

The symbols of exorcism

For the purposes of exorcism a distinction is made between entering Jordan for baptism and entering the Bethesda pool for spirit expulsion. In practice, however, the two ceremonies frequently overlap. Whenever the initial baptism of novices in Jordan provokes spirit possession, the ceremony will include exorcist procedures. Subsequent exorcisms on behalf of baptised church members, however, are referred to as Bethesda healing and not as baptismal ceremonies, despite such symbolic similarities as immersion in water.

Water, the main ritual component of exorcism, symbolises the presence and liberating power of God. It also reminds of the uncompromising truth of Christ that unmasks the deception and socially destructive intentions of both the inhabiting spirit and its host during the struggle between good and evil in the water. Thus the pool is the place where Christ's kingship over all powers is vividly enacted, where the message that 'evil has no future', to use Bosch's term, is meaningfully and dramatically enacted. In the water, symbol and reality merge. The Holy Spirit is present at the pool in all its power to assure victory over the forces of evil. Traditionally associated with purity and fertility, water in this context also effects purification, so that the candidate emerges from the pool cleansed of evil inhabitation and intent.

Nyasha commented about the expulsion of evil at the pool:

Uroyi is a very powerful force which human beings cannot overcome on their own. When such powers are at work we can fight and overcome them only if we are truly guided by God. We take the beleaguered person to the pool of Bethesda where we cast out the possessing spirit. If we fail, we return home and seek God's guidance once more, until he reveals to us how to deal with that spirit. Later we return to the pool once more. There we pray over and instruct (*kurairidza*) the water about the persistent spirit before we commence fighting it, until it leaves.

From this narrative it is clear that the African equivalent for the biblical Bethesda pool (John 5:1-15) is the one near Nyasha's Jerusalem or wherever Nyasha prefers to conduct a Bethesda ceremony. The African equivalent for the angel stirring the water is the prophet praying over and 'instructing' the pool. Human activity in this instance is not interpreted as magical manipulation to ensure successful spirit expulsion, but is considered to demonstrate right-mindedness



Plate 33: Bishop Nyasha and fellow exorciser splash women with forceful movements to induce uroyi spirits to leave their hosts (top), some suspect 'witches' may cast off some of their clothes as a sign of resisting the proceedings (bottom)





Plate 34: A repeat performance at the Bethesda pool is necessary at times before the prophet is satisfied that a full confession was made about witchcraft involvement (top), Prophet-healer Kiyai applies a different exorcistic technique from that of Bishop Nyasha. He claims to 'kill' the *uroyi* demons with his holy staff, in the name of the Holy Spirit (bottom)



and dependence on God's powerful presence, since the *uroyi* power is regarded as too powerful for ordinary human beings to overcome on their own.

Preceded by public prayer and open confession by the potential or practising witch/sorcerer on the banks of the pool, the actual exorcism consists of forceful immersion to symbolise God's victory over evil. If the spirit protests, the patient (at this stage often in a state of possession) is repeatedly splashed with water until breathing becomes difficult and the departing spirit leaves a gasping and subdued figure, quietly resting in the water. Small wonder that those who have undergone repeated exorcisms refer to their experience as *kundorobga* Bethesda (literally to be beaten [at] Bethesda; that is, to be struck with water in the Bethesda pool).

Other symbols used at the Bethesda pool include a piece of red cloth, which is tied around the patient's waist. This cloth symbolises the cleansing and protective power of Christ's blood. As the *uroyi* spirit is more powerful than its host and therefore capable of harming her/him, the element of danger during exorcism is subverted by the patient's symbolic acceptance of Christ's kingship. In addition to the triumphant aspect of Christ's salvific work, the cloth reminds the patient about her/his public confession of sin, which suggests not only a miraculous or ritually formulated expulsion of evil taking place, but also an admission of personal guilt – a state that has to be cleansed by Christ's blood. Liberation from the *uroyi* spirit is therefore accompanied by deliverance from sin. Nyasha's exorcism does not provide the patient with a convenient loophole by placing all the blame on the *uroyi* spirit. Public confession of guilt confirms personal involvement and abuse of individual responsibility by the patient. Built into this exorcism is the ongoing conversion message that prohibits any facile justification through the projection of all guilt onto the unwanted spirit. Besides, the red cloth symbolically establishes common ground between the suffering of Christ, the one Scapegoat of all the world, and the suffering of the real or potential wizard as a result of social discrimination and isolation; an identification that heals, but requires persevering prayer and spiritual growth of the now liberated person.

Money (50c or Z\$1) is also brought to the pool. The coin used is called *gupuro*, the divorce fee that, in accordance with customary law, accompanies a divorced woman when she goes back to her parents. The *gupuro* at the Bethesda pool signifies public recognition of 'divorce' between host and inhabiting spirit. It is also called *mari yokutuka* (money of the curse), because both the afflicted person and the prophetic exorcist are required to publicly dissociate themselves in the strongest terms from the invading spirit by cursing it and commanding it to leave. By throwing the coin into the pool, the patient is not only publicly divorcing her/himself from the *uroyi* spirit, but is also subjecting the unwanted spirit-being to the superior power of God represented by or present in the water.

In the case of a persistent spirit that keeps returning to its host after exorcism, the patient is required to bring a new plate and a fowl to the pool. The unused plate symbolises the sharing of something of value between host and spirit, something not easily surrendered. Upon killing the fowl, its blood is spilt into the plate – the symbolic equivalent of innocent blood spilled by the *uroyi* spirit. In the pool the exorcist may smear the blood on the patient, then wash it away, while addressing the spirit: 'See this plate and the blood in it. It is the blood of the people you kill. See, we wash the blood away and we throw this plate away. Likewise this person casts you away. You are to go now in the name of Christ, and never return.' Thereupon the plate and the remaining blood are cast into the pool.

Whenever witch-familiars (spirit animals, birds and reptiles) and the use of destructive medicines are involved, exorcism is supplemented with the literal and/or symbolic burning of evil. In performing all these activities Nyasha is fully aware that there is much more at stake than just the miraculous elimination of evil. His is an ongoing ministry – a struggle, not only with the unseen powers, but also with the unpredictable and ambivalent attitudes of humankind: people who seek God, but refuse to follow in his ways. 'I talk to people about their sinful ways,' he said, 'and I keep telling them that they themselves do not really want to change. I say to them: 'You are still in league with those spirits or demons. You do not really want them expelled.' 'There are those, too, who come with an overwhelming desire to be liberated. After exorcism they witness about their former addiction to evil and about complete liberation. The plaguing spirits leave them permanently.'

Nyasha encounters opposition from rival healers and church groups. One suspects that the main motive for such opposition is envy of his popularity and growing following. Allegations are made, however, that Bishop Nyasha is a bad man because he pollutes all the pools with plates and money. Opponents try to sway opinion against Nyasha by suggesting that people who wash in the polluted pools could be possessed by the now vengeful evil spirits exorcised in those pools. Thus the symbols of liberation are reinterpreted by outsiders as vehicles of retaliatory evil. Nyasha refuses to be intimidated by such tactics. He is convinced that he has received a gift from God that he should use to serve troubled humanity.

Exorcism: a one-sided ministry?

The centrality of exorcism in Nyasha's ministry cannot be denied. It forms the dramatic focal point of his work and has become the single most potent recruitment device in his church. The combination of this specialised ministry in the field of wizardry and his extensive ecclesial duties and authority means that Nyasha's concentration on a contextualised gospel of liberation conditions the theology of his entire church. A certain one-sidedness is therefore inevitable.

In the sermons of the Pentecosta preachers there emerges a powerful God who triumphs over all evil, a Christ whose cross tells more about truth and kingship over all powers in heaven and on earth than about his suffering as a human being, and a Holy Spirit who reveals and combats wizardry as a threat to human life and society rather than one who sanctifies the believer's inner being.

Nyasha's sermons usually range across a broad spectrum of subjects. His message is characterised by a broad evangelistic streak, with direct appeals for conversion, apocalyptic expectations and a legalism focused on strong Christian morals in marital and family life. Yet within this framework he constantly draws his followers' attention to his main concern, the Christian strife between good and evil – expressed, of course, in terms of the traditional worldview.

An excerpt from one of Nyasha's sermons illustrates the point. He opened a weekend conference at Gutu in December 1985 as follows:

I know God because he is involved in our struggle and guides our existence. Because he is our Saviour, our Protector and Teacher we experience a wonderful life. Because his name is present at this place, our Jerusalem, it is blessed and holy. What God expects of this gathering is that we should reconsider our deeds and act as true Christians. God is not happy with the death of the unrighteous. Come ye, therefore, return to Jehovah. Those who do so will have their sins forgiven. Today our sermons will concentrate on 2 Peter 1:5-9, so that we can learn how a person who worships God should behave. We need this instruction because most of us are inclined to worship in ignorance.

We come to God's house as passive members, ignorant of the real meaning of Christian discipleship. Why? Because we enter the church for selfish motives. We seek physical survival [to have our flesh saved] instead of subjecting our spirit [in the sense of entire being] to the saving power of God. When we experience illness we run to the healers to be prayed for. Only at these times do we recognise God.

Those who practise wizardry are active at all times. They cover great distances at night, like we had to do to attend *pungwe* meetings [during the war]. We believers must be just as active if we want to please God. It is pointless for us to kneel and prophesy if the deeds of our life do not witness to our faith ...

Last night three women were brought to my attention. I did not sleep all night. These women did not sleep at their houses either. They were right here in this vicinity [operating as witches]. Two of them intend eating a child. They even sent medicine to induce lameness in my legs. If God had not protected me I would have been in trouble. At first I could not understand what was happening. Then I noticed the medicine consisting of female hair and blood. It was sent to hurt me, but it failed in the same way as the drums of evil had gone silent because of God's power. The Lord refused!

God knows the span of our lives; he counts our years. Nevertheless the enemy follows us, seeking our destruction because the drums of evil are silenced. God sees this and is angered. He says that you [the three witches concerned] will eat your own children, since he will prevent you from eating the children of others. God refuses. He says: 'Since you lust after human flesh, eat your own children!' Those who have ears, let them hear what God's Spirit tells his church. Let those who want to be people of God live in God. As the hunter eventually gets killed by his hunting, so the wizard eventually gets killed by his wizardry, unless he repents. The only way for all of us to be saved, including the wizards, is through God. He alone knows the inner being of a person. He knows where evil hides. Persevere ye therefore in prayer. Persevere until the Lord comes. That is our salvation... The righteous will meet Christ when he comes. Those of good blood will arrive here and reveal their dreams. In our dream narratives we reveal our attitudes towards God. Sometimes when I sit and listen to dream accounts, I say 'Yes! Yes!', even while I know that the Lord refuses [baptism or exorcism] because the entire truth has not been revealed.

Bishop Nyasha's preoccupation with the powers of darkness is plain from this sermon. At the same time he discloses his own vulnerability as an exorcist to counter-attacks by witches operating at night. In a sense he is cautioning his listeners that everybody is exposed to suffering. There is no guaranteed immunity against wizardry, although God counts our years. Yet God's followers can be confident of protection and salvation, because God's power triumphs over that of evil. Nyasha himself communicates considerable confidence, knowing that his God-given ministry has been instrumental in 'silencing the drums of evil' – that is, eradicating the practice of wizardry. The essence of his message at this juncture is that God's saving power confronts and overcomes evil. It is not some vague and distant victory, but one experienced in this broken world, penetrating the conflicts and anger of tense relations and erecting the signs of God's triumph over evil in the very context where the heat of hatred and frustration generates the momentum for the next round of destructive action.

In Nyasha's world victory in God does not permit complacency. Vigilance and perseverance in prayer remain vital. Humility and total dependence on God are required in the struggle against evil. With this in mind, Nyasha wars against the wrong motives for worship. Aware that his exorcist ministry can contribute to a one-sided understanding of salvation, whereby the church is seen purely as a safe refuge from physical affliction, he urges all believers to repent fully.

In view of Nyasha's overriding preoccupation with the very real threat of wizardry to life, it is an open question whether he achieves a comprehensive understanding of the gospel message for every avenue of life. There can be little doubt, however, that many of his followers have an authentic experience of liberation in that sphere of life where the closest of human relationships come apart.

The impact of Nyasha's exorcist ministry

It is difficult to assess fully the impact of Nyasha's church on rural society in the widest sense of the word. Such an evaluation requires a wide-ranging survey of entire village communities to which the Pentecosta members belong – a project that, at the time of writing, had not been attempted. Nevertheless, a perusal of interviews with church leaders and members (most of whom had been exorcised) as well as close observation of the movement over a number of years is sufficiently revealing to permit at least a preliminary evaluation of prominent trends. *

Positive features

Prophetic control

Nyasha's church resembles the other Shona Spirit-type churches in that it established an image of prophetic control over wizardry activities – even more decisively than most of the Zionist churches. To the vast community of believers in these churches, with their common interest in ritual purification and the combating of evil forces, their prophetic movement – diversified as it is – amounts to a protective institution. In an earlier study (Daneel 1974:293), I noted that 'although it is recognised that the majority of wizards, even within these churches, are never completely cured, there is some consolation in the knowledge that the prophets know who the wizards are and that they reduce the inclinations and powers of church members who perpetrate such evils to a minimum through repeated exposure in public'.

This observation still holds true, with the exception that Nyasha's ministry reflects a more powerful assertion of complete eradication of wizardry. The sceptics in Shona society may well contest his claims, but somehow he has managed to convince most of his followers as well as a large number of outsiders that all wizards can be cured completely through the mercy and power of the Christian God, irrespective of the degree of their involvement with evil. His, therefore, is not a mere 'pest-control service', as Shorter (1985:97) qualifies witch-finding movements, 'which results in strengthening people's fear of witches and consequently their acceptance of the [witchcraft] theory'. Nyasha's pastoral aftercare of the exorcised, his insistence on quality of Christian discipleship and persevering prayer by the liberated wizard and his total reliance on God's power go a long way towards establishing faith and confidence in *God's* reign, his future and his liberation, thus modifying the traditional basis of the fear of wizardry. The transformation associated with conversion and spirit-expulsion in Nyasha's church goes deeper than merely a 'temporary respite from fear' (Shorter 1985:97). It reaches down to the intellectual fabric of wizardry beliefs by forcibly blowing the traditional belief in the incorrigibility of wizards and by

demonstrating to congregations that retaliation and the elimination of wizards can be replaced by loving acceptance and social rehabilitation.

Transformation, however, is a slow process, always incomplete, as is the Christian experience of conversion. Prophetic control, consequently, remains significant, in Nyasha's church too. It is a form of support and a safeguard against destructive evil in the event of a former wizard's relapse. To Nyasha prophetic discipline realistically accepts the sinfulness of human nature, the prospect of even the staunchest believer succumbing to temptation – an insight that in itself militates against the traditional dualistic philosophy behind wizardry, namely an antithesis of absolute good and absolute evil.

In the Spirit-type churches, prophetic control generally consists of three types of activity. First, all neophytes are subjected to one or several diagnostic prophecies, prior to Jordan baptism. These prophecies serve to determine whether potential or self-confessed wizards intend to stop their practices and whether they are retaining some of their malignant medicines or familiars for use while they are church members. While the prophet aims at bringing all the neophyte's hidden sins and possible wizardry involvement into the open, it is vital that the neophyte demonstrates right-mindedness and a willingness to submit not only to the prophet, but also to the divine authority operative in this first phase of initiation into the new group.

Second, regular exposure during church services establishes a pattern of public confession. Church members, particularly the *Vapostori*, are required to pass the 'gates' to the sacred enclosure prior to the commencement of the service. Confessions of sin are made to prophets representing symbolically, at that point in time, the 'gates of heaven'. Brief as these confessionals are, they effectively demonstrate control by the Holy Spirit and subject unruly church members to a supernaturally sanctioned ecclesial authority.

Third, there is the final 'gate test' before participation in the Eucharist at the annual Paschal celebrations, which represents the most spectacular form of wizard-control in the Spirit-type churches. As purity, at least in intent, is prerequisite for partaking of the sacrament, confession assumes greater intensity and urgency during lengthy nocturnal vigils than in other ceremonies. Continuous speaking in tongues by the prophets at the gates and radical rejection of those who refuse to make full confessions serve to confirm the Holy Spirit's power of control and symbolically illustrate his victory over evil. (For a full discussion of these three measures of control, see Daneel 1974:292–308).

Apart from assimilating these prophetic control measures in a manner suggesting a distinct preference for Maranke's Apostolic tradition, Nyasha has developed Bethesda exorcism as his church's special weapon to combat and control wizardry. There can be little doubt that this ritual appeals to the imagination of those to whom he ministers, that it has convinced many Pentecosta members

that wizardry is not only curbed, but completely overcome, and that sustained vigilance on the part of the Holy Spirit, prophets and potential victims of wizardry permits people to relax, overcome their fear of evil and enjoy a normal life.

Group catharsis and individual liberation

A study of the biographies of numerous people who have been exorcised shows that spirit expulsion and healing of individuals invariably also trigger a therapeutic process in a family and village context. As wizardry activities are exposed and the *uroyi* spirits' hold on their hosts are broken, conflict with spouses or with villagers who feel threatened is either resolved or simply fades into the background. The malady of the bewitched or ensorcelled, or the affliction of those called to perpetrate witchcraft, is not an isolated, individual issue. It is symptomatic of social conflict, of insecurity and uncertainty in the face of uncontrollable forces of social change, of ambition, rivalry, jealousy and animosity in interpersonal relations. Thus the patients arriving at Nyasha's headquarters for consultation mostly have a history of strained relations with others, imputed antisocial conduct, increasing ostracism by various groups – in fact, a whole web of disturbed relationships. Consequently the afflicted are often accompanied to the prophet's headquarters by delegations who witness to proceedings and report back to the social group concerned. A therapeutic solution for the patient can therefore have a positive cathartic effect on an entire family or village where tensions have been building.

The life histories of exorcised Pentecosta members, specifically those associated with wizardry practices, mostly reveal certain stereotypical trends. First, persistent illness leads to visits to traditional *nganga* and/or Independent Church prophets, who may ascribe the malady to the activity of *uroyi* spirits, particularly if the family has a history of wizardry involvement. Should the diagnosis be confirmed by the patient's dreams about blood, eating of children, graves, death and the like, it is generally accepted that the patient is under supernatural pressure to practise wizardry. Depending on a variety of circumstances, including the character of the patient, the village community then brands the afflicted person as either a potential or a practising wizard. In either case the patient's position in society deteriorates, leading to isolation or family conflict that undermines the patient's self-confidence and exacerbates her/his physical and mental suffering. Invariably this is when the patient, in a state of despair and terror of spirit intervention, arrives at Nyasha's Jerusalem. Through a process of counselling, confession and exorcism, the patient experiences liberation from the afflicting spirit(s) and in most cases recovers completely to proceed with normal life. Rehabilitation of the actual or would-be witch or sorcerer follows a route of spiritual growth and intensified personal spiritual activity (for example prayer and fasting, regular participation in Nyasha's church activities and the bonding of interpersonal ties, both in the new church and in a family context).

By way of example, Mrs Evelyn Chiremba's tape-recorded account of her experiences is reproduced in part Mrs Chiremba belonged to Bishop Mutendi's Zion Christian Church, until she joined the Pentecosta in 1984. She said:

I suffered greatly because my late aunt's spirit kept visiting me. My aunt was a bad person who practised witchcraft. After my mother's death, her spirit exposed me to my aunt's spirit by 'opening the door' [that is, withdrawing her protective ancestral function of guarding the doors of her living descendants]. It was an evil thing for my mother to do. Both these spirits wanted me to become a witch. Because I refused to participate my health deteriorated until I was almost completely crippled. All my strength had gone. My aunt's spirit fought me, insisting that she wanted to come and live with [in] me. But I kept refusing to live with a [spirit] person practising witchcraft.

When things had become unbearable, I joined the *Pentecosta* in 1984. They received me kindly, cleansed me and chased both spirits away. Then they healed me and restored my strength. My troubles are over.

