



UNISA

**African Initiatives in  
Christian Mission VIII**

Edited by Greg Cuthbertson, Hennie Pretorius and Dana Robert

Frontiers of  
*African Christianity*



Essays in Honour of Inus Daneel

University of South Africa, Pretoria

# CONTENTS

Series preface	ix
Introduction by editors	xiii
Acknowledgements	xxii
Contributing authors	xxiii
<b>I The many names of Inus Daneel</b>	<b>1</b>
1 Dana L Robert, 'M L Daneel: missionary as folk theologian'	1
2 Frans J Verstraelen, 'Even hunters can change: a personal appraisal of Inus Daneel and his work'	16
3 Willem Saayman, 'My friend Mafuranhunzi'	31
4 Reuben Marinda, 'Mudavanhu: the one who loves the people'	36
5 Interviews with Chiefs Chikwanda, Chivi and Murinye, 'Muchakata and the War of the Trees'	43
6 Solomon Zvanaka, 'Bishop Moses, the Earthkeeper'	55
7 Larry Rasmussen, 'Bishop Moses and the trees'	69
8 Greg Cuthbertson, 'Chakarakata and Chimurenga: stories of the Zimbabwean War of Liberation'	75
<b>II Daneel's academic legacy: AIC studies and African religions</b>	
<i>AIC Studies</i>	
9 Stan Nussbaum, 'The three-self formula in light of the emergence of African Independent Churches'	86
10 Allan Anderson, 'Healing in the Zion Christian Churches of Southern Africa: Daneel's research in Zimbabwe compared with the South African Movement'	103
11 Nicolas Stebbing, CR, 'You shall have no other gods before me'	120
12 Stephen Hayes, 'Issues of "Catholic" ecclesiology in Ethiopian-type AICs'	137
13 Hennie L Pretorius, 'Strange are the ways of Zion: a coloured Zionist pioneer'	153
14 Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, 'Interpreting the interpreters of AICs and other grassroots Christian communities in South Africa'	173

# SERIES PREFACE

Literature on Christian mission in Africa has been biased toward the activity of Western-oriented mission. White missionaries, Western mission policies 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).'<sup>1</sup>

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 of 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 African Initiated Churches. 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

---

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, different authors are free to use any of the three 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'.

Out of the project meeting 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 widest possible definition of 'mission' underlies the series. 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, social-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 African theologians, for instance, are contributors in this series. And despite the predominant concern with black African 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 response 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.

# INTRODUCTION

## Frontiers of African Christianity Essays in honour of Inus Daneel

In 1964 a young doctoral student in theology at the Free University of Amsterdam completed his comprehensive examinations and boarded a boat for South Africa. After disembarking in Cape Town, he drove fifteen hundred miles to Bikita in Rhodesia. Product of a missionary home and fluent in Shona, he was fascinated by the interplay among African traditional religions, Shona culture and Christianity. The best way to understand the African influence on Christian theology, he decided, was to move into the Shona communal lands among members of African Independent Churches (AICs). As participant-observer, he would be able to experience firsthand both traditional religion and the indigenous church integration of African culture and Christianity. After living for a few months at the Zion City of Bishop Samuel Mutendi, the student moved to Chingombe Chieftancy in Gutu District where he built his own wattle and daub hut. For the next three years, with Chingombe as his base of operations, the student explored the lifestyle of the people in the rural areas. In the African spirit of reciprocity, he began each day by administering medicine to groups of the needy, and then conducted interviews, surveys and observations of the rich religious life around him. He became the driver who took people to the distant mission hospital for emergencies. On the day in 1965 when Rhodesian prime minister Ian Smith announced the Unilateral Declaration of Independence, thereby making civil war inevitable, the student was listening to the radio while delivering the baby of a village woman in the back of his truck.

The political events of 1965 and his years in the Shona communal areas in defiance of an 'apartheid system' proved to be a major turning point in the student's life. Rather than accepting several offers of 'safe' academic posts in the Netherlands or South Africa, or becoming a Dutch Reformed missionary in his parents' footsteps, Inus Daneel bonded with the so-called heretics, the indigenous Christians of rural Zimbabwe. Over the next few decades, despite civil war, shattered finances, family traumas and the disapproval of peers in the Dutch Reformed Church, he pursued his relationship with the Shona Independent Churches. Although he began by studying the AICs, his

What is striking about the essays in part I is how the ethnicity, scholarly discipline and social location of the authors influence their understanding of Daneel's significance. Looking at him from different angles reveals the complexity of his character and the resulting creative, often controversial, aspects of his work. Each author gives him a different name – Daneel as missionary, lay theologian, Mafuranhunzi the sharpshooter, Muchakata the wild cork tree, Mudavanhu who 'loves the people', Bishop Moses the ecumenist, environmentalist and prize-winning historical novelist. Yet somehow all the different perspectives are required to give a whole picture.

The first essay is by Professor Dana Robert of Boston University. An American mission historian, she puts Daneel into the context of mission history by writing a biographical overview of his life and work. She places him in the ranks of the 'great' missionary-ethnographers and activists – men like Maurice Leenhardt and Bruno Gutmann. As a North American, she sees him as representative of a continental (particularly Dutch and German) approach to missionary activism among rural, grassroots communities. His complex identity as both Afrikaner and Zimbabwean led him to combine scholarship with participation in Shona community life. As his wife since 1996, Professor Robert also comments on how Daneel's private struggles have impacted his work.

In 'Even hunters can change', Professor Frans Verstraelen evaluates Daneel's work on African Indigenous Churches in light of its singular importance in drawing the attention of Dutch scholarship to the phenomena. As a leading Dutch Catholic missiologist and professor in Holland and in Zimbabwe, Verstraelen reflects on Daneel's evolution as a lay theologian over twenty-five years of acquaintance. He documents Daneel's theological development from Reformed dogma to a 'science of religions' engagement with African traditional religions. Even as Daneel's view of Christ has expanded over the decades, Verstraelen concludes that he has remained consistent in his missionary vocation of 'representing the Good News in Jesus Christ'.

The third essay, by Willem Saayman, former head of the Department of Missiology at the University of South Africa, evaluates Daneel as colleague, friend, and fellow Afrikaner and hunter – *Mafuranhunzi*, or 'sharpshooter' in the Shona language. Saayman critiques him as a 'romantic' in his relationship with the African bush and with traditional rural life, in contrast to an urban-based, more radical black theology that openly challenged the apartheid system. Yet in Daneel's 'romanticism' – and meticulous field-

Oxford historian Terence Ranger as the two most prominent scholars on Zimbabwe's ancestral religion. Cuthbertson explores the anti-colonial, pro-Zimbabwean stance in Daneel's war novel, *Guerilla snuff*, as well as its autobiographical significance. While Daneel has excelled in empirical research, Ranger has historicised his findings – yet both men treat Africans as agents of their own destinies rather than 'passive victims'.