Bishop Nyasha revealed the truth about the plaguing spirits during his prophecies, and we [me and my family] agreed. He also interpreted the meaning of my dreams – bad dreams about snakes and graves and the coming deaths of people, dreams which terrified me. With the expulsion of the spirits, the bad dreams stopped. Should they occur again, I shall immediately discuss them with the Bishop. It is a relief to know that one can rely on his assistance. Our bishop has received great healing power as a gift from God. The Holy Spirit works through him whereby he heals many people in the pool of Bethesda.

Subsequent to the casting out of the *uroyi* spirits at Bethesda, Nyasha repeatedly advised me to pray perseveringly and to go to *masowe* [a ritually secluded place for fasting] to fast. This I do regularly, because if I stop worshipping God the evil spirits can return. One has to remain on guard oneself.

Having been in the Pentecosta for several years without a recurrence of spirit visitation, I now believe that if I remain in this church there is no chance of being possessed again. Should it ever happen that these spirits return, it will be a sign that I am worshipping the flesh and not the truth [God].

Mrs Chiremba's testimony highlights the following positive features of Nyasha's ministry:

- Liberation is experienced as real and lasting. Through the all-powerful Christian God a new life is possible. The traditional incorrigibility of witches is unmasked as a fallacy.
- Rehabilitation of the potential or practising witch is possible. Where exorcism is followed up by sustained consultation, as well as acceptance and support by the church group, an atmosphere is created in which the scapegoat of

society – the suspect, outcast or misfit – can heal and grow into a meaningful existence.

- Despite the significance attributed to the dramatic enactment of God's power in exorcism, the ritual is interpreted in context. It is not seen as a mechanical process, an isolated miracle in which God manifests his power only to withdraw again into obscurity, or as mere magical manipulation of mystical forces by a gifted exorcist. The active involvement of the patient in confessing sin, receiving exorcism and taking responsibility for a future life of sustained worship (that is, maintaining a direct relation with a liberating God) forms an essential part of Nyasha's ministry. Mrs Chiremba's recognition of her own responsibility in the struggle against evil is a move away from the traditional (if not universally human) tendency to indulge in self-justification by projecting sin and all manner of evil deeds on an extraneous agent. The evil, in this case attributed to the *uroyi* spirits, does not exonerate the host – neither from deliberately seeking deliverance, nor from remaining vigilant against future temptation.

The traditional paradigm of the objective reality of witchcraft may not be completely changed, but Nyasha's exorcism certainly attacks its roots. Pastoral consultation, which takes the traditional worldview seriously and confronts it with the Christian message of deliverance, goes beyond mere reinforcement of the old system. Although it is impossible to gauge from interviews with former patients whether some of their old fears of visitation by *uroyi* spirits or with direct threats of wizardry are still lurking in the background, there is ample evidence that many patients, like Mrs. Chiremba, experience complete liberation from incapacitating fear – liberation in which obsessive preoccupation with evil forces is replaced by new hope and a will to lead socially constructive lives.

Reconciliation

The message of reconciliation is central to Nyasha's ministry. It is highly significant that many of the women who have been exorcised in the Pentecosta spontaneously refer to this church as *kereke yokuwadzanisa* (the church of reconciliation). Their histories by and large confirm that their relations with their spouses or other family members improved as a direct result of Bethesda treatment and (in most cases) obtaining Pentecosta membership. Their image of the church as a conciliatory institution therefore is primarily indicative not of group identity or loyalty, but of an experience of changed relationships, of love and acceptance against a background of strife, rejection and suffering.

Asked about her church's service to society, Mrs. Evelyn Chiremba said:

Many women suffer when *uroyi* spirits plague them. These spirits always try to take complete control [of their hosts] and thereby separate women from their husbands. This certainly is a church of reconciliation, because it seeks to overcome family feuds arising from the visitation of these evil

spirits. I experience that myself through better relations with my people at home. This church has a message of love. It overcomes darkness and brings harmony between people. All of it is the work of God. It is his Spirit who overcomes all darkness, his power which enables us to lead (whole) lives with others at our homes.

Mrs Zimuto, a former Roman Catholic with a long history of illness – her own and her children’s – claimed that Bishop Nyasha managed to liberate her and her relatives from a vengeful *ngozi* spirit, widely considered to have caused several deaths in her family, and her *mbuya* (grandmother) spirit, which had been urging her to practise witchcraft. She said:

I did not join this church just to be healed. I wanted my entire life changed. In addition I was desperate for a solution for my family. Because of the *ngozi* spirit my children were ill at the time. The spirits of the *ngozi* and of my *mbuya* kept pushing my family [towards destruction]. As a result my relationship with my husband deteriorated. We kept quarrelling and I was irritable. Whenever we talked I scolded him. Now that those spirits have been driven away we rarely quarrel and we discuss things openly. My husband still does not attend church. But he appreciates the change in me and has, as a result, stopped smoking and drinking. When he observes my going to sleep without praying at night, he insists that I pray. Then I get up and pray for us all.

I belong to the Pentecosta now. It instructs me. It is my life. My friends urge me to go back to the Roman Catholic Church, but this is where I have found life and where I shall stay.

It is evident from these testimonies that the message of reconciliation is concretely realised in the lives of potential or self-confessed witches on two levels: the church and the family. Through induction into the church – which to the suffering and suspect holds prospects of healing, acceptance by a group which understands the agony of ostracism, and generally improved social status – a wholesome existence becomes possible. Close identification of the new member with the healer-prophet and a women’s association (engaged in regular Bible study, prayer meetings, ministry to the poor, etc.) contrasts starkly with the suspicions, accusations and withdrawal of relatives and acquaintances in the home village. Hence the renewal of purpose in life – the ‘fulfilled life’ of Evelyn Chiremba and the ‘finding of life’ of Mrs Zimuto. The consequences of liberation and change, of confession and submission to prophetic authority in a church setting, are soon reflected in improved family ties. With new hope and purpose in life comes renewed self-confidence, an essential symptom of good therapy noticeable in the attitudes of most of Nyasha’s patients or ex-patients whose testimonies were recorded.

There can be little doubt that much of Nyasha’s success in effecting genuine reconciliation between outcasts, misfits and suspects and their disenchanting

spouses or other relatives hinges on his ability to identify closely and convincingly with those who seek his help. Unlike the roving prophet whose brief stay and direct or indirect imputations of wizardry can incur grievous stigmatisation and discrimination by a village community against the guilty party, Nyasha's sustained and selfless identification with supplicants is a hallmark of sound pastoral care. His radical rejection apparently extends to the invading spirit or *uroyi* medicine, while his patience, sympathy and understanding for the afflicted person communicate the good news of the gospel in such a way that the possibility of a lasting solution – against traditional expectations – is realised.

The information available at the time of writing did not permit an accurate assessment of the extent to which rehabilitated wizards meet with full approval or repudiation in the wider social context. Criticism of Nyasha's ministry by some rural people in the Chingombe chiefdom indicates some scepticism. This suggests possible deterioration in the social status of at least some of the 'wizards' subsequent to their confessions and treatment in Nyasha's church. On the other hand, there are indications of great esteem from outsiders, specifically for the exposure of evil and the restraint of wizardry practices attributed to Nyasha's ministry.

Negative features

Possible misinterpretation of exorcist symbolism

Despite Nyasha's clear distinctions between the symbols he uses at Bethesda and the beings or powers represented by them, the chances are that some of the participants attach a magical interpretation to their use. Thus they endow the water of Bethesda with inherent efficacy and remedial qualities without fully understanding the power of the Holy Spirit. It is also possible that the red cloth and its protective quality assume such importance in the ritual context that it loses its instructive value concerning the wider salvific implications of Christ's blood. In addition, the use of fowl's blood could evoke unintended traditional connotations, as if the fowl had some sacrificial significance in placating the troublesome spirit.

The occurrence of such misinterpretations does not necessarily invalidate Nyasha's entire ministry. In Africa the tendency among Christians to attach magical interpretations to, for instance, the symbols of the sacraments is a common phenomenon, both in the 'historical' and the Independent Churches. The repeated proclamation of the gospel as an integral part of exorcist procedure and the prophet healer's manifest faith in the triune Christian God act as powerful correctives and deepen the understanding of those sufficiently open to religious reorientation. The use of fowl's blood in Nyasha's exorcism, moreover, symbolises dissociation from and rejection of the possessing spirit. It has no propitiatory objective, as Nyasha and his assistants intend it to be the

strongest possible symbolic statement against the destruction of life wrought by wizardry.

Enslavement?

Does Nyasha's exorcism effect complete liberation from possessing spirits that cause affliction and from related fears? Is the image of the Pentecosta as a protective institution and the prominence of the charismatic leader not a stumbling block in the development of the patient's own spiritual strength and understanding?

The emphasis in the cited testimonies on prophetic support and guidance, as well as the tendency to regard church membership as a safeguard against future visitations by evil spirits, indeed suggest the substitution of one kind of 'enslavement' for another. I have little doubt that at least some patients acquire a kind of 'captive' status in the church through a combination of external and internal coercive factors, such as disapproving neighbours who demand expulsion of the culprit from their village or some other radical solution, as well as the subjection of the desperate outcast to a strict disciplinary code within the Pentecosta. Not all patients achieve true religious liberation and independence subsequent to the initial spirit expulsion. To them, Nyasha's dream interpretations and sustained guidance, instead of iconically reflecting Christ's power over evil, become binding in a legalistic sense and a precondition for future wellbeing. In such cases the exorcist and his institution have an addictive rather than a liberating impact – a state which does not leave sufficient scope for detached and objective reflection.

Flaws of this nature, however, do not preclude a positive evaluation of Nyasha's ministry. Much as the 'captive' membership of some of his patients and their residual fears of a recurrence of spirit possession could be exploited, wittingly or unwittingly, for in-group cohesion, Nyasha makes a point of stimulating the patient's own religious responsibility. He insists on perseverance in prayer, fasting and spiritual growth as essential conditions for long-term recovery. His ministry therefore provides a powerful inducement for overly dependent followers to develop from captive security to independence and freedom.

Discrimination and stigmatisation as side effects

From my observations of Nyasha's exorcist rituals I gained the impression that in some marginal cases, where wizardry is not necessarily at issue, group dynamics and expectations of revealing confessions subject the patient to pressures that are quite disproportionate to the malady or social misbehaviour presented. This can lead to confessions of nocturnal or other antisocial activities of which the patient is not guilty. Such confessions in turn can cause discrimination against unfortunates by unsympathetic outsiders. In other words, Nyasha's exorcism can have counterproductive social results. Instead of healing

and reinstatement in society, general deterioration of social status can be the outcome of misconstrued confessions.

In some cases it must be extremely difficult for a suspect 'witch' to decide what to confess. Refusal to confess some form of witchcraft involvement could confirm the suspicions of relatives or hostile villagers and lead to social alienation. By the same token confession of witchcraft in order to satisfy group expectations could produce mentally and spiritually beneficial results within the Pentecosta church without providing an equally satisfactory solution in the village context. Prophetically induced confessions can therefore jeopardise the patient's position back home (by more or less playing into the hands of his or her enemies) instead of effecting the desired reconciliation.

Whereas Bishop Nyasha tries to avoid coercive measures, some of his assistant prophets tend to pressurise patients in an attempt to obtain full confessions, particularly when they deal with 'hardened' wizards who are uncooperative. Because prophetic persuasion takes place in the name and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, sympathetic consultation can develop into psycho-religious coercion, a subtle or flagrant process in which the prophet takes unfair advantage of a troubled, victimised and socially insecure patient.

I once witnessed a somewhat unrepentant witch entering the Bethesda pool. The prophet-exorcist, who was not satisfied with the 'witch's' confession, dived into the pool, then turned his back on the 'witch', tore his garments in a dramatic act of repudiating evil and walked away from the pool, leading the entire attendant congregation back to the conference camp. The diminutive figure of the 'witch' sat shivering, rejected and alone in the water. Under such severe pressure she eventually made a complete confession and a few days later had a plaguing *uroyi* spirit exorcised. Whereas my Shona field-assistants seemed unperturbed and felt that drastic action against a person associated with evil was appropriate, I could not help resenting the event as discriminatory and judgmental. The incident is not representative, but it illustrates one of the weaknesses of a ministry not entirely free of prophetic abuse.

A consideration of the positive results and the imperfections of Nyasha's exorcist ministry highlights the complex problems one faces in assessing this phenomenon in terms of the theoretical framework (above). A biased appraisal of the negative implications of confession and exorcism for some individuals could lead one to claim that the end result is enslavement to the old order – that Nyasha's preoccupation with wizardry leads to an affirmation of the traditional paradigm. This could be taken as evidence that Shorter's warning against the negative results of traditional witchcraft eradication movements applies to Nyasha's work; that his control over evil is purely illusory; that he establishes an unjust, discriminatory system; and that he usurps the position of God by

passing judgment on the wizard. The negative aspects discussed above indeed suggest that such criticism would be valid up to a point.

On the other hand, the overwhelming positive evidence suggests that we are confronted with an admittedly incomplete ministry – and one would do well to remember that however correct its doctrinal or theoretical formulation, no church practice in this life is perfect – but one that is instrumental in genuine liberation and healing. Nyasha's exorcism implicitly encompasses both the indigenising and pilgrim principles referred to by Walls (1982). Inasmuch as it addresses the old paradigm – taking related beliefs and fears seriously, while introducing an essentially new message that denies the incorrigibility of the wizard, replacing the traditional punitive measures with reconciliation and facilitating the social rehabilitation of the scapegoat – it represents a significant contribution to a paradigm shift. This paradigm shift is not as sweeping and articulate in Nyasha's church as it appears on paper in Bosch's theoretical treatise (1987). Yet it militates against traditional scapegoat theory by introducing the liberating and humanising message of Christ's sacrifice into the world of suffering experienced by the casualties of that theory. In its own imaginative way this ministry proclaims the enigmatic truth that evil has no future, that the only worthwhile future is with God. Hence in one way or another the requirements for a paradigm shift, as elucidated by Bosch, feature in the Pentecosta church.

Finally, it should be kept in mind that, by Western standards, Nyasha and most of his assistants have had little or no education. Thus theirs is not a consistently systematised theology or a deliberate programme of radical change in philosophy or worldview. Still, on the basis of intuitive, simplistic understanding of the gospel, they have introduced the good news of Christ's reign into the dark realm and existential reality of evil. In this enacted theology of ritual and symbol they are making a more original, more effective contribution to wizardry-related pastoral care than many a Mission Church which misunderstood, rejected and ultimately negated the wizardry beliefs and the concomitant needs of African people.

The Encounter between Christianity and Traditional African Culture*

For the purpose of this chapter the term 'African culture' is interpreted holistically to include African traditional religion. The interaction of four theological traditions with the religio-cultural heritage of Africa will be considered. These are the Roman Catholic, the Protestant Dutch Reformed, African theology and the African Independent traditions. Inasmuch as the approach adopted here is empirical and descriptive, the data presented refer mainly to the Shona peoples of Zimbabwe, as this is the only cultural context about which the writer has had first-hand information, and in which he has had direct experience of the kind of encounter discussed in this chapter.

The main focus is on the influence of the four traditions on an emerging concept of God in African Christianity. There are a number of reasons that God the Father has remained a remote and transcendent Being. Traditionally, the general image of the Supreme Being was that of the Creator who, although he is the foundation of all that exists, is not directly involved in maintaining and controlling it. This function was to a large extent attributed to the ancestors, veneration of whom became a dominant feature of traditional religious activity. In some instances God's remoteness was ascribed to human error that had disrupted the God-man relationship. Western observers in particular have emphasised silence and detachment as the outstanding characteristics of the traditional divinity in Africa. With the exception of the oracular deity (*Mwari waMatorjeni*, the God of the Matopo Hills) of the Shona and the gods worshipped by the Ashanti, Dogon and Ambo, the God of Africa has been characterised as a *deus otiosus* or a *deus remotus*. As Taylor (1963:85) observed concerning the 'apotheosis' of Kyala: 'Beginning in this world as part of the "human" hierarchy of the living and the ancestors, they [the gods] are eventually, as we might say, pushed through the sky-light and lost sight of.'

While this God is still in touch with the ancestors, he is seldom approached directly by individuals. Even in the Shona High-God cult, Mwari's oracular pronouncements about rain and national issues are monitored by a few cultic officials (Daneel 1970:40f). Apart from these select few, he is seldom approached by anyone in direct acts of worship.

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Because of this absence in the traditional religion of any spontaneous relationship between God and man, religious practice was directed largely at the more accessible spirit world. Small wonder, therefore, that missionaries, apart from using the traditional names of the Supreme Being for God in their Bible translations, tended to direct the main thrust of their indigenising policies towards the accommodation or confrontation of the more dominant ancestor rituals. This sometimes happened at the expense of a consistent approach to the relationship between the God of Africa and the Bible. Hence the pertinence of our central question: Did the church in Africa succeed in drawing the remote one convincingly into the orbit of day-to-day human life? Did he acquire recognisable features as the 'Insider'?

Accommodation and confusion

The Roman Catholic tradition of natural theology allows for a far-reaching accommodation or adaptation to the varied cultures of mankind. In contrast to the Reformed view of human nature as totally corrupted by sin, Catholicism holds that some incorrupt seed is present in creation.

As a result, inherently good customs are encountered among all peoples. The Catholic Church assimilates these good customs in the name of the Son of God – not necessarily by way of radical transformation, but through a synthesis between the indigenous and the Christian truth. Using key words such as 'accommodation' and 'assimilation', Catholic missiological strategy entails the building of bridges between Christianity and the local cultures it encounters. Even papal decrees ascribe to the Roman Catholic Church the function of guardian of the positive aspects of indigenous culture. In *Summi Pontificatus*, for instance, Pope Pius XII stipulated that anything that enjoys general recognition in the way of life of a people, provided it is not inextricably interwoven with superstition, should be weighed sympathetically by the church and, if possible, preserved unaltered and undamaged (Burke 1957:57).

During the initial phase of Roman Catholic mission in Africa this sympathetic approach to traditional culture and religion required by an accommodating theology was markedly absent. Prestage, a priest who devoted himself to the study of traditional customs among the Shona, was of the opinion that the all-pervasive dread of the ancestors and the power of the spirit mediums made it impossible to build on the old religious foundations (Gann 1965:206). In their radical confrontation and rejection of indigenous cultures the early Catholic and Protestant missionary policies resembled each other.

With the passage of time, however, differences between these policies crystallised. In the Catholic Church the emphasis shifted towards the study of local customs and their incorporation into the church. African priests were drawn into experimental attempts at re-evaluating the old usages. Father

Kumbirai, the Shona priest who in the 1960s and 1970s set the trend in the accommodation of traditional rituals and beliefs, judged that Shona tradition was a God-given *praeparatio evangelica* that was to reach fulfilment in the ambit of Christendom. He considered *kupira midzimu* (literally 'to give to the ancestors') to be the ritual extension to the ancestral realm of the same respect that is shown to living people. Having thus done away with the connotation of ancestor 'worship', the way was paved for the introduction into the Shona Catholic Church of adapted forms of communication with the ancestors (Daneel 1971:269f).

One of the first attempts to adapt church ritual was the replacement of the old rain-making ritual (*mukwerere*) with a church ceremony: *Tinonamatira mvura* ('we pray for rain'). This liturgy includes the reading of Scripture passages such as the lament of Judah over drought (Jeremiah 14). In the prescribed prayers the ancestors are not addressed, but God himself is repeatedly asked to bless the fields, the seed and the cattle of the worshippers with sufficient rain. Here a recurrent seasonal need of subsistence peasants is catered for without the traditional addresses to the guardian tribal spirits who, in the old system, were supposed to transmit the request to the rain-giving creator God, Mwari. In this respect the new ritual was theologically conservative and transformative rather than accommodating. The priestly blessing of the lands, the seed and cattle with holy water is also significant. The magical practices of the diviner (*nganga*) are here replaced by symbolic action that is intelligible within the framework of traditional thinking.

In 1966 a burial ceremony proposed by Kumbirai was approved for general use by the Bishops' Conference. It includes the address of the ancestral spirits of the deceased person by both the priest and congregation prior to lowering the coffin into the grave. The liturgically prescribed address starts with an appeal to Mary and the deceased's patron saints, then proceeds as follows:

Priest: You of his father's house, there is your child.

People: Go with him to Mwari!

Priest: You, his ancestors and forefathers and all of his father's tribe who have died, here is your child.

People: Go with him to Mwari!

Priest: You, the departed of his mother's house, here is your child.

People: Go with him to Mwari!

Priest: You, his uncles and grandmothers of his mother's lineage and all who have died of his mother's tribe, here is your child.

People: Go with him to Mwari!

During the closing prayer, God is again asked to receive the departed, who is then addressed personally as follows: 'Intercede for this family of yours, N, so that it may be free from problems in this world and also from the things that

harm body and soul. On the day when they die you must meet them and escort them to Mwari in heaven where there is eternal joy' (Kumbirai 1967:6–15).

Kumbirai also attempted to Christianise the *kugadzira*, the key ritual of all ancestor veneration, representing the official induction of the deceased's spirit into the ancestral realm as a condition for and sanction of all future interaction between the living and the living dead. In the adapted ritual, called the *magadziro echikriste* (the Christian home-bringing of the departed spirit), the characteristic elements of the traditional *kugadzira* are preserved. Incorporation of the departed spirit by the living still takes place, no longer into the old hierarchy of the ancestors, but into the heavenly communion of the saints. Communication with the departed and related ancestors continues and the protective function of the newly installed ancestor is given new content. Instead of symbolically guarding the door of the homestead of his or her living descendants, the ancestor is made an intercessor on behalf of the living so that God will protect them. In this way the family ancestors' mediatory function between God and their living kinsmen becomes more direct than in the traditional religion. By making God responsible for the daily protection of the deceased's relatives and rendering him more readily accessible through a reinterpreted form of mediation, the accommodating Catholic ritual, in its intention at least, seeks to overcome the traditional remoteness of God. Ritually, at any rate, he is drawn nigh!

There can be little doubt about the salutary impact of these adapted rites. In the rural areas the church appeared to come closer to the people; it lost some of its alien Western character, was decidedly less judgmental about the indigenous culture than at first, and gained in popularity. One of the most convincing proofs that the Catholic Church was becoming increasingly enculturated or incarnated in Shona society was its ability to maintain a reasonably stable and loyal membership. In contrast to the Protestant churches, which were losing substantial numbers of members through large-scale secessions, the emergence of Independent Churches and individual apostasy, the Catholic Church emerged comparatively intact.

Beneath the surface, however, the Catholic clergy had serious misgivings about the Christian nature of the new rituals. In the ensuing controversy Father Rubio (Guti 1965:92–3) was the most radical critic of Kumbirai's proposals. 'The *mudzimu* cult,' he contended, 'is not a mere honour but the highest act of worship the Africans can think of ... I was shocked to see that there is a strong tendency to baptise the system of *midzimu* almost by all means ... The system itself cannot be baptised unless we want to make the devil himself a Christian.' Father Kuehne (Guti 1965:116–7), on the other hand, evaluated ancestor veneration more positively. He stated: 'We should not fight a negative fight against honouring the *midzimu*, but show them positively how to do it, for example replace their sacrifices with Holy Mass, give them suitable prayers to and for the *midzimu*.'

Well aware of the possibility of misinterpretation and confusion on the part of church members, Doctor Oskar Niederberger, one of the more moderate critics of the church's attempt to Christianise the crucial *kugadzira* ritual, stressed the significance of consistent instruction to prevent misunderstanding (Daneel 1971:276). It is doubtful, however, whether such a preventive measure could be entirely effective. When the new rituals were first introduced, prominent Shona Catholics in the Gutu district expressed grave concern that the address of the ancestors in church ceremonies would result in a diluted and syncretised Christianity. Fears were expressed that such addresses could be interpreted as the church's sanction of traditional *kupira midzimu* rituals and that dependence on the Christian God was being obscured rather than enhanced.

Considering the traditional preoccupation – at the expense of a remote creator God – with ancestral involvement in everyday life, there are sufficient grounds for concern about interpretive confusion. The adapted burial rite, for instance, emphasises the mediatory function of the ancestors. Officially such adaptation presents few problems, since Catholic theology teaches that those ancestors who obeyed natural law are with God and can therefore act as mediators. Kumbarai himself (in verbal discussion with me) insisted that a distinction is made in the church between the mediatory office of the *mudzimu* for the non-Christian dead and that of the *mudzimu* who intercedes with God through Christ for the faithful. Yet the liturgy quoted above clearly does not make a distinction between Christian and non-Christian ancestors. All the departed person's ancestors are addressed as a group. Ancestral mediation is supposedly transformed in the new liturgy; part of this transformation hinges on the subjection of such mediation to Mariology. Certain features of this liturgy, however, are disturbing and place a question mark over the nature of the conceptual transformation achieved:

- Christ is not mentioned at this juncture at all. A good opportunity to contrast the uniqueness of his mediation with that of the ancestors appears to be squandered.
- God's presence is presupposed, but the participants in the ritual do not address him directly in their plea to the ancestors to accompany the deceased to God. Hence in this part of the ceremony Mwari is portrayed as a passive force.
- By contrast, the ancestors are active, the agents who are to intercede on behalf of the living. With such a projected configuration of roles in the world beyond, it is conceivable that Christ's mediation could be equated with that of the ancestors, with Mwari himself remaining the traditionally conceived distant figure – supreme ruler of the universe, yet crowded out by a legion of active and humanly more comprehensible ancestors.

Representative empirical evidence will be required for a balanced assessment of the full impact of Rome's accommodating policy in the Shona Catholic

Church. Nevertheless, a recent survey of the roles of traditionalists and Church members in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle (*chimurenga*) suggests that ritual accommodation without thoroughgoing Christian transformation can lead to a distortion of Christian truth. Thus Protestant ex-combatants, mainly of the Reformed Church of Zimbabwe (RCZ), tended to evaluate their overriding dependence on senior tribal ancestors and their representative spirit mediums during the war years as a form of spiritual back-sliding (*kuheduka*). By contrast Roman Catholic fighters were inclined to judge this feature of *chimurenga* as a veritable renaissance of traditional religion, fully endorsed by their church. On the issue of mediation, several ex-guerrilla commanders, who are still active Roman Catholics, maintain that there is no qualitative difference between the salvific work of Christ and the Shona hero-ancestor, Chaminuka. Christ, they say, is the mediator of the whites and Chaminuka of the blacks. Cosmas Gonese, a former guerrilla detachment commander who operated in the Gutu district for many years, narrated how he spent a year in prison in solitary confinement reading through the Bible several times and daily using ancestral snuff as a means of venerating both Chaminuka and Mabwazhe (founding ancestor of Gutu's Rufura tribe), who guided him and saved him from destruction through years of combat. His prayers included addresses to the Christian Mwari, to Chaminuka, Mabwazhe and those senior ancestors he considered responsible for the survival of the guerrillas in each of the districts where he operated.

This kind of *chimurenga* evidence should not be misconstrued. It illustrates conclusively only that virtually all Africans, particularly in times of crisis, live with and rely on their ancestors for protection, irrespective of the policies of the churches they belong to. The views of Protestant and Catholic combatants are not contrasted here for a comparative evaluation of the degree of Christianisation achieved by the two traditions. Any such comparison could result in an indictment of both traditions, in that existentially Mwari remained very much the outsider, if, in a protracted war situation, the attention of thousands of members of these Mission Churches could be so thoroughly absorbed by the ancestors. Nevertheless the ease with which Catholic believers justify such absorption and equate Christ's saviourhood with the protective function of local guardian spirits suggests an incomplete understanding of the central message of Christianity, which may well be the outcome of a popular yet superficial accommodation strategy.

Discontinuity and negation

In the Reformed tradition Calvinist thinking took a more pessimistic view of human nature than Rome's natural theology. As a result, Reformed mission theology tended to emphasise individual conversion as a radical break with the past and treated the process of church indigenisation as a total transformation of all aspects of indigenous cultures and religions. This emphasis obviously

excluded adaptation in terms of identifying and incorporating constructive elements of traditional customs. Instead, it invariably promoted a policy of discontinuity, which inhibited dialogue between representatives of the Western and African cultures and led to a negation of indigenous practices by the early Mission Church policy-makers.

The mission theology of the South African Dutch Reformed Church has been influenced by German theologians. Professor J. du Plessis, for instance, supported Gustav Warneck's insistence on the indigenisation of the Mission Church – the 'rooting of Christianity in national life' (Warneck 1897:22). According to Dutch Reformed policy Africans are not to be robbed of their language and culture. Instead their entire national heritage must be permeated and purified (Van der Merwe 1967:52). The pioneer missionaries among the Shona, however, lacked the strong ethnological interest of men such as Burno Gutmann and Christiaan Keyser. Convinced of the necessity of individual conversion and filled with the pietistic zeal of the outstanding DRC leader, Andrew Murray, the Revd A. A. Louw (a nephew of Murray) and his colleagues propagated a radical break with Shona culture. For them, 'indigenous' meant primarily effective preaching in the Shona language and the training of indigenous church leaders. Gann (1965:206) adequately described the frontier situation in which these pioneer missionaries worked: 'Early evangelists – black or white – took their lives in their hands by going out to the far North; they did not go to analyse, synthesise or apologise, they went to fight Satan and all his works; they took risks because they believed they were fighting evil, and evil brooked no compromise.'

The singularly dedicated and indeed saintly Revd A. A. Louw clearly represented the uncompromising frontier spirit. He was convinced that none of the heathen dances, dream messages of the spirits, addresses to the ancestors, consultation with diviners (*nganga*) or any form of traditional marriage could be assimilated into or purified within the church community. In this respect he echoed the convictions of Father Prestage, his pioneering counterpart in the Roman Catholic mission. All indigenous customs had to be renounced. As a result, the Shona Reformed Church largely came to reflect the sober liturgical forms and lifestyle of the parent body. It was inevitable, therefore, that to many Shona adherents their church (apart from the joyful news of redemption) came to have a doubly foreign content: that of the biblical Christian position (in but not of the world) and, in addition, an alien Western pattern of worship.

As the young church began to grow, the Revd Louw's views of indigenous customs found increasingly clear expression in the Shona catechism and book of church laws, entitled 'Rules and Regulations'. The rain cult of the Supreme Being with its oracular manifestation at Matonjeni (Matopo Hills) and the local rain rituals of the tribal spirits (*mukwerere*) were rejected as 'evil customs' of the ancestors. No ecclesiastic rain rites were replaced in the liturgy except the prayer meeting for rain in times of drought, as is customary in the parent church.

All forms of ancestor worship and divination were typified as transgressions against the first commandment (*Katekisma* 1966:8). The *shavi* cult, wizardry and other traditional customs were lumped together with the ancestral cult and described as a direct evil from Satan to deceive the faithful. Traditional burial ceremonies were condemned (*Rules and Regulations* 1967:35) and a condolence ceremony (*runyaradzo*), introduced as a substitute for traditional post-burial rituals, was abandoned when it appeared to be degenerating into the traditional *kugadzira* in some areas (Daneel 1971:276).

It would be unfair to suggest that DRC missionaries took no interest in the indigenous culture. Some of their leading ministers engaged in research in order to acquire deeper insight into traditional worldviews. This led to valuable publications, among others *The Shona Idea of God* by Professor W. J. van der Merwe. Black and white mission workers also developed spontaneous patterns of pastoral care in confrontation with the spirit world pervading the lives of believers. These included the laying on of hands and exorcism. But the general tendency was towards elimination and a measure of negation of Shona beliefs, rather than confrontation and dialogue. Attitudes towards the ancestor cult, in particular, concentrated on the actual or imagined features of worship, idolatry and satanic turning away from God so excessively that no room was left for remoulding by assimilation or for the substitution of parallel Christian rites within the church.

The implication of this policy was that the good news of the missionaries seldom addressed the entire range of existentially significant issues in a rural subsistence economy. What was good news at the mission stations, at the schools and at the clinics erected by the missionaries was not necessarily good news in the villages. Religiously church members tended to live in two worlds. They would attend Sunday services and prayer meetings at the mission station where God indeed seemed to be present for the protection and advancement of his people. Back in the villages, however, the threat of wizardry, destructive forces and crippling droughts were as real as before. Here God did not appear to be the Insider. Because the Christian message insufficiently penetrated this world, many church members continued to propitiate the ancestors, to surround their homesteads with a 'stockade' of magically prepared objects to ward off evil, to participate in traditional exorcistic and witchcraft-eradication activities, etc., in an attempt to secure their wellbeing.

A particularly poignant example of the two-world paradox of DRC members living around the rural mission stations is the relationship or, to be more precise, the lack of interaction between the Gutu mission station and the traditional Mwari cult. Having rejected the ancient cult of the Supreme Being, both missionaries and African church leaders on the whole negated it. Unaware of the resilience of the traditional system, they rarely, if ever, confronted the old belief in the ancient rain-god in church sermons or discussions. Conversion and spiritual growth in

the pietistic sense and upliftment of the heathen through education and medical services were uppermost in their minds, the very essence of their success story. But this very success, with its overwhelming burden of administrative work, created a blind spot. Nobody at the mission station paid any attention to Vondo Mukozho, living on their very doorstep for several decades. He was just one of the local peasants, a kind man who sometimes attended church and showed great appreciation for the excellent education his children were receiving at the mission station. But to the Gutu peasants Vondo was the senior *munyai* (messenger) of the Mwari cult in the district, the one who annually collected gifts (*zvipa*) all over the district, from traditionalists, Dutch Reformed members and Catholics alike. These gifts were then presented at the distant cultic shrines near Bulawayo with a plea for rain. Mwari in turn would address his people oracularly from the cultic caves on issues of agriculture, rain and tribal politics (Daneel 1970, *passim*).

To the peasants, therefore, prayers to the Christian God at the mission station were not enough, especially not in times of drought. Those prayers, so it must have seemed to the villagers, benefited only the mission. During droughts the missionaries' salaries did not cease to be paid, their schools did not close down and their good, affluent life proceeded unaffected. It was in the villages that people went hungry, that the granaries stood empty, and the cattle died. Somehow the God of the white man, the one of educational and medical progress, did not cut a clear figure among the peasants. And falling back on the traditional cult did not help much to phase out the idea of a remote God either. For, despite his rain-giving function and tribal political concern, the traditional Supreme Being essentially remained a remote presence behind the ancestors.

In village life, therefore, the ancestors continued to hold sway, determining the destinies of their living descendants. For the traditionalists this held true because to individuals, families and tribal communities, ancestor veneration was the age-old religious pivot on which life turned. Modern progress and acculturation had not changed this. Many Roman Catholics subscribed to the same truth. Through over-accommodation, traditional ancestral mediation entered the church essentially unchanged. In the Dutch Reformed Church, on the other hand, radical discontinuity without adequate replacement created a vacuum that many members filled by leading a double religious existence: worshipping the God of the Bible at the mission station and venerating the ancestors for protection and wellbeing in the village.

In both cases, therefore, God existentially remained the Outsider – mentioned more regularly in ceremonial life than ever before, but still the distant enigmatic Being, because the basic rural cosmology had remained unchanged. The African Reformed Church (currently called the Reformed Church of Zimbabwe or RCZ) eventually had to face the additional complication that its cultural foreignness and strict disciplinary measures, experienced by many members as

a repudiation of their own cultural identity, led to alienation and the defection of large numbers of adherents. They were attracted to the Independent Churches where God visibly entered their world; where his hands, his eyes, his feet were etched in black, through emissaries totally identified with and sharing the sufferings and joys of their own rural world.

Inculturation and rehabilitation

Over the past three decades African theology has grown as an attempt to give expression to Christianity in African religio-cultural terms, to relate Christianity meaningfully to the African's view of reality and to integrate it into his worldview. According to Ukpong (1984a:510) 'the final goal [of African theology] is to help the African live out Christianity authentically within his cultural milieu and to integrate his religious personality'.

A distinction can be made between the more moderate school, which emphasises indigenisation, and the radical school, which is concerned with inculturation. Insofar as they concentrate on the religio-cultural heritage of Africa, both these approaches represent a cultural theology, as opposed to South African black theology whose focus is primarily socio-political. In the moderate school, represented by theologians like Mulago, Nyamiti and Pobee, concepts such as indigenisation and accommodation predominate. Here the task of translating the Christian message in the African context still makes use of Western methodology. Indigenous cultural elements used in the process of indigenisation remain subject to Western revelation theology and gain validity in the church only through transformation. The more radical school of inculturation, represented by theologians such as Tshibangu, Mushete, Bimwenyi-Kweshi and, to some extent, Idowu and Mbiti as well, adopts a new theological methodology. The Bible and Christian tradition are evaluated with greater openness towards the African culture. As the latter is allowed to direct the course of theologising to a greater extent, the result is an existentially oriented, contextualised theology as opposed to a rationally systematised, doctrinal theology. The basic emphasis is on grassroots encounter between the Christian message and Africans in their total cultural context.

Whether moderate or radical, African theology is essentially a response to Western theology and its practical expression in the missionary context, two examples of which were cited above. In this respect African theology attempts to unmask the weaknesses and pretensions of Western theology and, in doing so, establishes its own identity. Thus, at the Fourth Theological Seminar in Kinshasa, Zaire (1968), Vincent Mulago rejected Western theology's implicit claim to universality and normativeness as well as the tendency of Western theologians to view African theology as an adapted version of universal theology. By contrast he emphasised the pluriformity of all theological endeavour. Bimwenyi-Kweshi

in turn insisted that African theology constituted much more than attempts at 'Africanisation' or 'indigenisation'. '[It] proceeds from its own basis, to grapple with the total complexity of questions put by the church in Africa and to respond to these questions in the light of the African faith' (in Bosch 1984:113).

As a form of contextualised inculturation, African theology should be characterised as religio-cultural liberation. It presents a new approach in the face of a history of colonial subjection, Western racism and imperialism. Enforced acculturation has caused a deep, traumatic split in the African soul – a 'religious schizophrenia', as Desmond Tutu put it – with an accompanying identity crisis. Against this background, African theology forms part of the Africans' attempt to overcome alienation from their cultural heritage. Reaction against colonial conquest provides self-respect as a necessary condition for the search for a new, liberating identity. Hence preoccupation with and re-evaluation of indigenous traditions represent, not a return to the fleshpots of Egypt but, as Witvliet puts it, the necessary and demanding first phase of the exodus from Western religio-cultural enslavement (Witvliet 1984:111). A characteristic feature of this form of liberation theology is the rediscovery of and appreciation for those tenets of African culture that had been rejected or ignored under Western domination. Rehabilitation of culture, tradition and history is thus the hallmark of this first phase of liberation.

How does this rehabilitation of traditional religion affect the views of African theologians on the subject of biblical and African concepts of God? Is the *deus otiosus* brought into the inner circle of mankind or does he remain the remote outsider? Does Scripture remain normative or is the gospel message smothered in African religion and bereft of its liberating power? In response to such questions one should bear in mind, first of all, that against the background of colonialism – which all too often was mirrored by missionary policy, praxis and attitudes – African theologians, in their reflection on traditional religion, are passionate apologists. They are concerned with their own religious roots. What they find there shows continuity with the Christian faith rather than the discontinuity which the missionaries tended to emphasise. The God of Africa and the God of the Bible are essentially one. As Kibicho (1968:235) puts it: 'I think it would be right to conclude that the Kikuyu conception of God compares well with the Hebrew conception of the Old Testament, perhaps even at the latter's highest level of development.' This favourable comparison, which features in numerous variations in recent monographs on the African understanding of God – such as Idowu's *God in Nigerian Belief*, Danquah's *The Akan Doctrine of God*, Nyamiti's *African Tradition and the Christian God*, Mbiti's *Concepts of God in Africa* and Setiloane's *The Image of God among the Sotho-Tswana* – implies rejection of the idea of a *deus otiosus* or *deus remotus* as a misleading generalisation contrived by Western observers. Such elevation of the African concept of the Supreme Being, moreover, is based on a prefiguration paradigm,

in which traditional religion represents a *praeparatio evangelica* in its own right, comparable with the Old Testament. Like the latter, African religion finds its fulfilment by affirmation in the gospel message of Christ and does not fall under the judgment of discontinuity as preached by the missionaries.