Through their different interpretations of Inus Daneel's life and work, the authors in the first section provide keen insights into his multifaceted contributions as both academic and activist. They agree in seeing him as a unique and creative figure who bridges multiple worlds – African and European, Christian and traditionalist, white and black, scholarly and grassroots. The genius of his accomplishment is his holism and his single-minded refusal to compromise his vocation in order to please his critics.

## Daneel's academic legacy: AIC studies and African religions

As pioneer researcher on AICs among the Shona, as first researcher to gain admittance to the high-god oracle at the Matopo Hills, and as professor of missiology for fifteen years at the University of South Africa (Unisa), Inus Daneel has profoundly impacted the shape of scholarship on religion in southern Africa. In this section of the *Festschrift*, the essays are broken into two groups that represent the major issues to which Inus has devoted his scholarly career: AIC studies, and the study of African religions. Contributions by his former students reveal the generative power of his ideas, as they pay tribute to his scholarly inspiration and then extend the scope of his interests through their own research. As these essays show, Inus Daneel is the rare writer and teacher whose ideas pushed his colleagues' scholarship into new and fruitful directions.

The essays on AIC studies show the importance of Inus Daneel's work as scholar, teacher and mentor in empirical research among grassroots Christian communities. During his tenure at Unisa, Daneel supervised master's and doctoral students – the best of whom followed in their teacher's footsteps by undertaking their own substantial 'field' research among selected groups of churches, including AICs, Pentecostals and historic mission churches. After retiring from Unisa, Daneel continued his mentoring role in The Pew Project on African Initiatives in Christian Mission by interacting with African scholars on their research, visiting them at their

diviners, Stebbing follows Daneel in finding an explicit rejection of traditionalist healing norms by followers of Father Muyambi, and indeed by other Zimbabwean Christians as well. Hayes relates his own research to Daneel's extensive work on succession struggles in Shona AICs, as found in volume 3 of *Old and new*. In examining the class of AICs generally categorised as 'Ethiopian', Hayes finds that Ethiopian secessions from the Anglican/Methodist episcopal tradition are connected with 'catholic' tendencies in ecclesiology. The search for 'apostolic succession' has been a tool in authority struggles within Ethiopian-type AICs, which emerged mostly from episcopal-type mission churches. The search for authority has even led some AICs to merge into Greek Orthodoxy.

The final two articles on themes relevant to studies of AICs were written by colleagues involved with Inus Daneel in the multinational research project African Initiatives in Christian Mission, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts in the 1990s. Since 1995 Daneel has led an interracial team of researchers from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and the United States in documenting African missionary leadership in Southern Africa. Dr Hennie Pretorius was first drawn to AIC research by reading works by Daneel, and he has recently been conducting empirical research among Zionists in the Cape Flats. In 'Strange are the ways of Zion: a coloured Zionist pioneer', Pretorius stresses the importance of oral history for AIC studies by narrating the life story of William Louw, a 'coloured' Zionist. Shedding light on the relatively rare phenomenon of AICs founded by people of mixed descent, Pretorius stresses Louw's ecumenical and irenic spirit, and also the coloured rejection of certain aspects of African traditional religion more readily incorporated into Christianity by black African Zionists.

Finally, Professor Tinyiko Maluleke, dean of theology at the University of South Africa (Unisa), offers a trenchant analysis of the state of AIC research in 'Interpreting the interpreters of AICs . . .'. Maluleke wryly notes the new interest in grassroots Christianity since the demise of the anti-apartheid theological agenda – an interest that now includes AICs. He traces the missionary dominance of AIC research for the past century, and speculates why so few black Africans have undertaken such studies. Finding the 'empirical observer' approach to grassroots community research just as Western as that of liberation theologians in universities, Maluleke analyses selected recent studies of South African AICs by white scholars. While the scope of Maluleke's article cannot reach to the exhaustive Zimbabwean

an intentionally non-Christian perspective. In a tribute to Inus Daneel as her teacher and as sympathetic researcher into African traditional religion, Manley presents fundamental conceptual differences between African and Western worldviews that she noted in her thesis research. She explores the continuity between sacred and profane, the focus on kinship, and the hierarchical social structure of traditional African societies. While wary of Inus Daneel's theological approach toward AIC models of ministry, she extends some of his insights beyond the study of Christianity, into the study of other African spiritualities.

The final article in the *Festschrift* is contributed by Matthew Schoffeleers. A Dutch Catholic missionary priest and former professor in the Netherlands, Schoffeleers, like Inus Daneel, is part of a distinguished international community of mission scholars involved in research on African religion. Throughout their long friendship, Schoffeleers and Daneel have worked on similar research issues, notably on personal healing and on earth 'healing cults'. In his essay, Professor Schoffeleers discusses the interrelationship of the Mbona cult of Malawi to the Tengani kingship. As in Inus Daneel's studies of the role of the Mwari cult in *Chimurenga*, Schoffeleers finds that the Mbona cult can become a 'major locus of rituals of rebellion' against undesirable government policies. The earth cult provides an 'interface' between private healing cults and the political system.

As the richness of these essays proves, the pioneering creativity of Inus Daneel's life and work extends in many directions. As he continues his vocation among the AICs, and his current research on the cult centres of Mwari, we wish Inus Daneel long life and every success – whether as missionary, as Bishop Moses, or under a new name and vision as yet unspoken.

Greg Cuthbertson

Hennie Pretorius

Dana Robert

# CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Allan H Anderson is director of the Research Unit for Pentecostal Studies in the Centre for Missiology and World Christianity at the University of Birmingham, Britain. He has written *Zion and Pentecost* (2000) and *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the twentieth century* (2001). With Walter Hollenweger, he edited *Pentecostals after a century* (1999).

Greg Cuthbertson is associate professor of history, Unisa, Pretoria, and editor of *Writing a wider war: rethinking gender, race and identity in the South African War* (2002).

Stephen T W Hayes works in Pretoria as freelance writer, editor, missiologist and teacher.

Janet Hodgson was formerly an advisor in local mission for the Diocese of Durham, Britain. She has written *The god of the Xhosa* (1982) and, with Jay Kothare, co-authored *Vision quest: native spirituality and the Church in Canada* (1990).