Mbiti's theology clearly reflects this trend. In his *Concepts of God in Africa* he construes a uniform concept of the African Supreme Being from the widely divergent views of some 270 African tribes. In what appears to be an oversimplification, he blends the fragmented concepts of African religions into a systematised totality, expressed in Western categories, which reads like a textbook in systematic theology. In an article on the encounter between Christian faith and African religion, Mbiti (1980:817f) states emphatically that the God of the Bible is the same as the God already known in the pre-Christian framework of African religion. The missionaries introduced Christ as an innovation, but correctly used the names of the God already present in Africa, as it is he who is the creator and the father of Jesus Christ. This God not only revealed himself on the Old Testament Mount Sinai, but also on Mount Fuji and Mount Kenya. Consequently Mbiti rejects the Western theological distinction between 'general' and 'special' revelation as unbiblical. God's revelation should not be restricted to its biblical account. 'One important task, then,' writes Mbiti (1980:818), 'is to see the nature, the method and the implication of God's revelation among African peoples, in the light of the biblical record of the same revelation.' By implication, therefore, the historical account of God's involvement with the people of Africa is considered to be on a par with that of Israel. Thus 'salvation history' should be broadened to encompass other nations along with the nation of the Old Testament covenant, Israel. Although Mbiti does not draw this argument to its logical conclusion in this article, the equation of Old Testament history with the pre-Christian history of traditional Africa appears to be implicit in his reasoning; hence the prefiguration paradigm.

Moving beyond the prefiguration paradigm, Setiloane considers the Christian concept of God as preached by the missionaries among the Sotho-Tswana to be inferior to these peoples' traditional concept of Modimo. Setiloane characterises Modimo as a near pantheistic IT-reality, a non-personal being whose mysterious presence pervades all creation. In full support of Rudolf Otto's description of man's encounter with God as an irrational experience of the 'mysterium tremendum', Setiloane (1976:85) qualifies the Sotho-Tswana's existential perception of Modimo along similar lines: 'IT is "mysterium"', he contends, 'intangible, all-pervasive, at no point capable of definition. IT is "tremendum" – "selo", monstrous, whose very name is taboo to all but the few. IT is "fascinans" – "mother", concerned for the poor and the weak, and for justice among all. And precisely because IT is concerned for justice, IT has something in IT not only of the numinous, but of the holy.'

To the missionaries, who identified the holy and the moral, such a perception of God was unacceptable. According to Setiloane, however, African religion should reject the Western portrayal of the Christian God, for the West has lost the experience of God as 'mysterium tremendum et fascinans' and has replaced it with a 'deus absconditus', or a saviour only of individual souls. To Setiloane, therefore, the Sotho-Tswana hesitation in the presence of the mystery, Modimo, is more acceptable than the glibness with which the Christian evangelist speaks of 'the Lord'. 'It is indeed suggested,' he urges, 'that Western theologians might go to school with the Sotho-Tswana if they wish to rediscover, in truth, the Yahweh whom they profess to serve' (Setiloane 1976:229-30). Through his identification of Modimo with the Old Testament Yahweh, Setiloane thus rejects the pretensions of Western missionaries whose small and insignificant concept of God fail to do justice to Africa's perception of the holy.

Much as one may appreciate Setiloane's exposure of limitations in mission theology, his appeal remains unconvincing insofar as he does not attempt a biblical appraisal of the relationship between Modimo and the Old Testament Yahweh. In this respect his theology appears to have far less of a biblical basis than Mbiti's. By carrying the argument beyond the prefiguration paradigm, African religion rather than Scripture becomes the norm for theology. The question arises whether Setiloane still operates within the parameters of a Christian theology. If the Sotho-Tswana religion prescribes the actual terms of reference for theological reflection, there has been a shift to what should possibly be termed 'African traditional theology'.

Contributions of this nature, valuable as they are in establishing an independent theological orientation by way of religio-cultural liberation from the virtual monopoly formerly asserted by Western theology, are the cause of some concern. Protestant evangelical theologians such as the late Byang Kato, Adeyemo and Tienou have serious reservations about the use of traditional religious notions as a basis for the development of an African theology. Bosch (1984:117) is of the opinion that 'Africa has not yet produced many scholars who are equipped to produce a truly incarnational theology emerging from a profound encounter between the Bible and the African world.' In his view francophone African theologians have been overly committed to speculative theology and anglophone theologians to apologetics. The need currently is for an African theology that takes both the biblical revelation and African world seriously, 'an authentic theology of religions ... that moves beyond isolating certain aspects of African life and thought for which sanction from biblical revelation is then sought' (1984:118-9). Surprisingly, this is precisely what is taking place, not in the written reflections of sophisticated African theologians, but in the spontaneously enacted theology of many African Independent Churches, to which we shall now turn.

Existential confrontation and transformation

At Mission Church conferences and African theological consultations, the written word, as the repository of systematic reflection and public debate, predominates. At this level the oral and enacted theology of the Independent Churches is acknowledged by African theologians as a significant source of raw material for a truly contextualised theology (Fashole-Luke 1978:144). But very few of the known African theologians have had the opportunity to conduct empirical surveys of Independentism. Hence the relatively low profile of Independent Church theology in the literature produced by black African theologians, which obviously does not denigrate the significant contribution actually made by the Independents. Their liberation from Western domination and their religious rehabilitation (in Witvliet's sense of the word) consisted of withdrawal from missionary control and substitution of their own 'Jeruselems' and 'holy cities' for the rural mission stations. There they could minister uninhibitedly to the existential needs of their people. Free from Western doctrinal strictures and imported attitudes of negation or repudiation of their own worldview and religious practices, they could incorporate or confront and transform these as they saw fit, whether through serious dialogue, symbolic ritual or dancing feet. Basically their policy towards traditional culture varies from uncritical absorption of the 'old customs', which leads to syncretistic synthesis (commonly found in Ethiopian-type churches), to confrontational transformation marked by innovative replacement of old practices (as in the prophetic Spirit-type Zionist and Apostolic churches). Our concern here is mainly with the latter approach.

In contrast to the African theologians' attempt (above) to trace a continuity between the God of Africa and the God of the Bible and to reject the very real dimension of God's remoteness in traditional religion, the Independents in practice appear to acknowledge both continuity and discontinuity. The Shona Zionist prophets, for example, recognise both the continuing significance of the traditional High-God cult and take seriously the remoteness of Mwari, which is also the name used for God in their Bibles. Through improvised rain rituals – tradition-oriented yet radically changed – they endeavour to bring the distant God, approachable only to a few select cultic officials, into the orbit of their daily living. This ritualistic attempt represents the line of continuity. For in Zionist sermons and ritual, Mwari, the distant one of the Matopo hills, who in pre-Christian times was also called *Wokumusoro* (the one above) and *Wedenga* (the one of heaven) is now introduced as the recognisable one, much closer to the individual than formerly.

There are several ways in which the traditional High-God was drawn close and in which his image changed in the Shona prophetic communities. First of all, he was drawn close as rain-giver and the provider of crop and human fertility. In other words, he remained recognisable in his traditional function, with the difference that he became much more accessible than he had been in his

former manifestations through oracular pronouncements. In the second place, he became more prominent in adapted ancestral rituals such as the consolation ceremony (*runyaradzo*), which replaced the traditional accommodation (*kugadzira*) ritual. As a result of all addresses to the ancestors and the attempted suppression of their mediatory function, the role of Christ came to feature more prominently, and was highlighted by the iconic leadership of the Zionist bishop. This contrasts favourably with the way Christ is to some extent overshadowed by ancestral mediation in, for instance, the Roman Catholic rituals (above). In the third place, the healer-prophet took over the position of the traditional *nganga*. His/her faith-healing ministry in the name of the Holy Spirit incorporates diagnostic and therapeutic activities in which traditional magic and medicine are replaced by the healing power of a manifestly present God. Fourth, a special ministry of exorcism and witchcraft eradication brings the real African perception of evil and sin into the open and confronts it directly with the liberating and reconciliatory power of God. This prophetic ministry differs vastly from the missionaries' rejection of witchcraft and the preaching of individual immorality and sin against God, in a manner that seldom penetrated to and exposed the African experience of destructive evil in society.

In this chapter we can only dwell briefly on the entry of the rain-giving God into a peasant culture. Bishop Mutendi of the Zion Christian Church confronted and transformed the traditional Mwari cult more thoroughly than any of the other Shona AIC leaders. In contrast to the Mission Churches, he regularly preached about and attacked the old system. Instead of relying on the traditional cult messenger (*munyai*), each Zionist congregation was required to send a delegation to Zion City during the October conference (called the *mbeu ungaro*, seed conference) with gifts and a special request for rain. There they could petition the Zionist 'man of God' directly for rain and agricultural prosperity. Towards the end of the proceedings Mutendi blessed the seed to be sown by his followers and the flails to be used after the reaping of the crops, through laying on of hands. Thus Mutendi conveyed the protective blessings of the 'One in heaven' directly to the seed and other objects in the presence of thousands of ZCC peasants as a substitute for the generation of fertility by the oracular deity of Matonjeni.

More important still was the manner in which Mutendi modelled the ceremonial request for rain at Zion City on the familiar procedures of the ancient cult. In the same month that the cultic priests and messengers dance in honour of Mwari and present the gifts from outlying districts at their oracular shrines, Zionists from all over the country dance before the 'man of God' at ZCC headquarters. Each district sends a group of dancers, thus combining joyful celebration with the handing over of their church circuit's financial gifts, together with a plea for rain. Delegates then trust that their concrete requests, presented to God by their bishop, will secure sufficient rain for the coming season.

As iconic leader, the ZCC bishop in a very real sense reflects the presence or is the incarnation of the biblical Mwari at Zion City. Himself a peasant, as dependent on the rural subsistence economy – and therefore on good rains – as his followers, the bishop is totally identified with them in his petitioning of God. Unlike the white missionaries, whose livelihood at the mission station remains secure when the rains fail, the Zionist bishop faces the same dilemma and hardships as his followers in periods of drought. When they suffer, he suffers. When they rejoice over the harvest of bumper crops, he leads their celebration, their thanksgiving and their testimony – sermons that propagate a caring God present in the midst of his people. Existentially, therefore, God enters the lives of these Zionist peasants in the person of someone who shares their destiny, who feels what they feel, whose features they know, who lives in their midst. God's protection and mercy, in addition, acquire convincingly concrete shape at Zion City through a mutual aid scheme developed by Mutendi. All outlying congregations contribute part of their crop yields to the central granary at Zion City in acknowledgment of divine involvement in their agricultural pursuits. From this maize supply the needy, the poor, the widows and orphans and those Zionist communities suffering from drought in any particular year are fed.

As opposed to the two-world paradox and double religious life caused by the missionary rejection and negation of traditional religion, the ZCC policy stimulated conflict. To some extent this is a measure of successful Zionist inculturation. In this system, prophetic detection makes it impossible to participate unobserved in Christian or traditional rituals. Where the one openly and consistently opposes and provides replacements for the other, thereby posing a threat to the other's existence, conflict is inevitable. Mutendi's success in drawing tribal chiefs into his church and subverting their traditional loyalty to the oracular cult with alternative, impressive rain-making claims posed just such a threat to Matonjeni – much more serious than that of the critical but complacent Mission Churches. Loss of support to Zionist substitute ceremonies provoked bitter opposition from the Mwari cult officials. In February 1965 the Bikita *munyai*, Chihiya, who resided near Zion City, had to listen to an angry oracle at Matonjeni. Mwari told him: 'You people in Bikita believe in Mutendi's power to make rain. I do not like this and I shall send but little rain for the next six months. If you want rain, go ask Mutendi! Let us see if he succeeds. I will punish the people because the Zionists call me Satan!' When the messenger from Victoria South arrived at the cave soon after Chihiya, he was asked why Chief Jena did not stop his people from becoming Zionists, as the Zionists destroy the (traditional) world. Speaking for Jena, the messenger replied: 'They simply join and I cannot stop them.' Thereupon he was chased from the shrine as 'Mwari showed great anger indeed' (Daneel 1970:69). This provocation of the otherwise secretive High-God into an overt attack on Zionism clearly illustrates the far-reaching impact of an uncompromising yet thoroughly contextualised

and dramatically enacted theology on the traditional religious nerve centre, the final bulwark of Shona culture.

Another illustration of the Christian God's entry into a peasant culture as a traditionally recognisable yet different figure is provided by the Zionist and Apostolic fasting ceremonies on mountains. These are the Christianised versions of the old *mukwerere* rain rituals. Instead of addressing the senior tribal spirits at their mountain graves with a request that they forward a plea for rain to the distant Mwari of the Matopo Hills, Mwari becomes a palpable presence among the body of believers on the mountain top. In contrast to the traditional Mwari, who appeared to be only indirectly interested in the morals of his people, Mwari the 'Insider' now manifests himself as the Holy Spirit of Scriptures, intensely concerned and stringently regarding the moral behaviour of those present. He requires obedience; he commands, through his prophets, confession of sins; he forgives, judges, blesses. He is still recognisably the rain-giver and is therefore in a sense the one who has revealed himself all along at the shrines of Matonjeni. Simultaneously, however, he is the 'Totally Other' (Rudolf Otto), the loving Father of the Bible who has now penetrated the Shona thought-world in a manner they understand, but radically and directly involved through his prophet emissaries, in total contrast to the old perception. Herein lies the discontinuity of the prophetic churches in relation to the old concept of the deity.

As an expression of intuitive biblical interpretation and spontaneous, praxis-related policy, Zionist dialogue with and transformation of traditional ritual practices are subject to impromptu innovation and change. Consequently theological evaluation of these ceremonies remains a complex task. One of the sensitive issues in Bishop Mutendi's adaptive remoulding of the Mwari cult, for instance, is the prominent function as mediator between God and his followers which he himself acquired in the latter's conceptual world. Despite his rejection of any form of deification and claims to messianic leadership as a black Christ, the acute need for a tangible manifestation of an incarnate God, in the face of colonial subjection and cultural alienation understandably caused some Zionists to attribute to the 'man of God' a near divine role. Thus to some of his followers at least, his iconic leadership obscured rather than illuminated the unique salvific function of Christ. Another problematic issue is whether the petitioning of God with gifts actually represents a conceptual and cosmological breakthrough. In the minds of many Zionists there apparently survives some idea of a causal relationship between right-minded giving to and subsequent receiving from God – between droughts and the failure of church members to provide their leader with Mwari's gifts. As of old, the failure to comply with God's demands results in divine retaliation through droughts. This could obstruct full perception of God's free grace, irrespective of human meritorious behaviour.

Incomplete as it may be, however, the process of conceptual transformation is under way at the existential level where it matters.

In conclusion it can be said that the practical and mostly vividly enacted theology of the Independents significantly complements the written theology of their fellow African theologians referred to above. Their presentation and experience of God as an 'insider' sheds new light on the relationship between the God of Africa and the God of the Bible. Their message of liberation bears little direct relation to the Western world of books, conference halls and verbal semantics. On the whole, they represent the semi-literate masses of Africa. Nevertheless, in some respects their perception of the Christian message may even function as a corrective to the reflections of academically advanced African theologians. Less intent than their more Westernised and sophisticated fellow theologians on championing the uniqueness and legitimacy of the African religious heritage in the face of an often deprecatory missionary tradition, they appear to be less inhibited in presenting the uniqueness of the Christian God, who both accommodates and judges the God of Africa.

The attempts of the Shona prophets in this respect resemble the penetration of the Old Testament Yahweh into the Semitic world. Bosch (1974:51f) gives a striking description of the continuity and discontinuity between Yahweh and El, a prominent Semitic god. In that assimilation and integration too there was continuity. 'El was king, creator and judge, the holy one, the One to whom the heavens belonged and the God of the heavenly council (Psalm 82).' Yahweh absorbed all these characteristics and still emerged a uniquely different deity. Without being equated with El, he penetrated the Semitic world via El. Likewise, in the Shona prophetic movement, Yahweh enters a world already occupied by pre-Christian concepts of Mwari and, as with El, he gives fresh content to these concepts to gain access to the Shona worldview. But there is also discontinuity, because the Mwari proclaimed by the Shona prophet makes different and more comprehensive claims on the individual than Mwari of Matonjeni ever did.

Another point of discontinuity exists in that Mwari, Modimo, Nkulunkulu and other African deities try, through their representatives, to maintain themselves in opposition to Yahweh. This is not to attack the African theologians' view that the traditional God of Africa is related to the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible indeed did not leave himself unwitnessed in Africa! But the effect of his intervention in the thought-world and lives of people outside the biblical revelation is, from a Christian perspective, incomplete and in need of change. Of this the Shona Independents are aware, intuitively rather than doctrinally. As a result they consciously engage in turning the old into something new.

Theirs is a ritually enacted and dramatised theology of fulfilment in which the old deity is not merely embraced as if he has merely donned a new garment, but in which he emerges as the one whose existence was always guessed at,

who indeed was always present, yet who now manifests himself as the Totally Other.

Finally, I wish to state that the comprehensive nature of the encounter between Christianity and African culture far surpasses the scope of these sketchy notes on four policies or traditions concerning such encounter. No attempt was made to weigh the full strength and limitations of each tradition, or to assess the overlapping between them. Future solutions, from a Christian perspective, do not lie in policy statements and the accompanying choice of key words – such as accommodation, assimilation, contextualisation or transformation – but in the quality of cross-cultural, inter-human encounter, through which the incarnation of Christ, as the affirmation and judgment of all cultures, becomes manifest. A fair assessment of the nature of Christ's presence in each culture requires both written reflection and enacted theology.

UNITY THAT THE WORLD MAY KNOW

The last section, consisting of only one chapter, thematises an aspect of Daneel's work that returns the reader to the overarching theme of this book: holding together what has broken apart. In 'Liberative Ecumenism', Daneel analyses his own contribution to ecumenism among the AICs. Using the thought of theologian Jerald Gort as a rubric, chapter 13 recounts the story of *Fambidzano*, an organisation that brought together over 90 AICs in Zimbabwe. During its twenty-plus years of existence, *Fambidzano* provided essential theological training, development programmes, and recognition from outside Christian bodies who had previously shunned the Independents. Most importantly, it fostered a sense of unity among formerly atomistic churches that still endures. For *Fambidzano* member churches, unity meant more than the formal statements and conferences that sometimes distinguish Western ecumenism. The AICs' unified work for justice, liberation, and reconciliation exemplifies the enacted, holistic theologies that have energised the pages of *All Things Hold Together*. By heeding Jesus' prayer for unity among believers in John 17:21–23, *Fambidzano* members' ecumenical testimony holds relevance far beyond the confines of rural Zimbabwe.

Liberative Ecumenism at the African Grassroots*

Introduction

Jerald Gort and I have shared strong interests in ecumenism ever since we studied and later worked together at the theological faculty of the Free University of Amsterdam. As an outstanding scholar in missiology, Jerry studied and published on this subject as it evolved in the context of the World Council of Churches and international ecclesiastical developments. By way of contrast, my own interests were geographically limited to the situation of Zimbabwe where I attempted as a white African and missiological activist to engage in an ecumenical ministry at the grassroots for and with the African Initiated Churches (AICs).

Despite the difference in approach, there was a way in which our ecumenical endeavours were complementary and mutually beneficial. Jerry's depth of insight and well-defined theological orientation enabled me to evaluate more accurately and critically the complex ecumenical processes in which I was involved in the field. And my trial and error attempts to foster African Initiated Church (AIC) ecumenical leadership opened a window for him in Africa, and an excuse to occasionally escape the rigours of Western indoor academia and briefly exchange them for the vibrant celebration of life of the AICs under the African sun.

I was privileged to found and direct for some time the African Independent Church Conference, called *Fambidzano yemaKereke avaTema* in Shona (literally Cooperative of Black Churches), the first ecumenical movement of AICs in Zimbabwe. Established in 1972, it focused mainly on the provision of theological education by extension (TEE) and on socio-economic development work for the benefit of the AICs involved. On the whole, ecumenism in the *Fambidzano* context entailed collaboration between Christian churches. The liberative dimension of interchurch encounter will be featured in this chapter.

* An earlier version of this chapter appeared in *Fullness of Life for All: Challenges for Mission in Early 21st Century*, edited by Marthinus Daneel, Charles Van Engen, Hendrik Vroom. Rodopi Bv Editions, 2003, pp. 295–327.

Through a number of visits to Zimbabwe, Jerry familiarised himself with the emergent patterns of ecumenism over an extensive period of time. During these visits, as a representative of the Free University of Amsterdam and the Protestant Dutch mission councils (Gereformeerd and Hervormd), both of which sponsored the Zimbabwe venture, Jerry patiently observed TEE classes at outlying extension centres, attended meetings with *Fambidzano* leaders, and spent hours with me discussing developments in the new movement. I could not have wished for a better-qualified and dedicated ecumenical envoy to assess the work in the field and report back to the sponsoring institutions abroad. In this chapter I am in a sense still reporting to the Dutch agencies whose substantial investment in an AIC mission in Africa enabled me to develop a rewarding lifetime ministry beyond all early expectations.

In presenting a few brief reflections on the ecumenical nature of this ministry, I am paying tribute not only to a respected fellow ecumenist and friend, but also to the leadership of these institutions for providing the required resources. Had it not been for the generous support of the Free University and the African Studies Centre in Leiden, I would not have had the opportunity to live among the Shona Independents for nearly three years from 1965 to 1967. This period of research provided me with the necessary insights into the needs of the AICs and the network of contacts with AIC leaders that formed the platform for launching *Fambidzano*. Subsequently, both the Free University and the Reformed mission councils of the Netherlands subsidised the budding AIC movement in Zimbabwe. I salute all these institutions without whose support the chapter on AIC ecumenism in Zimbabwe's twentieth-century ecclesiastical history could not have been written.

It is fitting that the title of this chapter, which signals my ongoing discourse with Jerry on AIC ecumenism, is similar to the one he used for an essay entitled 'Liberative Ecumenism: Gateway to the Sharing of Religious Experience Today' (1992). In this essay Jerry searches for an entrée to inter-religious sharing of experience. He proposes that 'an eminently promising means of bridging this gap [between religions] and of discovering possible areas of overlap of religious experience is the practice of liberative ecumenism, that is, inter-religious cooperation and identification with the poor' (Gort 1992:88). It is no coincidence that two of the major components implicit in the proposed agenda for liberative ecumenism, namely inter-religious cooperation and identification with the poor, were also focal points in *Fambidzano*. For, although the same terminology was not necessarily prominent in the policy and development of this movement, the liberationist thrust was clearly in evidence in the collaborative encounter of diverse religious partners in the achievement of common objectives and the empowerment of the poor to initiate and control their own inter-religious endeavour.

Given the valuable insights developed in Jerry's reflections on 'liberative ecumenism', it seems appropriate that I start with a brief discussion of the salient features in his essay before I attempt an evaluation of *Fambidzano* through the ecumenical perspective he provides.

Gort's theoretical considerations

In a discussion of the modes and dynamics of sharing, a distinction is made in the underlying theology of religion between the two extreme positions of inclusivism and exclusivism. Inclusivism assumes that all religions are essentially the same, ruling out the possibility of ultimate revelational particularity and thus eliminating the principle of fundamentally or constitutionally divergent religious identity. Exclusivism fails to recognise the saving presence of God throughout all the world in that it ignores the telling teachings of many religions. These views are mutually exclusive and preclude meaningful inter-religious sharing (Gort 1992:93). To avoid the impasse of these extreme positions, Gort 1992 suggests a form of theologising that incorporates the more flexible concept of religious 'distinctiveness' as proposed by Kenneth Cragg. This concept allows more generous scope for the similarities and differences between religious faiths than does 'uniqueness,' inasmuch as the latter qualification, as usually employed, leaves little or no room for 'overlap of meaning and experience between faith-concerns' (Gort 1992:94). An acknowledgment of the 'distinctiveness' of religions allows for the various dimensions of sharing distinguished by Gort: participation, witness, and conversion. In this connection he contends that Jose Miguez Bonino's telling observation concerning interaction between Christian denominations, namely that 'plurality may not be sacralised at the expense of coherence', while 'coherence must not be sacralised at the expense of diversity', is equally applicable to inter-religious relations (Gort 1992:94).

A condition for meaningful inter-religious sharing lies in the genuine nature and authenticity of the religious experience of the partners concerned. Rootedness in the Eternal, as opposed to satanic or idolatrous encounter, remains a yardstick in this field, which cannot be compromised. 'The quest for full sharing,' adds Gort, 'ought to be viewed as valid between and among religions whose beliefs and practices demonstrate that they "contain dreams of the new order and a new humankind, which are both a vision and motivating force" (Dornberg1989:112) for the lives of their adherents' (Gort 1992:95). Moreover, the articulations of the sharing faith-partners should reveal their understanding that the final purpose of divine revelation is the reflection of light into the world so that darkness may be overcome.

As for the motives and aims of inter-religious sharing, the main objective, as in all religious activity, lies in honouring God. Gort singles out a deteriorating global situation in which all religions share responsibility for the dividedness

of human communities, a division that precludes world peace, justice, and the integrity of creation. Herein lie the penultimate aim and motive of religious sharing. He contends that 'in the new situation of globalised pluralisation all have a shared responsibility for defining those terms [that is, peace, justice, integrity of creation] and for combating injustice, division and enmity, and the shameless exploitation of nature' (Gort 1992: 98).

Dialogue and mission represent two of the major responses of religion to the needs of the contemporary world. Within Christianity, those who regarded dividedness as the more urgent challenge tended to advocate dialogue as solution. In turn, those who identified poverty and the brokenness of humanity as priority opted for mission with its liberative thrust and gospel for the poor as prime task. Gort argues, however, that both options were based on a flawed hermeneutic. Dialogue did not pay sufficient attention to the poverty of the majority of religious believers, while mission neglected the religiosity of the poor. Instead of the two strategies operating autonomously or interrelating only in unresolved tension, they should, according to Gort, interact in a mutually beneficial manner:

Dialogue must allow itself to be thoroughly informed by the liberative thrust of mission in the realisation that justice is the ultimate aim and purpose of communication.... Likewise, mission must let itself be shot through with the communicative thrust of dialogue in the awareness that religion lies at the basis of liberation (Gort 1992:101).

At this point Pieris is quoted as saying: 'No true liberation is possible unless people are "religiously" motivated toward it.'

The insight that 'mission cannot be properly exercised in the absence of dialogue' was developed largely within the context of the missiological reflection that emerged from the consultations of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) since about 1985. To achieve a new methodology that integrates dialogue and mission, an orientation is required that allows 'cooperation with those religions or movements within religions that have a liberative aim and force' (Gort 1992:102). This new approach, says Gort, can appropriately be called 'liberative ecumenism'. The positive potential of the hermeneutic implicit in this methodology is such that Gort suggests, as a practical implication, the merging of the two departments in the World Council of Churches that deal with dialogue and mission into one division of liberative ecumenism.

Gort qualifies the envisaged ecumenism in terms of cooperative relations between people of different faiths, identification with the poor, and inter-religious involvement in movements of creativity, innovation and renewal. A degree of risk is involved here because this ecumenism requires that stagnant discourse based on so-called objectivity or neutrality should be replaced by

living and working together. But it is only in this way that an existential situation can be achieved that engenders fresh understanding and shared impulses for renewed dialogue. From a Christian view, the main condition for participation in inter-religious innovation remains commitment to the ministry and gospel of Jesus Christ. In this connection Gort interprets Samartha's assertion that 'Christ is at work wherever people are struggling for freedom and renewal, seeking for fullness of life, peace and joy', as follows:

If a religious movement or praxis has a genuinely liberative thrust toward human justice and peace, Christians may feel free to align themselves with it and seek to relate to it in the form of cooperative participation, even though in doing so they will have to take 'certain risks' and might 'not know where [they] are being led' [in Anderson 1976:243] ... [And] joint inter-religious praxis among and on behalf of the poor will yield not only the enhancement of a greater measure of justice but also an increase of communication and understanding (Gort 1992:103).

Interchurch (AICS) ecumenism at the African grassroots

This brief chapter covering more than 18 years of ecumenical endeavour in *Fambidzano* obviously cannot incorporate a full evaluation of the wide range of ecumenical activities involved. Moreover, the autobiographical dimension that inevitably pervades this account as a result of the leading role I played as founder of and full participant in this movement introduces elements of subjectivity that may subtly distort aspects of the overall picture. Other theologians and church historians may well judge the AIC ecumenism in Zimbabwe of the past few decades in an entirely different light from me. But the privilege I was afforded throughout most of my working life to partake in an enriching ministry among African Independents and traditional religionists necessitates the sharing of insights, particularly if such sharing relates to a friend and colleague whose ecumenical pilgrimage so meaningfully interacted with mine.

If nothing else, my observations below will illustrate an uneven passage in the formation of African ecumenism. The trial and error process I was involved in reflects something of the difference between the activity of neat theological formulation (often wrongly seen, as Gort argues, as the sole arbiter in the process of defining the parameters of ecumenism) and the challenging, if unpredictable, praxis of living and implementing ecumenism in African rural society. Bengt Sundkler and Harold Turner, the trailblazers of AIC studies in South and West Africa respectively, tried to dissuade me from engaging in such ministry. They were familiar with the failures of early attempts to unite AICs and argued that the independent nature of AIC leadership was bound to form a near-insurmountable barrier. Thus, I was aware from the outset of the odds against AIC ecumenism. But after three years of experiencing the generosity

and support of the AICs for my field research, I was strongly motivated to give them something meaningful in return.

In 1972, when I began visiting AIC leaders and office-bearers with proposals for an ecumenical movement, they had little or no educational background or experience to help them interpret all the ramifications of ecumenical interaction. The majority of AIC leaders were barely literate, had received little schooling and, with a few exceptions, had no theological training in a Western sense. Most were subsistence farmers, owning hardly any literature apart from their Bibles and some hymnals. Except for a few impressive church headquarters with schools, church buildings and/or clustered healing centres, the bulk of AICs had only small buildings or extended huts for churches, with a few Bible texts painted on the hut of a bishop, as indicators of AIC administrative centres. Poverty-ridden homesteads of small-scale farmers did not have telephones. Communication by mail was sporadic. As a result, sustained contact with the rural AICs in Zimbabwe required endless travel, much of it over badly rutted dirt roads. Thus, during the first year of preparatory talks with individual leaders, group consultations and conferences leading to the formation of *Fambidzano* (Daneel 1989b:30), I lived for long periods of time in rural villages.

Resistance to ecumenism was generated by group attitudes of exclusivism. AIC leaders feared that they could jeopardise their positions in relation to their followers if they were seen in an interchurch situation to compromise on issues that touched on the very identity of their churches. In a field of intense religious competition there was uncertainty about the impact of the proposed ecumenism on in-group loyalties and cohesion. Processes of outreach and group formation hinged largely on solidifying internal identity via criticism of rival church groups. Thus the Spirit-type churches (Zionists and Apostles) were inclined to look down on the Ethiopian-type or non-prophetic movements (the First Ethiopian Church, the African Reformed and African Congregational Church, etc.) as 'non-Christian' because of their so-called neglect of the Holy Spirit. The Ethiopian type churches, in turn, accused the Zionists and Apostles of aligning themselves with ancestral and demonic spirits rather than with the Holy Spirit of the Bible. In both instances the Christian nature of the churches concerned was called into question.

Even within those churches that shared the same features, such as the Pentecostal-oriented Spirit-type churches, the claims of founding leaders in group-consolidating traditions over the years tended to set trends of exclusivism. Thus the visionary experiences of Johane Maranke, founder of the largest AIC in Zimbabwe, the African Apostolic Church of Johane Maranke, became the centre of widely held Apostolic claims that this church is the only divinely sanctioned church of Christ in the country, if not in all of Africa. Johane was said to have been transported to heaven where he was commissioned directly by Christ to establish his true church in Africa. In like manner, Bishop Samuel Mutendi,

founder of the Zion Christian Church in Zimbabwe, became known as 'man of God' to his followers, in his case, too, in consequence of divine legitimation. In this instance the leader claimed a divine calling through dreams and performed numerous healings and successful rain requests in the name of the Christian God. To many of his followers, God was nowhere more truly present than at Mutendi's headquarters, Zion City. It is not surprising, therefore, that when Johane Maranke and Samuel Mutendi met to see whether they could find common ground for cooperation, they came to the conclusion that they did not serve the same Holy Spirit, whereupon they parted company.

Against this background it was clear to me that the development of inter-AIC ecumenical ties, the move from inward-looking exclusivism (which according to Gort 'fails to recognise the saving presence of God throughout all the world') to a more tolerant and open-ended distinctiveness within participant churches, would amount to a long-term up-hill effort. The challenge in the first year was to persuade at least some of the churches to join the envisaged movement. Fortunately, I had built friendships of mutual trust with most of the AIC leaders during the preceding period of research. The publications I brought with me from the Netherlands, books with their own histories and pictures, persuaded the AIC leaders that our joint efforts to record the development of their churches had not been in vain. One bishop, when he saw his own picture next to the historical sketch of his church in one of the books, sighed with relief and said: 'Now I can die in peace because the world out there will know and recognise me.' Another important factor was that I was not employed by any of the local Mission Churches, so my endeavours could not be interpreted as an attempt by any of the so-called mainline churches to gain control over the AICs. Despite some lingering suspicions about my motives in AIC quarters during the preparatory phase, the majority of the AIC leaders accepted at an early stage that I had returned to work for and with them. The new movement was to be seen as an independent entity, owned and run by the AICs themselves. Those were the conditions I negotiated with the sponsoring Dutch mission agencies in recognition of AIC autonomy and the sensitivity of these churches to any form of mission-church interference or manipulation.

The main objectives of the envisaged ecumenical body were that it would provide much-needed theological education for the AIC leadership; and that it would provide a platform from which member churches could acquire respect and recognition from the mainline churches. It was clear at the time that these were major considerations for the first twelve, mainly Zionist and Ethiopian-type, churches which joined hands in forming *Fambidzano* at the first major conference in July 1972. The delegates of many more AICs attended, but they wanted time to reflect on the matter and seek consensus in their own churches. Thus, far from starting on a large scale, the working out of *Fambidzano's* constitution, the establishment of a TEE programme, and the development of

an administrative centre were undertaken by a small core group of churches, who called themselves the 'Fambidzano pioneers', and myself. Hesitation and suspicion in the non-affiliated AICs was overcome over time as the comprehensive benefits of ecumenism unfolded. A groundswell of recruitment then followed, until the movement peaked with an overall membership of some 90 churches.

In an attempt to safeguard the Christian nature of *Fambidzano*, specific conditions for membership were constitutionally defined. In order to qualify, a church had to be based on the word of God (both Old and New Testaments); believe in God the Father, Jesus Christ His Son, and the Holy Spirit; practise baptism in the name of the triune God; practise holy communion; and have a church council to deal with disciplinary issues. Evident in these conditions are the Reformed *notae ecclesiae*. The implementation of these conditions by prominent AIC leaders in *Fambidzano*'s executive board opened a new chapter among the AICs. Leaders of formerly opposing Spirit-type and Ethiopian-type churches were now required to evaluate other AICs applying for membership. These criteria represented a deeper level of theological reflection than the old prejudices of the past that revolved around Holy Spirit manifestations. At this point the isolationist and exclusivist traits in participant churches started to break down as the search for an overarching ecumenical identity gained momentum. That the AIC leaders of the fledgling movement, despite their attempts to achieve greater interchurch tolerance, were serious about safeguarding the Christian nature of their new venture was reflected in the deliberate exclusion of Mai Chaza's *Guta raJehovah* (City of Jehovah) Church. It was felt at the time that Mai Chaza's posthumous integration with the God of the Bible, as propounded in a church handbook, was an unacceptable aberration of the understanding of the triune God of Scripture.

The sustained experience of meaningful interaction was more important for the elimination of the barriers of exclusivism between the *Fambidzano* churches than the theological search for scriptural, doctrinal and sacramental equivalence. Through regular annual conferences, administrative board meetings, weekly participation in TEE classes, regular visits to member churches by the *Fambidzano* president and a host of spontaneously organised interchurch worship ceremonies, an interactive exposure took place that contributed to the development of mutual responsibilities between leaders, women and ordinary church members. As new friendships were forged and new projects were launched, introspective claims of religious uniqueness and superior custodianship of biblical truths receded into the background for each participant church. In the annual graduation ceremonies involving hundreds of students, TEE tutors, and AIC supporters from a host of churches, it became particularly clear that the focus had shifted from introspective churchism to an emphasis on the African churches, including the Western-initiated Mission Churches whose members were also participating in



Plate 35: Core of *Fambidzano's* first executive committee, 1972: (from left to right) Peter Makamba (*Ndaza* Zionist), general secretary, Bishop Nheya Gavhure (First Ethiopian Church) – president and Revd J. Zvobgo (African Reformed Church) – vice-president (top). Revd Guruveti, *Ndaza* Zionist leader, and one of the first students to attend *Fambidzano's* TEE classes



Plate 36: Bishop Forridge receives his TEE certificate, while Revd Nyatoro (left) – tutor in Old Testament studies – proudly observes the proceedings. Bishop Forridge became one of the most influential AIC ecumenical leaders in the Gutu district.

the TEE and correspondence courses. Service within God's Kingdom through advanced church leadership, spiritual growth, women's advancement and socio-economic uplift superseded the narrow preoccupation of individual leaders with their own ecclesial kingdoms. When Bishop Gavhure, leader of the First Ethiopian Church and widely respected president of *Fambidzano*, passed away, for instance, a leadership succession ceremony in his church to install his successor son, Ishmael, was conducted by the leaders of a large number of both Ethiopian-type and Spirit-type churches. What formerly would have amounted to an intimate in-group ceremony in a specific church became an ecumenical event with wide-ranging inspirational sharing in *Fambidzano's* ranks and consolidation of leadership in the bereaved church.

Events of this nature did not signal a relativistic trend in terms of individual church identities. But the growing tolerance and respect between churches rendered unnecessary an insistence on in-group uniqueness. The change in interchurch attitudes, although not subject to precise theological definition in *Fambidzano* circles, was indeed a move away from doctrinal rigidity toward the recognition of group distinctiveness, the acknowledgment of ecclesial pluriformity in the participant church communities. This pluriformity contributed toward enrichment and creativity in sharing rather than conflict and withdrawal. What Gort postulates as essential for ecumenical theologising was being acted out in at least a rudimentary fashion at the African grassroots by the AICs.

Positive as the ecumenical undercurrent in the bonding of *Fambidzano* member churches tended to be, the process was by no means ideal or without flaws. Leadership jealousies and squabbles over finance flared up from time to time. Invariably, when internal cohesion was threatened by dissent, the necessary effort was put forth to assure the preservation of unity. The ecumenicity we shared hinged to a large extent on significant non-theological factors such as friendships that remained steadfast during crises and the preparedness to risk crossing new frontiers when there were no guarantees of success, that is, the willingness to operate on the basis of trial and error. At bottom, we clung in faith to the words of John 17:21–23, which we chose as cornerstone for our movement. As Christ prayed for his disciples to be united so that the world could see and believe in his mission, so we grew in the conviction that our unity in acceptance of his Lordship mandated *Fambidzano's* mission of equipping member churches for growth in self-interpretation, Bible knowledge, holistic ministry and the work of extended outreach in witness to the world so that it might see and believe that Jesus is Lord.