J N J (Klippiess) Kritzinger is professor of missiology at Unisa and coordinating editor of *Missionalia*. He has co-edited two volumes with Willem Saayman: *Mission in creative tension* (1990) and *Mission in bold humility* (1996).

Tinyiko Sam Maluleke is dean of theology at Unisa and has written many articles, including 'Black and African theologies in the new world order: a time to drink from our own wells' (*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 1996) and 'Dealing lightly with the wound of my people? The TRC Process in Theological Perspective' (*Missionalia* 1997).

Marcelle Manley has published poetry and fiction as well as articles in the field of religious studies, focusing on indigenous African belief.

Reuben Marinda is a bishop in the Zion Apostolic Church (Ndaza) and the author of a textbook on environmental ethics (in Shona).

Stan Nussbaum is director of training for Global Mapping International, Colorado Springs, USA, and editor of *The Review of AICs* and of *Freedom and Independence* (1994).

# CHAPTER 1

## M L Daneel: missionary as folk theologian

*Dana L Robert*

M L 'Inus' Daneel belongs to a rare group of missionaries – those who combine prophetic ministry among a group of people with scholarly reflection on their lifeways.<sup>1</sup> In his lifetime commitment to the African Independent Churches among the Shona of Zimbabwe,<sup>2</sup> he is both prophet and scholar. Among the first researchers to argue in the 1960s that AICs were contextualised rather than heretical or reactionary forms of Christianity, he was the first researcher to live among them as 'participant-observer'. Over the decades, his involvement with Shona Christians culminated in his becoming 'Bishop Moses' of the Ndaza (Holy Cord) Zionists. Inus was the first white person to speak with the oracle of Mwari, the high-god of the Shona. In the Zimbabwean War of Liberation (1965–1980), at much risk and personal sacrifice, he founded Fambidzano, a long-lived ecumenical movement of AICs that conducted theological training and development programmes. During the late 1980s and 1990s, he spearheaded the largest grassroots tree-planting movement in southern Africa, a remarkable effort because it involves both traditionalists and Christians in a crusade to reclaim the ecologically ravaged communal lands. With the exception of a decade during the war, Inus Daneel has continued his scholarly output, producing among other things the most detailed study extant of AICs in one cultural group. Steeped in the traditions of Dutch Reformed missions from childhood, and trained in the methodologies of religious science, Inus Daneel has become,

- 
- 1 In evaluating the place of M L Daneel in mission history, one is struck by the similarities with Maurice Leenhardt (1878–1954), the French Reformed ethnographer who sought to preserve Kanak culture in the face of French imperialism in New Caledonia, and who vitalised native ministry independent of European control. In his commitment to the Shona people, Daneel resembles the German Lutheran Bruno Gutmann (1876–1966) whose devotion to the Chagga of Mount Kilimanjaro resulted in 23 books and 476 articles, many of them ethnographic studies.
  - 2 In most of his published writings, Daneel has used the term 'African Independent Churches'. By the mid 1990s, he was also using the phrase 'African Initiated Churches'. Consistent with the usage most common in his works to date, in this article the term 'African Independent Churches' (AICs) will be used.

the vast Morgenster enterprises. His mother, Tina Muller Daneel, received her own call to missionary work and studied at the Dutch Reformed women's missionary training school, Friedenheim, before going to Nyasaland (Malawi) where she met her husband. Morgenster Mission before World War II was to Inus Daneel a warm and loving extended family – a paradise where mangoes and pawpaws dropped from the trees grown by the missionaries, wildlife abounded, and all were united in a common enterprise. As a child, Inus took the elderly A A Louw for rides in his go-cart and listened to him tell the ancient Shona myths.

Despite the attractions of 'paradise', Inus was nevertheless restless and independent from an early age, chafing under the structured piety imposed by his missionary heritage. As the only boy among four sisters, he spent as much time outdoors as allowed. At age 10 or 11 he went off to school, where his favorite subjects were writing and agriculture. After matriculating in 1954 from De Villiers Graaff High School in Villiersdorp, South Africa, a school that provided subsidies for missionary children, he enrolled at the University of Stellenbosch (South Africa) in 1955. Family resources were so scarce that he still wore clothing made by his mother, and he supported himself by driving taxis, fishing with mixed-race ('coloured') fishermen, and serving as a residence hall advisor for men. Although it seemed natural to pursue the theological course leading to ordination, Inus would have preferred to study anthropology. With the necessity to earn his living, and his extra-curricular activities, particularly in sports, he had little time for memorising the obligatory theology lectures. Although Inus was not politically active in opposing apartheid, his missionary background gave him fluency in Shona and an unusual openness to cross-cultural relationships. At a time when grand apartheid under prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd was segregating people into set racial groupings, Inus was reading accounts of anthropological investigations and mission work among black Africans in preparation for his own calling as a missionary among the Shona.

In 1960, having received a first degree in philosophy and psychology, and a second one in theology, but a year short of completing preparation for ordination, Inus won an Abe Bailey scholarship to tour the United Kingdom. The Bailey scholarship introduced promising South African students who showed leadership ability to the finer elements of 'British civilisation' such as universities, museums, and so forth. One of the other Bailey recipients in Inus's group was Richard Goldstone, later head of the Goldstone Commission. But the main benefit of the Bailey scholarship for Inus Daneel came when he

ground characterised by hostility to non-Christian religions, Inus eagerly absorbed Bavinck's alternative view that the existence of general revelation meant that divine purpose lay behind all religions, however fragmented and tarnished by the human tendency to obscure God's truth. Unlike the harsher German Reformed thought of Karl Barth, which saw no relationship between God and humanity possible in non-Christian religions, Bavinck and other Dutch Reformed missiologists retained a more positive view of other faiths. Bavinck maintained a creative tension between the belief that revelation existed in non-Christian faiths, and the proclamation of the Good News in Jesus Christ. In general revelation occurred in genuine encounters between God and humanity, Bavinck argued. Shortly before Bavinck's death in 1964 and Inus's return to Africa, Inus visited his professor in the hospital. In the manner of an Old Testament patriarch, Bavinck sat up in his hospital bed, laid his arms across his last student's shoulders while he knelt and blessed Inus for his ministry in Africa. Bavinck's blessing was one of the most significant moments in Inus Daneel's life, and its memory sustained him during the bleak war years and massive obstacles in his chosen life's work.

## Early research and war years, 1964-1980

Returning to Rhodesia during the apartheid era, with smouldering racial tensions about to burst into flame, Inus nevertheless settled into an African hut in the Gutu rural homelands. Based on empirical observation, he concluded that the AICs were not a 'bridge back to heathenism', as the mission literature of the day proclaimed. Rather, as the first researcher of AICs to live among them and to understand them as a participant-observer, as an 'insider', Daneel realised that independency represented the Africanisation of Christianity. To use current language, he recognised that the AICs had contextualised the Christian gospel into their own culture. This exciting realisation put him at odds with Sundkler and the regnant European scholarship.<sup>5</sup> Collecting data, conducting surveys, and interviewing AIC

---

5 Swedish missionary Bengt Sundkler's pioneer study of African Independency was first published as *Bantu prophets in South Africa* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948). As a result of sustained conversations between Sundkler and Daneel, Sundkler later rejected his categorisation of some AICs as 'messianic', in which some AIC leaders reputedly substituted themselves for the mediatorial work of Christ. Instead, Sundkler concluded that AIC leadership was 'iconic' rather than 'messianic'. See Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976).

members, Inus began analysing the rituals, beliefs, histories, and socio-logical realities of the AICs.

Although he was living among the AICs, Inus also sought to gain the confidence of the traditionalists. As an outdoorsman and hunter, with fluency in Shona, he was in a unique position to be accepted into the Shona community. After eighteen months, he was allowed to approach the Matonjeni oracle of Mwari, the high-god of the Shona. This remarkable event was preceded by his proving divine favour for his quest: he shot a flying hawk, at great distance, through the neck – a hawk that was eating the villagers' fowl.<sup>6</sup> As the first white person granted audience with the oracle, Daneel learned that Mwari was not an 'absent god', but was intimately concerned with the lives of his/her children. Rather than having disappeared after the unsuccessful First *Chimurenga* (liberation war) of 1896 against the British, Mwari had 'gone underground' but had maintained secret cultic traditions despite white domination of Rhodesia. In the voice of a woman, Mwari spoke to Daneel from the sacred caves in an ancient dialect and expressed displeasure at the poor treatment of his black children by his 'sister's' white children.<sup>7</sup>

The breakthroughs in field research in relation both to AICs and traditional religion were all the more remarkable given the beginning of guerrilla activity in the rural areas. As a white man and Afrikaner, Inus was naturally suspect to Africans eager to end white rule; he was a proverbial 'sitting duck' once the war broke out. As a Shona speaker living among blacks, he was anathema to white supremacists, who increasingly viewed him as a traitor and later as a draft dodger. Another complication in his situation was that Inus was a child of the mission, who in the eyes of some missionaries was compromising the Gospel by moving in with the 'heretics'. Missionaries expected him to return from abroad ready to work at Morgenster Mission. Instead, Inus returned to do fieldwork among the very people who had broken off from mission churches in the first place. By 1967 it was clear that he would not be working for the Dutch Reformed mission. The tensions in Inus Daneel's world – a white man in a black setting during a racial war, a missionary at heart who had somehow disappointed his larger mission community – tormented him for decades.

---

6 For his feat of marksmanship, Daneel received one of his honorific names from the Shona, Mafuranhunzi, 'the one who shoots the fly'.

7 For a description of Daneel's visit to Matonjeni and the message that Mwari gave him, see Daneel, 1970a.

of AIC leaders. Through an exhausting process of 'shuttle diplomacy' as go-between and founder, Inus negotiated among different parties, including AIC bishops, government officials, and financial sponsors in Europe. The resulting successful organisation took ecumenical cooperation and theological training as its objectives and in 1984 added development as a priority, thus focusing on the 'realised eschatology' of the Shona AICs. By 1987, seventy AIC denominations were members. Theological Education by Extension (TEE) was the primary work of Fambidzano from 1973 until 1989, when development work started to override it. Inus wrote the story of the successes, challenges and tribulations of Fambidzano in the book *Fambidzano: ecumenical movement of Zimbabwean Independent Churches* (1989).

The personal cost exacted by Daneel's commitment to Fambidzano increased as the civil war intensified from 1975 until independence in 1980. As a white man of fighting age, he had to keep avoiding conscription, for to take up arms against the Shona would have violated his convictions and destroyed his work. Yet his life was often in danger and he lost white friends to guerrilla ambush, most notably his childhood friend the Reverend André Brand and his wife, Bineke, who did pastoral work in rural areas. Inus's sister and her family were ambushed upon returning to their farm, were severely injured but miraculously survived. Black friends and colleagues disappeared, as the Marxist-oriented guerrillas suspected Shona Christians of being pro-white. To help villagers get food, Inus culled game in sensitive areas where guerrillas operated. Travelling outside the convoys because of his ministry obligations, he often courted death. The worst blow occurred in 1977 when his wife, Beulah, took their four small children, Alec, Lidia, Talita and Inus, and moved permanently to South Africa. Then in 1978 his mother died. Tina Muller Daneel had been a superb linguist and active evangelist and teacher, and a support for her son in his unorthodox missionary journey.

To compensate for the loss of his family and to escape the stress of the war, Inus participated in the international tiger fishing tournament on Lake Kariba, placing with his team three firsts, a second, and a third over five years. To earn money, he founded a company 'Mutapa Eagles', designing and building fibreglass sports and fishing boats in a small factory. The cabin cruisers he designed are still among the most popular ones on the water at Lake Kariba today. To be able to visit his family occasionally, he learned to fly an airplane. Although he never became instrument rated, at times he had to hide in the clouds because of the risk of ground-to-air missiles.

executed by guerrillas, with Bibles destroyed and the name of Jesus practically silenced. Traditional religion had experienced a renaissance during the war, with spirit mediums and the cultic centres warning the freedom fighters of Rhodesian troop movements. Digging up the religious dimensions of *Chimurenga* was in some ways risky. Yet the process helped with the healing of deep wartime scars. Based on his research, Inus wrote a novel about the wartime activities of traditional and AIC leaders entitled *guerrilla snuff*. When the novel appeared in 1995, it won the African Booksellers' prize for best English novel. Yet even in writing fiction, Inus Daneel proved to be controversial, for although he was writing to present a favourable 'insider's' view of the guerrilla struggle, he was white.