Requirements and motives for interreligious sharing

According to Gort, authenticity of religious experience as a condition for multifaith sharing should be 'rooted in the Eternal', as opposed to deliberate

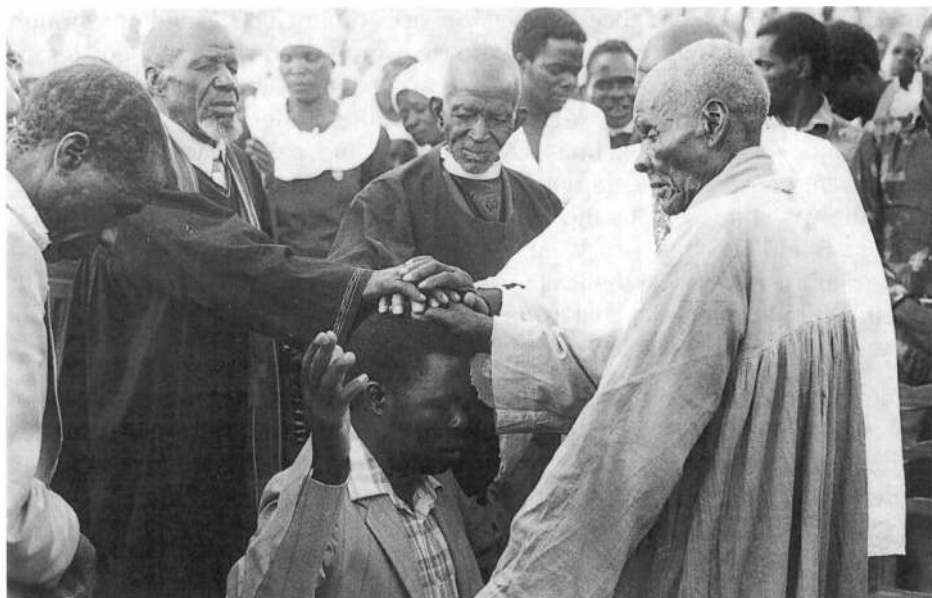
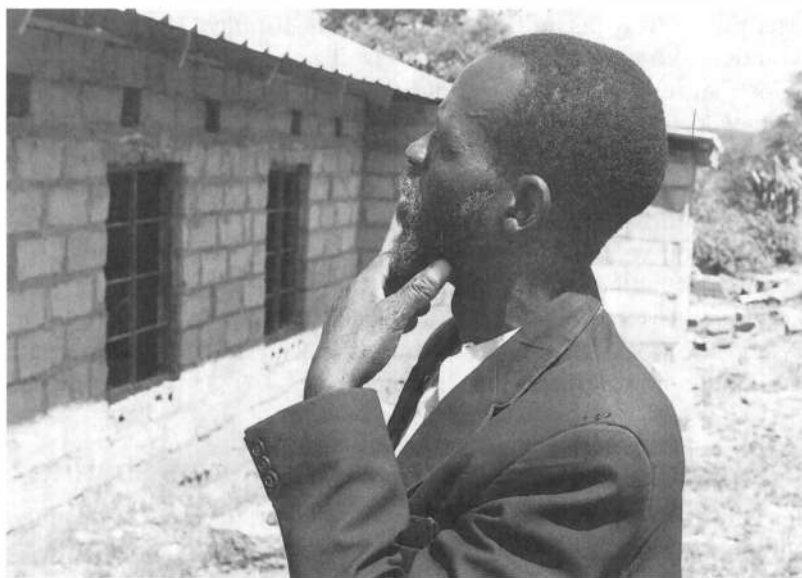


Plate 37: AIC ecumenical ordination ceremony. Bishop Ishmael Gavhure undergoes laying-on-of-hands, for his succession to his deceased father's leadership, by Revd Musasikusa (*Topia*), Bishop Moyana (Seventh Church), Bishop Moses Maskamba (Zion Apostolic Church) and Revd Chapinga (*Topia*) – (top). Bishop Dorias Shoko of the Zion Apostolic Faith Mission (*Ndaza*) observes with pride the community development centre which was funded by *Fambidzano* (bottom)



'satanic or idolatrous encounter'. In addition, the religions of the sharing partners should, he says, reflect awareness ('dreams') of belonging to a new order in which divine revelation inspires people to counteract darkness and evil by radiating light and truth in society.

Even though these characteristics of authentic religious experience were not in all respects explicit in the deliberations preceding ecumenical sharing in the *Fambidzano* context, they were inherent in the evolving process of AIC ecumenism. For the participant churches, rootedness in Scriptures meant rootedness in the Eternal. *Fambidzano's* ecumenism was a response to Christ's call to mission and unity. The context and inspiration for such response was the Kingdom of God, a theme that repeatedly featured on the agenda of Annual General Conference meetings. Improvement of scriptural knowledge through theological education, with its resultant benefits for church leadership and church life, was considered to be the work of God's Kingdom. Progress in the new dispensation included a holistic approach that not only targeted spiritual improvement, but also intensified the struggle against poverty and injustice through community development, income generation and water distribution.

Gort also stipulates that all inter-religious sharing should focus primarily on 'the honour of God'. This central motive for ecumenism is placed in the context of increased societal polarisation on a global scale. Honouring God in such a deteriorating situation inevitably translates into all religions sharing responsibility for peace, justice and the protection of natural resources. The gravity of such responsibility makes it incumbent upon religions to join forces and reconcile their differences.

Honouring God certainly was a pervasive underlying motive in *Fambidzano's* ecumenism. This was to take shape in service to and worship of God against the backdrop of an Africanised Kingdom theology. God's reign and Christ's healing presence was already an experienced reality in the ministries of iconic and prophetic leaders at AIC headquarters and healing colonies prior to the existence of *Fambidzano*. Subsequently, united AIC action was to find realisation in improved church leadership, a deepening of spirituality and biblical-theological knowledge, and general church progress through outreach, growth and organisation. The hub around which all this revolved was *Fambidzano's* TEE programme. Thus our interchurch ecumenism as such was never an end in itself. Instead, it was a vehicle for purposeful theological advancement and holistic mission so that the world might see and believe in the Lordship and Saviourhood of Christ.

At its peak *Fambidzano's* TEE work encompassed regular weekly training at 40 extension centres throughout Masvingo Province, at Chivhu and in Harare. Several teams of tutors taught up to 600 AIC and mainline Mission Church students at these centres each year. Certificate courses lasted for two years and

included basic biblical studies, church history, homiletics, ethics, and theology of religions, all in the vernacular. More than a thousand students annually also participated in the correspondence courses.

The impact of theological education on students and participant churches was gauged in an extensive survey (Daneel 1989b: chapters 6 and 7). Old Testament studies facilitated an understanding of AIC prophetic praxis in relation to biblical Hebrew prophets, while New Testament studies strengthened the Christological basis of church life, triggered a spate of student conversions and, in combination with homiletics, led to improved sermon preparation and exegetically sound preaching in the place of fragmented text interpretation. Church history lessons contributed significantly toward advanced self-interpretation in the ranks of AICs in relation to world Christianity and provided an interpretive basis for the parallel development of *Fambidzano* in joining first of all the Rhodesian Christian Conference and then the National Christian Council affiliated with the WCC. As the knowledge of the dynamics of church schisms worldwide grew in the ranks of participant AICs, the leadership placed a deliberate curb on schismatic fragmentation through sustained negotiations with prospective defectors. The result was startling: hardly a single schism occurred in *Fambidzano's* member churches during the more than twenty years of its existence.

The motive of honouring God also found expression in *Fambidzano's* response to the comprehensive needs of its church constituencies. Poverty was fought through a host of income-generating, community development and water-supply projects (Daneel 1989b). Moreover, after years of opposition by male bishops, *Fambidzano* took the bold step of promoting female emancipation and women's leadership in the churches through the formation of an ecumenical women's association which closely linked the *Ruwadzano* (women's leagues) of participant churches. Such developments constituted a kind of realised-eschatology thrust among most AICs, the attempted concretisation of God's salvation in the here and now through the agency of holistic healing ministries aimed at relieving the physical, mental, social and economic maladies of Africa.

Dialogue and mission in ecumenical sharing

To overcome the flaws of one-sidedness in the strategies of dialogue and mission, 'the former tending to neglect the poverty within religions and the latter the religiosity of the poor', Gort pleads for meaningful interaction and integration of both strategies. Following the new methodology of 'liberative ecumenism', he argues that stagnant discourse between religions on the basis of 'neutrality' or 'objectivity' should be replaced by cooperative relations of living and working together with a liberative thrust. While Gort reminds us that a basic condition for Christians in all forms of ecumenism remains full adherence to the ministry and gospel of Christ, he contends that Christians should feel free

to align themselves with other religions involved in struggles for freedom, even though such alignment inevitably involves risk.

Considering the brand of African grassroots ecumenism we are surveying, the similarities between their existential realities and Gort's proposals for liberative ecumenism are so striking that someone may well feel tempted to ask whether Gort wrote the script for these movements. Perhaps his observations of a spontaneously enacted 'script' at the African grassroots also impacted the development of his ecumenical theology.

Unsurprisingly, *Fambidzano's* main focus on interchurch ecumenism entailed an understanding of dialogue as consisting, in the first place, of communication between AIC denominations in a wide variety of newly created contexts such as conferences, executive meetings, gatherings of women's associations, theological training centres, joint services, Eucharists, funerals, and ordination ceremonies. The sharing of Bible interpretations, spiritual insights, experiences in church growth, church histories and traditions, the latest congregational developments and personal issues in these contexts was of great value in heightening the sense of unity and spiritual renewal in the ranks of *Fambidzano*.

As time went on, however, *Fambidzano* began to promote inter-religious dialogue between Christians and traditionalists as well. Some TEE courses were specifically crafted to deal with and assess the patterns of interaction in healing contexts between Spirit-type faith-healers and people (both Christian and non-Christian) who still adhered to African religious belief systems. This led to lively debates among students during classes and occasioned reflective self-assessments by church leaders of the varied processes of religious interchange taking place in Zionist and Apostolic healing colonies where a truly indigenous *theologia religionis* was taking shape in praxis. In addition, *Fambidzano's* eventual involvement in attempts to arrest poverty in rural villages through religiously open-ended community-development projects stimulated comprehensive Christian-traditionalist ecumenism or, in Gort's words, a 'living and working together with a view to the alleviation of human suffering'.

Unfortunately, *Fambidzano* proved to be insufficiently equipped to handle the pressures of community development. At the time, everyone involved was confident about expanding *Fambidzano's* activities in this direction. The movement had proved itself to be a stable organisation, standing on its own feet for several years. Financial transparency and accountability appeared to be in evidence in accordance with built-in constitutional safeguards. But given the needs of the poor, the demands and expectations of AIC bishops were disproportionate to the available means. Impressed at first by the efficiency of *Fambidzano's* administration and wide-ranging influence, Western development agents tended to overburden the movement's infrastructure with

ambitious projects. Supervision of project implementation at the grassroots was inadequate. The agents had their own agendas, not all of which were realistically aligned to the religio-cultural background and leadership potential of *Fambidzano*.

Fambidzano kept limping along for a few years. Preoccupation with more development projects and funds than it could properly manage took its toll on TEE work. Once this mainstay of the movement's ecumenical endeavour crumbled, disintegration set in and finally, for reasons that are too complicated to set out within the limits of this essay, *Fambidzano* collapsed. But not all was lost. *Fambidzano* made a lasting contribution to AIC ecumenism that is still in evidence in widened and constructive interchurch relations. Without the *Fambidzano* background, for instance, it would not have been possible for ZIRRCO to mobilise the AICs in the Association of African Earth-keeping Churches (AAEC) as quickly and effectively as it did. (See chapters 2 and 3.) In addition to the lasting influence *Fambidzano's* TEE work has had on AIC leadership, one of the most outstanding features of the movement's legacy is the innovative emphasis it has had on the integral relationship between ecumenism and mission.

Ecumenical sharing enacted: Bishop Forridge's *Paseka*

In the pre-*Fambidzano* era some AICs, especially Bishop Mutendi's Zion Christian Church, tended to use the Eucharist during Paschal celebrations as a flash-point, a 'launching pad' for large-scale countrywide missionary campaigns. *Fambidzano* extended this tradition by refashioning ecumenical Paschal celebrations into missionary events in themselves. Eucharistic sermons focused on Christ's good news, reminded audiences of the witnessing character of Christian unity, called for repentance and, as a result, triggered conversions and baptisms. Thus, the ecumenical witness given during joint sacramental celebrations resulted directly in baptismal ceremonies in which the leaders of participant churches would together enter the 'waters of Jordan' (any dam or river suited to the occasion) to baptise new converts in the church of their choice.

The prime representative of *Fambidzano's* new approach to an ecumenical Eucharist-in-mission was Bishop Forridge, who fashioned his entire ministry to accommodate the conviction that ecumenical endeavour in Christ quite literally spelled mission. For years he propagated this conviction in the eastern regions of the Gutu district until he eventually succeeded in drawing the widest possible cross-section of Mission Churches (Dutch Reformed, Roman Catholic, Full Gospel, Methodist, Church of Christ, etc.) and AICs into a regular programme of joint Paschal celebrations. His success in persuading large numbers of non-affiliated *VaPostori* (Maranke Apostles), the church with arguably the strongest

anti-ecumenical bias in Zimbabwe, to participate underscored the far-reaching ecumenical impact of his ministry.

Concerned with the witness character of *Paseka* against the background of *Fambidzano's* interpretation of John 17:21–23, Bishop Forridge moulded his ecumenical Eucharist into a ceremony in which internal reorientation, cleansing and spiritual uplift in the church's visible unification as the body of Christ was combined with the outbound witnessing movement of the church into the world. In this way he engendered a spirit of inter-ecclesial altruism, whereby the preoccupation of individual AIC leaders with membership recruitment for and preservation of the influence of their own churches shifted to the more broadly conceived understanding of Christ's salvific dispensation for all the world.

Bishop Forridge was a semi-literate man, but at the African grassroots he featured as an outstanding Christian leader of great compassion and integrity. His ecumenical achievements live on in the churches of eastern Gutu, and his legacy – which is the legacy of *Fambidzano* – challenges the church in Africa and beyond to commit itself afresh to mission in unity, where denominational self-interest pales in the blaze of the demands and promises of God's Kingdom.

The following extended description⁵⁶ of one of Forridge's ecumenical *Pasekas* provides some idea of the theological motivation and ecclesiastic interaction on such occasions. The celebration took place in the Buhera district between 30 June and 2 July 1984, and involved a wide cross-section of participant Mission and Independent Church members as well as traditionalist observers.

Main theme: Christian unity

Bishop Forridge himself set the theme of the conference by preaching repeatedly about ecumenism. With reference to John 17:13 Forridge preached:

Jesus says: As I come into the world all of them [Jesus's disciples] must be united. The message I am giving them is not to separate, not to be diverted even if someone influences them with an evil message. I tell all of them not to break away but to be one. They must unite! They must unite! And now that you (at this point Forridge addresses the audience) are one, be careful, lest thieves enter your ranks with divisive objectives. No! When that happens you must distinguish for yourselves that while you are at meetings of this nature, Satan has his meeting too. He simply says: Separate! Separate! Don't mislead yourself by thinking that Satan is happy with this kind of gathering. He is not happy. On the contrary, when you find you are making progress in courting a girl and you trust her to enter your house, others are wooing her, luring her with their eyes. They wink at her. While you think you have a girl, behind your back there is another who loves her.

The bishop was not giving a learned discourse, but was making a simple and straightforward appeal for unity which summed up the main points he wanted

to make. First, the call for unity has a christological basis: in his prayer to his Father, Christ actually commands his followers to unite. Second, Satan's powers to subvert unity, against a background of church fragmentation, should not be underestimated. Third, the vulnerability of existing unity is illustrated by a very apt analogy with the uncertainty of everyday life as experienced in courtship. The unity of Christian believers can be shattered as easily as a beloved is distracted by temptations from rivals.

Following Bishop Forridge's lead, the Methodist Reverend Masiya dwelt on the contents of John 17. He interpreted the motive behind Christ's prayer as the salvation of humankind and portrayed Christ as the liberator who frees people from the burdens of this world. Masiya related the call to salvation directly to church unity:

Will we continue walking in darkness now that the world has been cleansed? Are we witnesses for everybody to see? Are we suffering for the sake of the blood [of Christ] spilt for us? With all the many churches in this world, we fail to have one place of unity where we can have our names written; we fail to have one place of which we can say we saw so-and-so at church. So we call on you today, we urge you to discard your [ecclesiastic] divisions and have your names written down [in support of unity and as a sign of salvation].

In a sense, Masiya was suggesting that salvation without unity is incomplete. One presupposes the other; the absence of church unity makes a mockery of salvation in Christ. By implication he was emphasising the witness character, the missionary nature, of unity – the dominant theme in John 17. Masiya's combination of a call to overcome divisions with the image of having one's name written in the book of life clearly conveys the message: *one* body of Christian believers, *one* salvation in Christ – that is, if the work of Christ and people's response to it are to have any credibility in this, the known world. Masiya also introduced a dimension of incarnational theology to concretise his appeal:

This bishop [Forridge] whom we have here is the one who was sent [by God] to be our witness. God did not send someone of another race but a son of our own kind, so that we can recognise him in this world ... He comes as a father of the people; he comes with blazing fire for us to draw close to him. Jesus said: 'I send you someone who lives among you, so that you will know and therefore draw close to Me.'

The portrayal of Forridge as the prototype of Christ, a flesh-and-blood person of the same race and culture as those present, forcefully and convincingly conveys the presence of a living God; it is not a substitution for the unique saviourhood of Christ. A true African, he brings fire (as did the Holy Spirit), which symbolises warmth and communion when the family huddles around it to dispel the darkness and cold of the night. Here the leader appears as a

true icon mirroring the loving attitude of Christ, who in his person contains and, therefore, imposes on his followers that elusive union which they seem incapable of realising in this world.

Viewpoints on ecumenism differed considerably in the sermons on this occasion. Some preachers propagated a unity in which the kingship of Christ encompassed the entire family of humankind. In this universal perspective ecumenism extends well beyond church divisions and includes reconciliation of all human beings to God, the creator and saviour. On the opposite side of the spectrum one found a narrower approach that applied the concept of unity only to the diversified 'house of Zion'. One of Forridge's sons, preacher Willard Forridge, for instance, equated being a Zionist with being a Christian. He called on fellow Zionists: 'Let us Zionists simply work together! We must act in truth! You fathers and mothers 'push' [i.e., interpret and preach from] your Bible verses in unity. Ask yourself whether you are really in his united home. Come and visit your fellow Zionists; observe Christian interaction.'

From this range of ecumenical views a composite picture emerged, which can briefly be characterised as follows. The biblical basis of ecumenism, introduced by the bishop and reconsidered by every preacher, was John 17. The Christological basis for unity is fully recognised. Christ is experienced as the author of unity, primarily as an incarnate being mirrored in this world by an iconic church leader (in this case Bishop Forridge), but this does not preclude the constitutive significance of his present kingship. Divine authorship of ecumenism does not stifle full human responsibility and action for its realisation – in fact, it requires it. Because of this involvement of sinful human beings, unity is subject to evil distortion and should therefore be safeguarded against disruptive conflict and secession. The purposes of ecumenism range from the glory and joy of Christ to the missionary character of the church which, through spiritual growth and internal stability, cleanses the world from evil. The realisation of ecumenism is so integral to Christianity that no believer can escape his/her responsibility in this regard. Hence the centrality of this subject in the preparation for holy communion, the most potent symbol of the unity of all believers in Christ.

Inner cleansing in preparation for the Eucharist

The two *vaPostori* who preached, evangelist James Machasi and baptiser Davison Foto, did not dwell lengthily on the subject of ecumenism. Their contribution was consistent with their religious heritage, placing greater emphasis on inner cleansing and purification in preparation for the Eucharist than the Zionists and the other preachers were inclined to do. That they felt sufficiently free to act in typically Apostolic fashion is a tribute to the uninhibited atmosphere of interchurch openness and acceptance generated by Forridge and his followers.

With reference to 2 Chronicles 35:18, 'No Passover like it had been in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet', Machasi said:

*Let joy be with us! A paschal celebration such as this one, arranged by our elders, I have never seen before. See what God has done. He has given our leader a great burden to carry with him from over there to here in Bikita. This is a pledge of redemption in Jesus Christ. This is a *Paseka* which, if one participates in it, makes one a person of God, someone who goes to heaven.*

Theologically debatable as the assertion that taking holy communion secures one's passage to heaven may be, in this context its aim was to give credibility to the proceedings and emphasise the uniqueness of the event. By referring to Bishop Forridge as 'our leader' and as someone burdened with the message of redemption in Christ, Machasi was identifying with the proceedings – a clear sign that he was distancing himself from the obdurate conservatism of his own Apostolic church. The main thrust of Machasi's message, however, was inner cleansing, an absolute condition for joining in the sacrament. He said:

Partaking of the Lord's body is for those who are entirely cleansed from all defilement. The Lord's body and blood must not be identified with anything unworthy. Confess your sins so that Christ will find a tidy dwelling place, a house properly swept!

In his sermon, baptiser Foto concurred:

All of you who have travelled and waited for this *Paseka* must be found cleansed in your hearts. Hallelujah! That is what we are teaching each other, so, that when we reach the actual celebration of holy communion it will be a cleansed communion; if you eat it in an unclean state that element [bread or wine] that enters you conducts its own enquiry. It is like eating or drinking poison ... So it is up to you whether you want to participate when there are still unsolved problems inside you. You must remember that this ceremony involves the blood of Christ. It is his blood we partake of today. So if you are not ready for it, do not participate in the pledge of the Son of man.

Foto's sensitivity to the ecumenical situation comes out in his alternate use of the expressions *kudya chirairo* (literally 'to eat holy communion') and *kutamba Paseka* (literally 'to play, to enact the Paschal event') to denote the celebration of the Eucharist. The former expression is normally used by the *vaPostori*, but forms part of the popular vocabulary of several Mission and Ethiopian-type churches. Through the use of these terms Foto displayed a flexible religious attitude and consideration for his diversified audience. Yet this did not prevent him from making a decidedly Apostolic contribution by emphasising cleansing through confession in preparation for the climax of *Paseka*, a purification based on observance of church laws and recognition of the unique 'potency' of Christ's body and blood. His assertion that misuse of the symbols of Christ's

body causes physical harm suggests a tendency to interpret Christian symbols magically – a characteristic feature of both Mission and Independent Church symbolism, steeped as they are in the traditional African worldview. According to this interpretation, Christ's blood – representing his most sacred pledge and therefore the mysterious presence of God – acquires life-giving power that somehow procures blessed wellbeing in this life and becomes a condition for entry into heaven. Theologically debatable as this point of view may be, it formed part of a richly varied message in this particular form of AIC ecumenism, proclaiming the presence of a saviour God.

Entry into heaven

In quite a number of sermons the underlying or ultimate purpose of the Paschal celebration was depicted as securing entry into heaven. We have already cited Machasi linking the Eucharist with the believer's passage to heaven. In similar vein preacher Willard Forridge claimed:

We have gathered here to teach each other about going to heaven. Should we assemble merely in honour of the house of Marikite [Bishop Forridge], we would be venerating our father. But the point at issue is God's word, so that those who want to go to heaven can find the way.

To this end, preacher Willard called on all people in the audience – Christians and non-Christians alike – to respond fully to God's word in preparation for the final passage that all individuals have to face on their own before meeting God in heaven. In addition to the individual dimension Willard referred to the universal dimension of Christ's second coming: 'We must be ready at all times. If Christ comes today we must all be prepared to meet him and go with him.'

The preoccupation with heaven was bound up with the good news of salvation, an implicit appeal for conversion, which to the believers present spelled spiritual renewal and to the outsiders induction into God's kingdom via baptism. Thus the references to heaven served the dual purpose of preparing celebrants for the Eucharist and new converts for admission to the church. Heaven is the symbol of hope for all people, in itself a powerful statement about fusing sacramental unity with missionary outreach. These thoughts do not reflect naive apocalyptic expectations or utopian escape into a futuristic eschatology. They are actually reminders of a future reality, a very basic tenet of Christian belief. This serves to counterbalance the emphasis on this-worldly salvation in the characteristic AIC preoccupation with God's blessings in this existence, the call to witness in ecumenical interaction here and now, and the requirement to adhere faithfully to church laws. The concern about an eventual passage to heaven acts as a corrective to religious pragmatism, so that united action and ecclesiastic legalism as conditions for salvation are elevated to become ends in themselves.

The few features of a *Fambidzano*-inspired Paschal event that we have considered indicate that missionary strategy is not singled out as a major issue in proclamation or debate. Yet the undercurrent of awareness that ecumenical unity in Christ includes the church's witness to the world is unmistakable. At no point did the concern for inner sanctity as a condition for sacramental union result in ecclesiastic isolation. The entire event was a statement about God's mission to the world and a call to all humans to repent.

Liberative ecumenism: concluding remarks

Toward the end of my discourse I realise that *Fambidzano's* liberative features have been mentioned in passing rather than forming the subject of closer scrutiny. In conclusion, therefore, I wish briefly to highlight a few liberationist trends lest their significance as landmarks of a very specific type of ecumenism remain obscure.

Probably the most important aspect of *Fambidzano's* ecumenism was the liberation of member AICs from ecclesial obscurity, geographical isolation and non-recognition by the local mainline churches. Geographical isolation, owing to poverty-imposed limitations on modern means of communication, long-distance travel and ecumenical opportunity, was substantially responsible for the introverted and exclusivist trends that characterised the pre-*Fambidzano* attitudes among AICs, especially the Spirit- and Ethiopian-type ones. *Fambidzano's* infrastructure ensured extensive and sustained encounter among member churches, leading to improvement of their self-knowledge, to fresh understanding of their *Fambidzano* counterparts, and to new interpersonal relations and friendships within the wide range of churches of which they were a part. And of course all of this heightened the individual and communal sense of self-respect, intrinsic value and dignity. Liberation from ecclesial obscurity extended much further than local inter-AIC relations. *Fambidzano's* associate membership in the Rhodesian Christian Conference and later the National Christian Council also provided a liberative breakthrough from rural isolation. Regular meetings with representatives of the mainline churches, visits by church leaders from overseas and attendance by *Fambidzano* delegates at a number of ecumenical conferences in Europe engendered a sense of belonging to the world church and provided encouragement for local ministry.

Considering the need of the AICs for recognition of their validity as Christian churches by their local 'mother churches' – the very Mission Churches from which many of their members seceded –without a loss of their new-found autonomy, there was only one model of ecumenism that could possibly succeed. *Fambidzano* had to affirm and expand the liberation already achieved by the AICs when their leaders distanced themselves from the tutelage of white leadership in the Mission Churches. Hence our insistence from the outset that the funding from abroad should have no stringent denominational strings

attached, that even though the origins of such sources might be Netherlands Reformed, British Congregational, Swedish and German Lutheran, the control and administration of funds would be entirely *Fambidzano's* responsibility, free of any control or supervision by Zimbabwean Mission Churches. Thus, we built the TEE institution not as a form of mission at the behest of a mainline Mission Church, but as an AIC enterprise, the ownership of which was vested firmly at the core of the emergent AIC movement. Liberation from the stigma of theologically ill-equipped leadership in the AICs therefore evolved as a process controlled by the AICs on their own behalf, relatively free from external control. This form of empowerment of poverty-ridden churches did much for the reinforcement of their hard-won autonomy, for their self-esteem, as well as their growing ability to interact with the local mainline churches from a platform of strength rather than from the former inferior position of being branded as separatists or heretics, unworthy of recognition as Christian churches.

The story narrated above, incomplete as it is, represent a contextualised African endorsement of the main tenets of Jerry Gort's ecumenical theology. It illustrates something of the richly varied weave of the fabric of liberative ecumenism in rural Africa. It also reflects institutional dilemmas, failures and vulnerabilities alongside the sheer adventure and joy of Africans exploring new avenues of contextually relevant ecumenism, new ways of proclaiming and living Christ's good news where the pain of poverty converts into the celebration of hope and liberation.

My own pilgrimage into the inscape of African spirituality is inseparably linked to the narrative above. That journey has in many respects been an uncharted, unconventional and controversial passage in which Africa taught me to become a storytelling rather than an analytical theologian. This explains in part the relative absence of theoretical theology and wide-ranging source references in my narrative: stories tend to avoid abstractions owing to the story-teller's fascination and bond with the players 'on stage'. But it also explains my gratitude to friends and colleagues such as Jerry Gort, whose more precisely defined theologies remind me of my Calvinist roots and inform the course I steer in Africa as footloose storyteller and tree-planter in the midst of dancing prophets and beer-libating traditionalist elders. Given the inventiveness and originality of African AICs in crafting their own version(s) of liberative ecumenism in Zimbabwe, the church in Africa and beyond may benefit from heeding the challenge implicit in this story for the renewal of its ministry in contextual mission, dialogue and comprehensive liberation within the orbit of local, continental and global ecumenism.

The significance of Marthinus Daneel for African Theology

By Allan Anderson

The research supervisor

At the end of 1996, after I had been in England just over a year, I was asked to speak at what was then the Selly Oak Colleges on my personal pilgrimage in mission. I began to reflect seriously on the impact that Inus Daneel had had on my own life and thinking. Like Daneel, I am a European African whose parents (and grandparents) were missionaries in Zimbabwe. When he took up his appointment at Unisa in 1981 I was a struggling part-time third-year undergraduate student and a Pentecostal Bible school teacher in Soshanguve (near Pretoria), trying to plough through what seemed an insurmountable mountain of study. It did not take long for me to become fascinated with his grassroots approach to research and theology in Africa, which resonated with my own experience in working with African Pentecostals in the townships and villages in South Africa. From Daneel I learned several important lessons: to treasure the vast riches in the African religious and cultural heritage and the need to be sensitive to that in mission in Africa, the enormous missiological relevance of the African Initiated Church (AIC) movement and the potential resources of this movement for academic research. Daneel admitted his 'Western-ness' (Daneel 1974:311), and his sympathetic approach to questions such as the so-called syncretism and heathenism of AICs further influenced my own approach. I became his protégé, especially after registering for my honours degree in 1983 (completed in 1985), and he supervised my two research degrees in the seven years following. More than anyone else, this unique combination of Afrikaner Reformed and Zimbabwean African missiologist provoked me to strive for academic excellence and meaningful missiological reflection by constantly stretching my horizons. He stimulated my desire to probe further in my own research by his own profound observations and practical experiences. His academic output was already legendary and I eagerly absorbed, and sometimes unconsciously reproduced, as many of his ideas as possible.

My interest in African Pentecostalism and AICs grew out of the experiences of many years and the stimulation of Inus Daneel. In the 1980s my studies naturally gravitated towards what interested me most, and had direct bearing on the people with whom I was working. In 1991, my first published book,

Moya (for which Daneel wrote the foreword) appeared, based on my master's dissertation. His trenchant critique of Martin's and Oosthuizen's views of African prophetic approaches to the Holy Spirit for example (revisited in the present book) was to have a major influence upon the theme of this publication (Daneel 1973:347–53, Anderson 1991:59). The subsequent field research that I was did under the auspices of Unisa's Institute for Theological Research for six years formed the foundation for the books *Bazalwane* (1992), *Tumelo* (1993), and the later updated book *Zion and Pentecost* (2000). My doctoral thesis was also completed in 1992, for which I had the advantage of Daneel's incisive comments and supervision during long hours of discussions. Daneel's work became a pattern for my own studies born in Africa about Africans and African Christianity. So much of what he had written about Zionists and Apostolics in Zimbabwe I could understand from my own Pentecostal perspective, and I began to realise that there was far more in common between these African Initiated Churches (AICs) and Pentecostalism than most would admit.

The reader of this volume will notice in the first chapter that Daneel does not share my enthusiasm for pointing out the resonance between Pentecostalism and African churches of the Spirit. I think this is partly because Daneel has often had to defend the 'Christian' nature of the AICs in Zimbabwe against those many Western critics who see them as 'heretical' or 'post-Christian'. He is often intent on proving that they follow 'historical' (especially Reformed) Christianity in their fundamental beliefs. His own passionate defence of 'Spirit-type' churches and his penetrating criticisms of those misinterpretations that had been so common since Bengt Sundkler's ground-breaking *Bantu Prophets* (1961), coming as they so often did from misunderstandings of African cosmology, were to profoundly influence my own writing and the direction of my subsequent research in the 1980s and 1990s (Daneel 1974:347; Anderson 1991:59; Anderson and Otwang 1993:113). But Daneel is also steeply immersed in Reformed theology and is a product of his Dutch Reformed missionary upbringing. For him it was therefore more important to show the continuities with Reformed Christianity than it was to allude to the influence of Pentecostalism, although his own thick descriptions of life in Zionist and Apostolic churches in Zimbabwe are pregnant with Pentecostal images with which I am very familiar. I share his scepticism of the crass nature and showmanship of those newer forms of Pentecostalism that think that spirituality is measured by material possessions, success and physical health. I am not putting AICs in the same camp as these any more than I would do so with older forms of Pentecostalism the world over.

During fieldwork in Soshanguve in the early 1990s, however, the liturgical and theological parallels I observed between the churches of the Spirit and those Pentecostals with closer Western links that I was more acquainted with fascinated me. I also noticed that there were distinct historical connections, particularly with South Africa's largest 'classical' Pentecostal church, the Apostolic

Faith Mission, founded in 1908. I do not think that 'Spirit-type' churches are an importation of Western (American) Pentecostalism, nor do I doubt that the imaginative innovations and adaptations Daneel describes so eloquently in this book are derived from the African cultural and religious context. Where we differ is the extent to which these churches might be described as 'Pentecostal', not as an attempt to gather them into a Western category, but as a phenomenological and liturgical family that have more in common than they usually admit on either 'side'(Anderson 2000b:30–37). In the earlier festschrift to Daneel I also attempted to point out some of the differences between AICs in South Africa and those in Zimbabwe, with particular reference to the Zion Christian Church (Anderson 2003). Daneel's criticism of my categorisation finds support in South African theologian Tinyiko Maluleke, who points to the possibility of a continuous rather than a discontinuous relationship between the so-called Mission Churches and AICs. He suggests that in 'growing sections (for example worship) of traditional black churches ... are becoming "AIC" and "pentecostal" in both theology and praxis'(Maluleke 1996:41). I have discovered since my contact in Birmingham with African 'Mission Church' leaders that this is true throughout Africa. This is an area where comparative studies urgently need to be done. There is a danger that AIC scholars may romanticise the AIC movement and unconsciously place it in a time cocoon without acknowledging the considerable historical, phenomenological and theological continuities between AICs and 'Mission Churches', and their modernising processes. In addition, the whole area of typology and categorisation probably needs to be revisited, as the AIC movement has moved considerably from Sundkler's Ethiopian/Zionist dichotomy that most of us have followed in various forms ever since (1961:53), and even the term 'AIC' with all its variations is now being questioned.

An African critique of AIC studies

My own publications (and that of other AIC scholars in South Africa) have been thoroughly scrutinised by Tinyiko Maluleke, whose fundamental and penetrating challenges are significant in the light of past and future AIC research (1993:186; 1994:61; 1996:34). I will outline and comment on two of his particular observations as a form of self-criticism, some of which may also have relevance to the work of Inus Daneel. The first has to do with methodology and the claim of 'insiderness' ('participant observer') and 'empiricism' as validating AIC research without a lucid theoretical framework. Thankfully, Daneel has not fallen into this trap. Although it is sometimes difficult to analyse Daneel's theoretical framework because of the sheer volume of his case studies, a framework does exist and is clearly discernible to the painstaking reader. Daneel's most abiding legacy may lie in the theme that forms a thread behind all of his writings: the process of contextualisation that he calls 'adaptation and transformation'. The

prophetic healing practices are therefore the outer layer of this deeper causative factor, which he states 'largely contributes to the attraction of the Independent Churches for rural Africans ... herein lies the secret of the unique appeal' (Daneel 1974:309). And yet, with Maluleke, we must ask ourselves whether the African traditional/ rural worldview is the 'only searchlight through which the complex forest of AIC praxis can and must be examined' (Maluleke 1993:191). Furthermore, we must also ask whether in 'empirical' case studies we are in fact seeing AICs through the eyes of the author of the study who is 'analysing, sifting and prescribing' (Maluleke 1994:61). The numerous case studies cited by Daneel in his works and based on extensive tape recordings and transcriptions, as well as on his personal observations, are also the product of his own subjectivity. Indeed, without the inevitable subjectivity of empirical research, no human knowledge is possible. But the claim by some Western observers that their research lets AICs 'speak for themselves' is idealistic and misleading. Maluleke may be right when he says that the voices of these researchers 'are actually drowning the sources' and that 'the sources can speak for themselves only before we lay our hands, eyes and minds on them!' (Maluleke 1996:41).

A second and equally justifiable criticism Maluleke levelled at my second book *Bazalwane* was the negative theological evaluation I gave there to African traditional religions, particularly from the perspective of African Pentecostals, who rejected most forms of traditional religion. Although Daneel is at pains to avoid this impression, I think at times he may have placed any 'mixing' of AIC beliefs and traditional ones in what is for him the negative category of 'syncretism'. He often emphasises the discontinuity and distance between (AIC) Christian faith and African traditional religion, particularly with regard to ancestors. His conservative Dutch Reformed theological background is sometimes the grid through which he views these departures from 'orthodoxy'. For example, AIC prophets are viewed from the perspective of the 'Reformed sense of the Word of God being preached ... and in the Old Testament sense of revelations and divine communications being transmitted' (Daneel 1988:25). There is another possibility that in the New Testament, particularly in the Acts of the Apostles, these two senses are combined and find expression in AICs – this would be the view of Pentecostals. Daneel's research findings are largely directed to the Western missiological and academic world, as indeed are most AIC studies. As students of AICs, particularly white ones, we must ask ourselves whether what we are doing is studying the AICs for their own worth, or as a backdrop from which to view ourselves and our own 'mission' failures (Maluleke 1996:23). There may be nothing wrong in such an approach as long as we admit it. A related admission is that of advantage: for whose primary benefit are AIC studies conducted, for those being researched or for the researcher him/herself? In most cases (painfully, including mine) it is the latter. These studies, like most academic studies, do not fundamentally empower the communities being studied, although they may facilitate mutual understanding

and cooperation. In contrast, Daneel's work illustrates the substantial benefit his philanthropic concerns have been to the grassroots communities he has lived and worked among, particularly in his ecological activities and theological education programmes.

The enduring legacy of Inus Daneel

Above all else, Daneel's many years of work, amply illustrated in this book, demonstrate that his 'thick descriptions' of the faith and life of Zimbabwean AICs are in a real and concrete sense African theology. AICs seldom have an elaborately worked-out theology such as is found in most 'mainline' churches. Nevertheless, in their inculturation of Christianity they have a distinct and considerable contribution to make to African Christian theology. This inculturation has been done in an intense and far-reaching way, and this is a prominent theme of this book. As he has written earlier, Daneel considers that the main significance of AICs lies in their 'spontaneous indigenisation of Christianity, uninhibited by direct Western control' and in their unique erection of 'bridgeheads between the Christian gospel and traditional thought forms' (Daneel 1989a:54). Although AICs have little formalised theology, they have what Hastings terms a 'praxis and a spirituality in which a theology is profoundly implicit' (1979:54). In an article on 'AIC Contributions to the World Church' (1996), the Nairobi-based Organisation of African Instituted Churches state, 'We may not all be articulate in written theology, but we express faith in our liturgy, worship, and structures' (in Pobee 1998:70). Theology is our human response to God's Word. The African pastors, bishops, or prophets who lay hands on the sick and lead their congregations in rituals of worship are enacting theology. Members of AICs have responded to God's word to them in a particular way. Their interpretation of the working of the Spirit as emphasised in the daily life and practices of their churches is real theology. And in this respect they have an extremely significant part to play in formulating African theology. If, as Justin Ukpong (1984b:520) observes, the main goal of African theology is to make Christianity 'attain African expression' and 'relevant to and expressive of the way [Africans] live and think', then Daneel's supreme contribution is that he has made available to the wider world the creative and practical ways in which AICs in Zimbabwe have done just that; in other words, Daneel is describing, in meticulous detail, precisely an African theology. I do not know of anyone else who has done this in such a profound and meaningful way. As Daneel shows us in these pages, probably more than any other form of Christianity in Africa, the 'Spirit' AICs have given a uniquely African character to their faith. In certain respects they have attained the goals towards which formal African theology still struggles. Because theology is our human response to God's word, Christianity must be expressive of everyday life or be in danger of becoming inconsequential. The AICs Daneel describes have

made such creative adaptations to their Christian faith that this amounts to a genuine and comprehensive African theology.