While conducting research in the areas of his childhood, Inus had become increasingly concerned at the deforestation and ecological degradation of the land, including traditionally sacred areas formerly rich with trees and wildlife. In the post-independence context, opportunists and squatters had begun exploiting the natural resources of Masvingo Province, their damage to the environment exacerbated by lack of government supervision and devastating droughts. By the mid-1980s, despair was gripping the peasant society concerning its lack of control over the environment and such issues as land distribution. In his discussions with ex-combatants, spirit mediums and chiefs, Inus realised that a common theme was the 'lost lands'; even though the land had been politically regained from the whites, it was still lost through ecological destruction. Consequently, in 1988 Daneel's research team launched Zirrcon, the Zimbabwean Institute for Religious Research and Ecological Conservation. Zirrcon sought to investigate the connections between religion and the environment. A group of spirit mediums and chiefs met repeatedly with the Zirrcon research team at Inus's Masvingo house in 1988, and together they launched an association to put traditionalist religious support behind a 'war of the trees', an effort to plant trees and preserve water and wildlife resources. The combined Zirrcon/traditionalist group began planting trees immediately, drawing upon traditional ancestral rituals to protect the saplings. By 1990 the group had founded Aztrec (Association of Zimbabwean Traditional Ecologists), which enlisted spirit mediums, chiefs and others in its reforestation efforts. The oracle of Mwari at Matonjeni approved of Aztrec's founding.

As Zirrcon and Aztrec increased their environmental efforts, planting trees and running woodlots, many AIC leaders sought to affiliate with Zirrcon and join the tree-planting efforts. During the 1990–91 rainy season, Zirrcon

## New beginnings and challenges

In 1995 Inus Daneel received a three-year grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts to guide a team of researchers in empirical research projects on African Initiatives in Christian Mission in Southern Africa. Early in 1997 the project held an international conference in Pretoria, drawing together researchers and bishops from several AICs. What became clear at the conference was that Daneel's lifelong agenda of respecting the cultural basis and theological authenticity of African Initiated Christianity had finally come into its own. With the passing of the apartheid regimes in the former Rhodesia and South Africa, the relationship between religion and culture came to the forefront in a way it could not while political change was the uppermost issue for theology. In the new South Africa, as in Zimbabwe, AICs comprised nearly fifty percent of all Christians. What in the 1960s had been a hard-fought battle to convince mission scholars that AICs were 'bridges to the Christian future' had by the 1990s become a commonplace assumption. By the year 2000 six books had been published in the series 'African Initiatives in Christian Mission,' edited by Daneel and Dana Robert, and published by Unisa Press. With more books in various stages of preparation, the series represents an ongoing contribution to understanding the nature of African mission during a time of rapid church growth on the continent.

Having done the groundwork for the funding of a new environmental venture at Unisa, Inus was instrumental in raising 2,3 million Rand from the mining corporation Gold Fields, in 1995. The money funded an institute, 'Faith and Earthkeeping', that operated out of Unisa on principles similar to those of Zirrcon. Leaving the institute in capable hands, however, he took early retirement from Unisa so he could devote more time to research and writing, the 'African Initiatives' series, and to Zirrcon. Inus also began exploring the possibility of organising an African Earthkeeper's Union to spread the Zirrcon message across the continent. Then in February 1996 he married Dana Robert, a missiologist at Boston University, thereby expanding his horizon to North America in partnership with a kindred spirit. He began a new schedule of commuting between the United States and Zimbabwe, and teaching at Boston University part time.

Two of the first volumes in the African Initiatives series are Inus's books on *African earthkeepers*, description and analysis of the Zirrcon environmental movement spearheaded by traditionalists and Christians. An American condensed version was published by Orbis Press in 2001. But starting in

grassroots ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue and ecological conservation has influenced Africans in southern Africa and European scholars abroad. But above all, he has become a folk theologian – a non-traditional missionary who has put his life at the service of the Shona African Independent Churches, helping them to articulate theologies that reflect their culture and to communicate their gifts to the rest of the world.

## Bibliography

Cronje, J M 1982. *Born to witness*. Pretoria: N G Kerkboekhandel.

---

on Daneel's research in their own publications, for example see Michael Bourdillon, *The Shona peoples: an ethnography of the contemporary Shona, with special reference to their religion* (Gwelo, Rhodesia: Mambo Press, 1976), and Harvey Cox, *Fire from heaven: the rise of Pentecostal spirituality and the reshaping of religion in the twenty-first century* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley 1995).

entered Inus's 'hunting ground', namely Zimbabwe (though the missiological field there is so varied that we could easily give each other a wide berth).

I feel honoured to have been invited to contribute to Inus's *Festschrift* as I feel deeply appreciative of him personally and of his work. This will not exclude some critical remarks which should, however, be considered an expression of genuine friendship.

## Winning people's sympathy

One of Inus's great gifts is undoubtedly the charm with which he wins over and mobilises people for his plans. He achieved this, for instance, by inviting people to come and obtain first-hand experience of his work with Shona Independent Churches in Southern Zimbabwe. At that time I was doing research in Zambia in 1973 on new relationships of the Roman Catholic Church while my late wife, Gerdien, was engaged with her research into the history of the Reformed Church in Zambia (Verstraelen-Gilhuis 1982). We were both invited by Inus to visit his work in Fort Victoria (now Masvingo). I still have a vivid memory of his hospitality; we met a number of different AIC leaders, and Inus even lent us his Landrover to explore the environment of Great Zimbabwe. Many Dutch and other people have enjoyed similar visits that introduced them – often for the first time – to that important and intriguing phenomenon of church independency. Though Inus's hospitality was quite genuine (he is the most hospitable of men), he was also no doubt motivated by his (apparently inherited) 'merchant instinct' (Daneel 1995:197) and a deep desire to obtain moral and financial support for his work.

In that respect he was extremely fortunate in his relations with Protestant missionary and diaconal organisations in the Netherlands. For instance, the 1976 *Annual Report on Fambidzano* states that Dutch sponsors donated more than half of the funds for that year, namely R\$18.232 (DFI 67.920), while sponsors from other countries donated (altogether) R\$17.750. This indicates the extent of Inus's impact on circles concerned with mission and development since he obtained his doctorate in theology *cum laude* from the Free University in 1971.