Some African theologians, mainly with Western theological orientation and quoted here by Daneel, have pointed rather hesitatingly to the contribution of AICs to African theology as the 'raw material' of African theology. If African theology is found in the music, prayers, liturgy, church structures and community life of AICs, and if the AICs' freedom from colonial-based ecclesiastical structures makes it possible for them to discover their own Christian faith as one of joyful celebration, then this African theology has not been sufficiently recognised. Throughout his prodigious writings, Daneel has given us the enormous privilege of encountering this African theology. In attaining organisational liberation, AICs have also achieved a liturgical transformation and have been able to re-evaluate African culture and religion. Daneel speaks of the 'religio-cultural liberation' of AICs, a true 'liberation theology' also (Daneel 1989(a):59). AICs take seriously the African worldview and the Christian response to it. Healing, exorcism, and other manifestations of the Spirit depicted in these pages illustrate what Daneel calls 'the relativity, if not futility, of our neat Western theories when confronted, in practice, with the belief systems and stark pastoral realities of Africa'. Healing and deliverance from evil are essential parts of the life of AICs, because these problems affect the whole church community. They are not simply regarded as the private domain of an individual relegated to pastoral care – often the approach to these problems in Western churches. African experience is the crucible in which African theology is made. AICs have what Daneel has aptly described here as 'enacted theology', which is 'a vitally significant component of a developing African Christian theology' (see chapter 11 of this volume). The continuing dialogue between AICs and popular culture and religion helps clarify the Africanisation process that is essential to the realisation of a truly African theology. In the healing and exorcism rites of AICs in particular, liberation from the terrors and insecurities inherent in African experiences of evil powers and sorcery is achieved. Pointing this out with his many case studies is Daneel's enduring contribution for which we will be forever indebted.

Finally, I believe that Inus Daneel's natural curiosity and penetrating mind has made his unparalleled and unique research the quintessence of all AIC studies today and, I would hasten to add, an essential contribution to understanding Africa and its Christianity. His holistic love for rural Africa and its environment and his pursuit of excellence for himself and his students, undergirded by an evangelical faith, will always be, at least for this disciple of twenty-five years, both daunting and inspiring. For this, I cannot express my heartfelt thanks adequately enough.

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January 2005

ENDNOTES

- 1 Life Around the Pool:232.
- 2 Liberative Ecumenism:363.
- 3 Bishop Samuel Mutendi and Apostle Johane Maranke, whom the reader will meet frequently in this book.
- 4 AIC Pneumatology:21
- 5 Liberative Ecumenism:363.
- 6 Ndiokwere (1981:281) estimated the total number of AIC adherents in the 1970s at 20 million.
- 7 Anderson (1992:21) estimates that at least 80 per cent of the indigenous churches in South Africa belong to the Zionist movement.
- 8 Fambidzano, the first ecumenical movement of substance among the Zimbabwean AICs, was founded in 1972 (Daneel 1989b). It mainly served the AICs with theological education by extension (TEE) programmes and development work. During some of its regional ecumenical celebrations of the Eucharist, members of a number of mission-founded churches, including Pentecostals, were invited to participate; hence the development of ecumenical ties.
- 9 The only cluster of Pentecostal-related AICs in the central and south-eastern regions of Zimbabwe that I am aware of consists of a few relatively small splinter groups, calling themselves St Peter Church, Zvirevo zvaPostori, Habakuk, International Apostolic Church, etc. They broke away from Mughodi's Unity Apostolic Faith Mission, which, according to Ms Farai Mfanyana, senior researcher in ZIRRCO, is an off-shoot from the Apostolic Faith Mission at Wedza, to the north-east of Masvingo Province.
- 10 For a full discussion of the reasons that the Roman Catholic Church has suffered less from schisms and defections than the Pentecostal churches, see (Daneel 1987:87-97).
- 11 As founder of the movement I have admittedly influenced the nature of its religio-ecological programmes. Yet, my contribution at the outset was more that of stimulating motivation for environmental reform and providing financial empowerment through fund-raising than attempting to provide a theological blueprint for all activities. Instead, I encouraged local initiative and contextualisation. Consequently my own proposals, when accepted, tended to be absorbed and to be creatively inculturated by the key figures of the AICs involved; whereby there was no question of the imposition from above of stereotypical ecological models.
- 12 Mbiti (1986:177) points out that although African theologians have written a great deal about the role of foreign missions in Africa, there is almost nothing on African agency in the missionary outreach of the African church. In a brief overview of recent missiological literature he indicates that Ofori (Christianity in Tropical Africa, 1977) mentions only 10 out of 2 859 items in which black African theologians deal with this subject; that Verkuyl's Contemporary Missiology, 1978, contains not a single contribution by an African theologian; and that in Horst Bürkle's Missionstheologie, 1979, the contributions of African theologians do not include a single one that approaches missiology

from the angle of the African church. Environmental issues also tend to be neglected in written African theology. One of the exceptions is Sebastian Bakare's *My Right to Land – in the Bible and in Zimbabwe: A Theology of Land in Zimbabwe*, Harare, 1993.

- 13 In his attempt to set guidelines for reflection on the missionary nature of the African church, Mbiti (1986:205), for instance, does not pay sufficient attention to existing African missionary models, particularly those of the AICs. The reality of the AICs, he maintains, compels one to consider the missionary policy of Western Mission Churches in order to determine how that enterprise can be brought to bear on Africa's own participation in mission. Here Mbiti, in my view, remains bogged down in the biased conception of the AICs as a 'reaction to mission' – a theory espoused by Barrett (1968:156) and given prominence by theologians such as Hastings, Oosthuizen and Bosch (see Daneel 1987:71f). As a result, Mbiti's focus remains confined to the weaknesses of the Western missionary approach – responsible for such reaction – and he fails to acknowledge the unique creative missionary strategies of the AICs themselves.
- 14 I have attempted to indicate that the characterisation of AICs as predominantly 'protest movements' is flawed and that AIC missionaries on the whole are inspired in their evangelistic outreach by the Gospel. Hence, the central hypothesis in all my work on AIC growth (e.g., Daneel 1980;1974 chapters 2 and 5) that church expansion took place largely as a result of Africanised missionary strategies and praxis. One of the great challenges for a future African missiology lies in studying and ferreting out the richly diversified yet authentic mission model that has remained somewhat unobtrusively hidden in the largely unwritten growth histories of numerous AICs.
- 15 For more on Zionist mission-activating Eucharists see chapter 7. Ed.
- 16 As founder of this ecumenical movement, I served as full-time director for nine years and subsequently as part-time 'honorary director' (consultant) for another eight years. The main thrust of this movement was to provide the AICs with theological training through a contextualised TEE programme. After Independence, development work was introduced which focused mainly on small-scale income-generating projects, water and irrigation schemes, agriculture, carpentry and clothes manufacturing. Fambidzano has represented mainly Shona AICs. Compared to other AIC ecumenical movements on the continent it has proved to be one of the longest-lasting, stable and most comprehensively involved organisations.
- 17 For more on Fambidzano see chapter 13. Ed.
- 18 See chapter six of this volume. Ed.
- 19 Moltmann 1985:70–71; McDonagh 1986, chapter 7; and Wilkinson 1991:298. Wilkinson comments: 'Humans are to become saviours of nature, as Christ is the saviour of humanity (and hence, through humans, of those parts of creation placed under their care).'
- 20 See also attempts of eco-theologians to describe the world as God's (or Christ's) body; McFague 1987:69f; Messer 1992:67f.
- 21 Despite the tendency in some AICs to develop a leadership with messianic traits, the theological assessment of this phenomenon tended to be more

radical and condemnatory than the empirical evidence warranted. Invariably the so-called black Messiah positively mirrored the presence of the Christ figure in African society rather than replacing or obscuring his saviourhood. It is preferable therefore to speak of 'iconic leadership' instead. For a discussion of 'black Messianism', see Daneel 1987:180–94. [For greater depth on this theme see chapter 5. Ed.]

- 22 As Kibicho (1968:235) puts it: 'I think it would be right to conclude that the Kikuyu conception of God compares well with the Hebrew conception of the Old Testament, perhaps at the latter's highest level of development.' This favourable comparison which features in numerous variations in monographs on the African understanding of God – such as Idowu's *God in Nigerian Belief*, Danquah's *The Akan Doctrine of God*, Nyamiti's *African Tradition and the Christian God*, Mbiti's *Concepts of God in Africa*, and Setiloane's *The Image of God among the Sotho-Tswana* – implies rejection of the idea of a *deus otiosus* or *deus remotus* as a misleading generalisation contrived by Western observers. Mbiti (1980:817f) emphatically states that the God of the Bible is the same as the God already known in the pre-Christian framework of African religion. In a rejection of the distinction between general and special revelation, the Old Testament God who revealed himself on Mt Sinai is said to be the same as the One who appeared on Mt Fuji and Mt Kenya. By implication the pre-Christian historical account of God's involvement with the people of Africa is considered to be on par with that of Israel; hence the prefiguration paradigm.
- 23 This truth features not only in AAEC reflection and praxis, but in most modern attempts at ecological theologising. McDonagh (1985:119) says: 'The God he [Christ] reveals to us is not some immutable, primary cause beyond the flux of the Earth and unmoved by suffering and pain. He is God who is passionately involved in his creation and wishes to see it flowering.' Wilkinson (in De Wtt 1991:42) touches the heart of the matter when he says: 'The cost of creation is the suffering of God ... He [Christ] is the Creator, but he is also the lamb slain before the foundation of the world.' See also Moltmann (1985:39) for a portrayal of the travail of nature (Rm. 8:19–21).
- 24 Poem of Rabindranath Tagore; quoted by Kyung in Hallman (1994:178).
- 25 African theologians in South Africa have understandably related their interpretation of the suffering Christ to the sociopolitical dilemmas of their country. The central theme in Setiloane's poem 'I am an African' (1976:121–131) and Buthelezi's article 'Daring to Live for Christ' (in Anderson 1976:176–180) is the identification of black South Africans with Christ on the cross from within their own experience of political oppression and dehumanisation. Likewise the AAEC earthkeepers identify with Christ on the cross within the context of environmental degradation which forms part of their lives.
- 26 One of the commonest analogies which African academic theologians draw between the African religio-cultural world and the dispensation of Christ is his humanity in relationship to the traditional kinship structure. 'Since belonging to a kinship group is the mark of a man,' says Pobee (1979:88), 'our attempt at constructing an African Christology would emphasize the kinship of Jesus.' Mbiti (1986:56) shows how kinship dominates all of traditional African life.

Against this background the African is particularly interested in the birth, baptism and death of Jesus, which render him a complete person via the necessary rites de passage.

- 27 Although the AAEC earthkeepers refrain from calling Christ an ancestor, the tendency to proclaim his lordship over all creation and to envisage him as the controller of all cosmic and life-giving forces strengthens the perception of an earthkeeper who, as part of the human family also relates to the ancestral world. Christ's link with the ancestral world can be deepened and enriched for and with the earthkeeping fraternity by paying attention to the biblically based doctrine of Christ's descent into the underworld (referred to in Western theology as *descensio ad inferno*. Taylor (1963:164) accentuated the triumphal aspect of Christ's *descensio* for African theology. Sundkler (1960:292) maintains that modern Africans interpret the *descensio* soteriologically. Mbiti (1971:175) in turn develops the soteriological theme in Christ's interaction with the ancestors in an intriguing if speculative (in terms of ultimate universalist salvation for all human beings) interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19. The implications of the *descensio Christi* could enrich the AAEC's earthkeeping ministry. If Christ is indeed the 'elder brother' whose mission includes revealing himself to and instructing the deceased members of his family, does his message to the ancestors not encompass more than the salvation of human beings? In Christ's image as the 'guardian of the land', as the One who fulfills the traditional intuition that salvation combines divine, human and cosmic wellbeing, the suggestion that he instructs the ancestors about a holistic salvation for all creation is already implicit.
- 28 Setiloane (1979:64) believes that an authentic African Christology should be sought in the healing practices of the bongaka. Pobee (1978:93) considers that the parallel between the Akan healer and Jesus is a suitable illustration of the divinity, especially the power and authority of Christ. The similarity lies in both being 'ensouled' by God during the process of healing.
- 29 Both Beyerhaus (1969:75) and Oosthuizen (1968:119-42) have indicated patterns of misinterpretation of the work of the Holy Spirit, largely caused by traditional beliefs in magic. In my experience among the Shona, however, such misinterpretations apparently are the exceptions, not the rule. Interviews with AIC leaders and prophets show that the initiative for inspiration or revelation through the Holy Spirit is ascribed overwhelmingly to Mwari and not to any human being. Few prophets claim that they can 'give' the fullness of the Spirit to a lay member of the church. Guidance from the Holy Spirit is received as an act of faith and is related to the recipient's spiritual state. The receptivity of the prophet can be improved by Bible study, prayer and fasting; but ultimately it is the will of God which determines whether there will be new life, healing or special gifts such as prophecy and speaking in tongues (Daneel 1987:262).
- 30 For an excellent description of Fambidzano, an ecumenical 'experiment' designed to promote interchurch unity in Zimbabwe through theological education, see chapter 13, 'Liberative Ecumenism'. Ed.
- 31 Sundkler mentioned this in a paper read to the South African Missiological Society in January 1973.

- 32 For more on village-baptism as a wizard-detecting ceremony, see chapter 11. Ed.
- 33 The inference here is that Jaka was tempted to become a great nganga through the enlightening aid of the njuzu spirit. For a discussion of the functions of the popular njuzu spirit, see (Daneel 1971:129).
- 34 One of the most common containers of destructive medicine. The muroyi is believed either to plant it in, or direct it through magical manipulation at, the house of the victim.
- 35 Apostles endowed with the charisma of the Holy Spirit are not supposed to kill a snake with the aid of a stick. They should do so with their bare hands as a sign of divine power working through them.
- 36 Note the preoccupation with witchcraft. Jerry was actually addressing the witches who are believed to hide human flesh in some secret spot, as a potent and dangerous medicine.
- 37 Jerry was preparing the congregation for the 'horn-finding' session yet to come, through witnessing about Elison's former successes with the elimination of evil.
- 38 This frontal attack on the nganga and by implication on traditional religion is directed at Rutsate's annual propitiation of the ancestral spirits and his appeasement of the ngozi spirit which was believed to harass the family from time to time. The spirit-medium of the original ancestor, Rutsate Chingombe, is regularly consulted in connection with the local political struggle, and Rutsate's own daughter is a practising nganga. Prophet Aron likened nganga to vultures to illustrate the close connection between their practices and death. The eating of flesh connotes the idea of witchcraft, which makes the nganga doubly suspect from the Apostolic point of view.
- 39 Several Shinga Postora members living in or near Chingombe were interviewed. Invariably anxiety about bewitchment featured as a major consideration in obtaining Shinga Postora membership. Inevitably Elison's followers at the time considered their church to be primarily a witchcraft-eradicating and protective institution.
- 40 Both names are fictitious. Mufeyi means 'detective' (derived from kufeya: to investigate) and Mupumhi means 'accuser'. The latter name is derived from the term most frequently used in Shona to indicate the imputation of wizardry (kupumha uroyi: to accuse of wizardry).
- 41 Patricia said that she was offered three zvidoma (witch familiars of psychic nature) and a snake when her mainini ('small mother', i.e. second wife of her father) caused her to dream.
- 42 When the assault took place I was interviewing Baptist Marire a few hundred yards from where the beer party was being held. Kraalhead Zeka requested my assistance, and I transported the injured woman to the Gutu Mission hospital, where she regained consciousness three days later.
- 43 Evangelist Daveşon was employed as my 'camp superintendent' and personal advisor during the entire research period in Rhodesia (Daneel 1971:viii). According to his account the prophet on this occasion succeeded in pointing out the two men responsible for the theft. They were turned over to the police. In connection with Prophet Mupumhi's efforts to baptise him, he said: 'During

a prayer meeting the prophet pointed at me and said: "That man's mother died and now her spirit urges him to continue her task as a witch [kumutsa murimo]." I told him he was lying and that I would not be baptised a second time. I quoted Acts 4:12, which says that there is no other name than that of Jesus through which we must be saved.'

- 44 Prophet Mupumhi diagnosed C's irregular menstrual periods as the direct result of her blood being stolen by the familiars of her bewitching grandmother. At the time this explanation satisfied C. Later she proved to be pregnant. In the course of her illness she had visited several nganga, who also diagnosed the practices of the paternal mbuya as the source of her troubles. She herself admitted that she had had call-dreams to become a witch. At Gutu Mission she was treated for bilharzia, after which she stayed with relatives away from her home until the prophet had 'reinforced' her living quarters with divine powers as a precaution against future attacks. Only then did she dare to return to her original homestead.
- 45 Note that the witness carefully evaded stating whether the nganga or the prophet had made a direct imputation of witchcraft or not.
- 46 Mr Mino, the provincial magistrate at Fort Victoria, stated that one of the main reasons that prophets and traditional diviners are not frequently convicted on charges of wizardry imputations is the lack of witnesses willing to testify against the original imputors. Witnesses as a rule are afraid of retaliation through supernatural means. It is more often the kraalhead himself or a relative of the so-called wizard who brings out the report back at the village who bears the brunt of such imputations. Mr Mino regarded prophetic ordeals as a fairly recent phenomenon. The first case of a 'village baptism' was brought before him in 1955. He considers the baptismal ordeal to be a pseudo-religious phenomenon which is on the upsurge and should be repressed by deterrent sentences (interview: March 1967).
- 47 Psychic witch familiars conceived of as small animals.
- 48 Heredity, not in the biological sense, but in the sense of inheriting a practice of a deceased relative or relatives (Daneel 1971:160-1).
- 49 The ancestral spirit and its shavi, which inspires uroyi, are generally regarded as demons by the Apostles and Zionists. Hence Mai Piwai's reference to her mother's spirit as the 'demon of witchcraft'.
- 50 Kuchekenya is the leader of one of David Masuka's congregations in northern Chingombe.
- 51 These gates are narrow passages symbolising the 'gates of heaven'.
- 52 A prophet accused of prophesying falsely is sometimes disciplined by the church court. This seldom happens, however, and opposition to prophetic revelations – made in the name of the Holy Spirit – stands only a slim chance of success.
- 53 In 1966, more than 200 people from a total of 14 000 to 15 000 who passed the 'gates' were detained in the 'wizard-camp'.
- 54 Prophet Maisiri afterwards, at an interview, claimed that Mai J had actually confessed her uroyi. This goes to prove how conveniently the term uroyi can be stretched in Apostolic circles to cover a wide range of practices considered

sinful but which are not generally considered wizardry practices by Shona traditionalists.

- 55 For descriptive purposes the term 'wizardry' is used in this chapter as an equivalent for the Shona term *uroyi* in its widest connotation. Within this broad conceptual framework – referring to evil, antisocial acts by both males and females – a distinction is made between sorcery and witchcraft. The former involves mainly the use of destructive medicine; the latter refers to psychic acts, with or without the use of witch familiars and/or evil medicine. In this chapter witches on the whole are females. They can be classified as either hereditary witches or witches who, without any 'supernatural' pressure, accept their profession by having witchcraft medicines rubbed into incisions in their bodies made by other witches. Bishop Nyasha's exorcist ministry draws large numbers of potential or practising hereditary witches who seek liberation from afflicting ancestral spirits. For a detailed description of Shona wizardry beliefs, see Gelfand (1967, *passim*); Crawford (1967:74f); and Daneel (1971:156–77).
- 56 The rest of section 5 was excerpted from 'AIC Designs for a Relevant African Theology of Missions', *Missionalia* 28(2/3):2–46.

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