There already existed an extensive corpus of knowledge about new and independent religious movements in Africa when Inus began to publish, beginning with *The god of the Matopo Hills* in 1970. Northwestern University in 1966 produced a comprehensive bibliography of modern African movements

with 1 313 items, and the *Journal of Religion in Africa* continued this bibliography in 1968 and 1970 with 614 more items – 1 907 items altogether (Verstraelen 1973). It remains beyond doubt, however, that Inus Daneel has made an important contribution to describing in great detail the Southern Shona Independent Churches. And I am not overstating the case when I say that it was Inus who created great interest in the AIC movement in the academic world of my own country, the Netherlands, especially among missiologists and anthropologists. It is worth noting that two outstanding representatives of these categories graced Inus's 'promotion' in 1971: Prof Bishop Bengt Sundkler of the University of Uppsala (the pioneer researcher and author of *Bantu prophets in South Africa*, London 1948), and Prof J F Holleman of the University of Leiden and director of the Afrika Studiecentrum (author of *Shona customary law*, London 1952). Inus also saw to it that copies of his thesis found a wide circulation within academic circles. I myself (attached at the time to the Interuniversity Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research (IIMO) at Leiden) was one of the beneficiaries, with a copy signed by and inscribed with the compliments of the author. When in 1973, in the context of an IIMO project on mutual assistance between churches, I wrote an article on assistance to and from AICs, I could refer also to Daneel's Fambidzano project in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) (Verstraelen 1973).

## Achieving something remarkable

Most academics remain safely within the academic sphere while trying to gain some kind of recognition from their peers. But Inus used his study as a starting point for instituting a very special form of assistance: the setting up of a theological training centre for Shona Independent Churches, coordinated by Fambidzano *yemakereke avatema* (Conference of Churches of Black People).

To do this rather than aspire to an academic career was, of course, wholly in line with Inus's character. He is and has remained a roaming 'hunter' who cannot really settle down in one place. Later he accepted a post in missiology at Unisa, Pretoria, but that was out of mere necessity. When I once met him there in his office (his desk was completely covered with scripts which he had to mark), I felt as though I was meeting a caged bird that was desperately looking for an opportunity to escape to freedom. True to his nature, Inus succeeded in coming to an agreement with this busy correspondence university that allowed him annually to return for some months to his

Needless to say that the widely divergent backgrounds of a dedicated District Commissioner (who is spending much time promoting African Education) and a well-intending Dutch theologian who comes from a country where the iniquities of a race-discriminating Southern Africa are consistently (and all too often, one-sidedly) highlighted, provided the setting for interesting and lively discussion (*Fambidzano Annual Report* 1976:21).

It is clear (to me) that at the time Inus identified more easily with the Rhodesian district commissioner dedicated to promoting African education than with the Dutch theologian critical of the system of apartheid in South Africa and Rhodesia. Inus dedicated himself to the theological training of the Shona Independent Church people, but without analysing the political situation and context in which that training took place, and which resulted in offering a more or less acontextual type of theology.

## EXCURSUS: Fambidzano's programme scrutinised

In 1989 Daneel published *Fambidzano: ecumenical movement of Zimbabwean Independent Churches*, which describes the history and role of Fambidzano, and its theological training programme in particular (Daneel 1989). I wrote a review of this book in the Dutch missiological Journal *Wereld en Zending*, from which I take the following few points that illustrate my evaluation of Inus's major activity (Verstraelen 1990:279–281).

Fambidzano's theological programme contained ethics, but nothing is mentioned about a reflection on the political context. When Inus deals with the liberation struggle (as already mentioned, often referred to as 'terrorism'), he speaks about the problems and/or impossibility of pursuing theological training in the various centres. However, there is no word about theology of liberation, to which the situation no doubt gave rise. This leads to the question, 'What type of theology was presented in the programme?' Daneel definitely had great influence in conceiving and filling in the courses. He candidly describes his contribution as 'teaching them about *Western theology*' (Daneel 1989:10. Emphasis added). Although Inus was aware of the danger of imposing a foreign, colonial-oriented type of theology, he nevertheless remained fixed on Western theology, without apparently taking or finding time to link the programme to the theological developments in the South, the Third World theologies that were emerging during that period. In

traded the history of white missions for the uncharted territory of Black Independent Church missionary work' (Daneel 1995:197).

And yet Inus has been unmistakably influenced by the ideological stances taken by the DRC in South Africa. For instance, although Fambidzano had contacts with the Lausanne movement, they had none with the World Council of Churches (Verstraelen 1990:280). In one of the propositions (which in accordance with Dutch academic custom have to accompany one's main thesis), Inus echoes DRC criticism of the World Council of Churches while at the same time inviting his church to reconsider affiliation with this council on theological grounds.<sup>2</sup> The latter may be explained, I think, by Inus's exposure to a number of church and theological developments in the Netherlands during the period of his study there (1965–1971). De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands) had become a member of the WCC in 1968, while the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church) was one of the founding members of the WCC when it was officially established in Amsterdam in 1948. Inus must also have been aware of a breakthrough in relationships between Catholic and Protestant missionary and ecumenical institutions, and particularly between Protestant and Catholic missiologists. In this new atmosphere of openness and responsiveness to the influence of Vatican Council and WCC Assemblies, the creation of the Interuniversity Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research (IIMO) was realised in 1969 when state, Protestant and Catholic universities and theological colleges (together with missionary and ecumenical bodies) cooperated in reflecting on common issues and challenges for mission *in loco* and *in globo* (Verstraelen 1995:432–437).

Although Inus was already open to 'others', he was certainly further strengthened and encouraged in his attitudes by what he saw and experienced in the Dutch ecclesiastical and missio-theological field. We find an expression of Inus's openness in Fambidzano's 1976 *Annual Report*. In it he refers to the 'outstanding experience' of having spent three days with the Bethlehem (Catholic) Fathers at Driefontein Mission (Zimbabwe) in November 1976, lecturing and answering questions on the Shona Indepen-

---

2 'Despite the questionable resolution recently taken by the World Council of Churches in connection with financial aid to resistance movements, it is of importance that the Reformed Churches of South Africa consider affiliation to this ecumenical movement on theological grounds' (Proposition XIII to Daneel's PhD thesis, 1971).

drumming, hand clapping and ululating might lead to the introduction of adapted and more properly safeguarded practices'.<sup>4</sup> Inus, more than a decade later, speaks explicitly of the contribution of AICs to African theology. In a 1984 article he comes to the conclusion, 'if theology is to be relevant and contextual in order to be regarded as theology, there can be no doubt about the vital contribution of the Independent Churches to a *theologia Africana*' (Daneel 1984d:64–89; cf Verstraelen 1973).

## A missionary 'merchant-pirate'

While writing this contribution I was reminded of a sentence in *Sounds* by Vladimir Nabokov. The protagonist, on meeting an old friend, says: 'I started scrutinizing him, and had the feeling I was really seeing him for the first time, even though we were old acquaintances' (Nabokov 1995:18). Something similar happened to me when I tried to take a close look at Inus Daneel's personality and work. In this I have been greatly helped by Inus himself and his self-revelation about his own roots.

In the Epilogue of his novel, *Guerilla snuff* (1995), Inus mentions 'two sets of dreams dreaming me' (Daneel 1995: 196) that is, two genealogies, one African (in the 1960s he had been adopted by the Gumbo Rufura people of Gutu) and the other Western. Without denying Inus's closeness to the Shona people, one may say that he is also deeply rooted in his European ancestry: Flemish ship-owners and merchants, one of whom settled at the Cape and whom Inus sometimes thinks of as a pirate. But there were also distinguished clergymen and missionaries who went to the North. It is interesting to read how Inus identifies himself within this merchant-pirate-missionary genealogy:

This ancestral tide of merchants and pirates, ministers and missionaries, eventually deposited me in Zimbabwe. It seemed as if the heavy weight of all those ordained ministers was pulling the ancient genealogy slightly skew. *A new merchant pirate* was needed to restore equilibrium. So Zimbabwean soil obliged with a *lay missionary* . . . who then traded the history of white missions for the uncharted territory of black Independent Church missionary work (Daneel 1995:197. Emphasis added).

---

4 Proposition XIX, attached to Daneel's thesis of 1971.

target. *Gumbo* is Inus's name – after the Gumbo Rufura people adopted him in the 1960s. By using his African name, Inus apparently wishes to indicate that he belongs to African people and as such that he can understand and describe (more or less) from within how the liberation struggle revitalised many African ancestral beliefs and rituals.

It would be interesting to know whether Inus has come closer to the traditional African worldview during the past twenty-five years, including African traditional religion, not only strategically or phenomenologically but also spiritually, in the sense of a new evaluation and appreciation. In order to obtain a full and adequate answer I should have to make a systematic analysis of *all* Daneel's publications. Yet I want to share briefly *my impression* that Inus has indeed changed his evaluation and appreciation of African traditional religion.

In the 1970s Inus became an advocate of the idea that Independent Churches in Africa are Christian and form part of the Church Universal.<sup>5</sup> However, in this period he seemed reluctant to take a positive approach to African traditional religion as such. In an article, written in 1973 on 'The Christian Gospel and the ancestor cult', Daneel states, with reference to Romans 1:18ff, that 'there is no element in the traditional religion which is of itself "pure" or "good" and [which] can without further ado be incorporated in the Shona Church' (Daneel 1973:69). Here he undoubtedly is influenced by a Free University-Barthian type of dogmatics.

From the mid-1980s he seemed to show a more positive approach to African traditional religion – compared with his previous position. He has apparently moved away from theological dogmatism towards a science of religion approach, strengthened by a new, positive theology of religions. This move has become visible since the launching of Inus's environmental offensive through Zirrcon (founded in 1988).<sup>6</sup> Zirrcon (above) mobilised two sister groups, one for (mainly) spirit mediums (Aztec) and one for African Independent Churches (AAEC). The latter group did not join without opposition. The Rev Peter Makamba, successor to Inus Daneel as director

---

5 See Daneel's proposition IV, against G C Oosthuizen, *Post-Christianity in Africa* (London 1968) and proposition XVI, agreeing with J F Ade Ajayi and E A Ayandele's position in their 'Writing African church history' in *The church crossing frontiers*, Beyerhaus P, Hallencreutz, C F (eds) (Uppsala 1969). These propositions belong to Daneel's dissertation of 1971.

6 Daneel gives two different dates for the founding of Zirrcon: 1984 in Daneel 1996c:134, and 1988 in Daneel 1996a:216 (see note 28).

'Earthkeeping in missiological perspective' (1996). I do believe, however, that Inus fundamentally has remained the same: a Christian lay missionary confessing and even witnessing to Christ's Lordship over all powers and religious traditions. Yet I also think that Inus more and more has been captivated by the power of the traditional worldview and its religious components. This comes clearly to the fore in his novel *guerrilla snuff*, in which he is not required to take into account theological interlocutors and in which he feels free to express his real feelings. This can be clarified by the following event. After Inus had interviewed Chakarakata, former Zanla detachment commander of the liberation struggle, he discovered that the tape in his recorder was blank. Inus reports:

I was embarrassed. This had not happened to me before. But never before had a *chimurenga* horn of ancestral snuff been leaning against my recorder . . . Perhaps this was an ancestral warning, one given to a somewhat pragmatic man, which meant that he should not trifle with unseen powers. Perhaps Mabwazhe [the common ancestor of the Gumbo Rufura people of Gutu by whom Inus had been adopted. FJV] was sending his white kinsman the message, 'Tread carefully with respect, Mafuranhunzi. For our *chimurenga* [liberation struggle. FJV] ground on which you are standing is holy' (Daneel 1995:x).

## Change and sameness

The last sentence of Daneel's *guerilla snuff* reads, 'Even hunters can change' (Daneel 1995:198). It refers in its context to Inus as a hunter who has been 'converted' from killing animals to being a guardian of them. Inus came to this conclusion after he heard the voice of *Zenda*, the hunter's *shavi* spirit whispering in his ear, 'Mafuranhunzi, we shall become the guardians of the animals . . .'. Indeed, Inus Daneel has changed but, paradoxically, he has remained a 'merchant-pirate'. What has also remained is his missionary orientation: mission, not in general sense of 'task', but in the unambiguous Christian sense of representing the Good News in Jesus Christ. Inus, even in his earthkeeping enterprise proclaims that 'the entire tree-planting Eucharist testifies to Christ's lordship in heaven and on earth' (Daneel 1996c:164). Yet Inus's Christian missionary orientation has nevertheless undergone a change in that he, through a more positive approach to African traditional religion, has discovered Christ in a new light: 'Christ as the fulfillment of all ancestorhood' (Daneel 1996c:164).

## CHAPTER 3

### My friend Mafuranhunzi

*Willem Saayman*

With this book we are actually honouring more than one Inus Daneel, because there are various sides to his personality. There is Professor Inus Daneel, the painfully meticulous empirical researcher of Southern Shona African Initiated Churches (AICs),<sup>1</sup> who sometimes irritates and frustrates us by his unwillingness to generalise and extrapolate in theory formation about the Independents in the rest of Africa. Then there is the white Shona who identifies with the Shona Independents to such an extent that he is accorded the status of an independent bishop. And then there is the African bushman, known far and wide in the Masvingo Province of Zimbabwe as *Mafuranhunzi*, 'the one who can shoot the fly'. It is not my responsibility (rather fortunately, I think) to reconcile Inus's very unorthodox sympathy for the Independents with his somewhat rigid Reformed orthodoxy. My task is to introduce you to my friend and fellow-bushman, Mafuranhunzi.

We discovered our affinity as lovers of the silent, lonely places of the African bush when we became colleagues at Unisa. When the crush of people, the frustration of peak-hour traffic, and the continual hustle and bustle of a big university became too much for us, we knew that we would find a sympathetic hearing in each other's company. Very soon we departed on our first trip to the silent places in the kingdom of the wild together, and shared many a profound missiological discussion while travelling the thousands of kilometres it took us to reach our favourite places. As we shared words and silences, we began to understand each other's missiological concerns, which were often quite divergent.

Born at the well-known DRC mission station, Morgenster, in southern Zimbabwe in 1936, Inus is of traditional missionary parentage. He is a white African through and through – a person who would shrivel away and die if he

---

1 The terms, African Initiated Churches and African Independent Churches, are both used in the literature. I will refer to the Independents when I am writing about the members of these churches.

afternoon. But I would like to say that I know that my friend Mafuranhunzi's romanticism is not grounded in a hazy, make-believe concept of the realities of Africa today. He knows both the material poverty and the spiritual riches of the Independents of Africa; he knows the horrors committed on both sides of the liberation war; he knows the human greed and hypocrisy generated by the present era of 'economic aid' to poor, benighted Africa.

But he also knows the incredible richness inherent in the spirit of the traditions of Africa, traditions which are still alive in mud and wattle huts as well as in city skyscrapers; he knows the miracles of material and spiritual healing worked by the honestly human religious belief alive in Africa; and, above all, he knows the reality and honesty of human communion in Africa, the community of the living and the living dead, the community of the human and the natural environment. For this reason he can communicate at the graves of his missionary father and mother and under the tree where his beloved sister lost her life. This kind of romanticism, the hard romanticism of present-day Africa, the invigorating romanticism of the African bush, will long outlive modernity and postmodernism – because it is an essential dimension of human existence in Africa.

What I have written so far should in no way be read as an unqualified praise-poem to our friend and colleague Inus Daneel. As his beloved Reformed faith makes so abundantly clear, all of us are born sinful, and none of us can claim perfection in any way. So we are celebrating Inus, not because he is without faults or because he embodies all missiological wisdom. We celebrate him rather by recognising that he is as incomplete a human being as any one of us, and for this reason we take his contribution seriously by emphasising both the good and the bad in it. Given his wonderful talents and opportunities, he should have done much more to situate AICs within the totality of Southern African Christianity. His impatience with a more Marxist-oriented Southern African black theology, which often bordered on a dismissiveness of black mission churches, hampered, in my opinion, our theological progress toward a truly holistic Southern African Christian theology. In some respects, he was blind to the weaknesses in Southern African Independency, and he too easily dismissed critical questions raised by (especially younger) black theologians.

But Mafuranhunzi, my colleague and friend, you taught me many things which helped me to make peace with my Afrikaner/African/Christian identity. Your unconditional love for the African bush resonates in my heart, which

loves it equally unreservedly. The humour and joy in which your community with African people is grounded will continue to inspire us and give us hope that a truly human mutual existence is possible for God's dark-skinned as well as for his pale-faced African children.

preaching heresy to the people. His role as a liberator derived from his willingness to champion the cause of the AICs. As a result they became recognised as genuine Christian churches and missionary institutions in their own right.

Although the Shona Independents to whom he related during his research did not clearly or consistently articulate ecumenical ideas, he guessed that a united front was required if they were to launch successful theological training programmes of their own. This insight gave birth to his personal ideal of AIC ecumenism. Having established a wide network of contacts with the Shona Independent Church leaders, Mudavanhu realised that, given the opportunity, he could play a meaningful role as contact person and bridge builder among the widely scattered and doctrinally diverse church groups.

Mudavanhu accepted the ecumenical challenge in observance of the traditional Shona principle of reciprocity in kinship and wider social relations. This meant that he could plough back into the AICs something of the goodwill and friendship which he has always experienced among them. He was fully aware of the frustrating, often disheartening experiences of members of the Christian Institute in their dealing with AICA (African Independent Church Association in South Africa) and had no illusions about the hazards involved in such a venture.<sup>1</sup> Some of his friends and observers of the Independents elsewhere in Africa actually tried to persuade him not to get involved. They argued that the whole history of ecumenical attempts in Southern Africa, none of which seemed to have succeeded or lasted, indicated the futility of such attempts. Even in Zimbabwe the early attempt by the leaders of Ethiopian-type churches to form an ecumenical movement had failed. Nevertheless, once the challenge was there it could not be ignored.

When Mudavanhu returned to Masvingo Province from the Netherlands, where he completed his studies, he started his ministry amongst the AICs. He developed a theological training programme from within the AICs on a self-help basis. Right from the beginning it was emphasised that in spite of Mudavanhu's own involvement and also foreign financial support, theologi-

---

<sup>1</sup> Here Bishop Marinda is referring to the ill-fated attempt by Beyers Naudé to organise a self-sustaining ecumenical movement (AICA) among South African indigenous churches in the late 1960s (Editors).



Zionist tree-planting eucharist. Bishop Moses and Mutikizizi prepare the table of holy communion. Bishops Marinda and Zvanaka in the background (top). The sacrament of tree-planting is concluded with celebratory song and dance (bottom)



22–23 was always used as the biblical basis for bringing the participants together, with the inference that an Association of the Independent Churches could contribute to the realisation of the combined ideals of unity and mission. During several non-stop sessions the possible basis, objectives and organisation of an association were discussed. Consensus was soon reached on the need for establishing a representative body of the IACs which set itself at least two basic objectives: promoting theological education for its office-bearers; and improving inter-church relations. Generally it was agreed that, in order to qualify, a church should be based on the word of God (both Old and New Testament); 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 which deals with disciplinary issues. Some of the Zionist delegation wanted more clarification of the belief in the Holy Spirit, but the general feeling was that this should not be narrowed down by precise definition as it would leave insufficient scope for the diversity of beliefs.

From the discussions on this subject it was agreed that there was considerable concern for the genuinely Christian nature of the proposed association. Not just any group calling themselves Christians would be allowed to join. It was also stressed that the proposed administrative board would appoint a special committee to consider applications for membership in the light of these Christian standards.

Towards the end of the conference the delegates of twelve churches were in favour of immediate formation of an association. The remaining delegates wanted time to consider possible application. To avoid dissatisfaction it was decided that all churches which joined the association before the end of the year would be considered founding members. On Saturday evening 29 July 1972, the AICC (Fambidzano) was founded by the first twelve member churches.

One of the most important features in founding Fambidzano was enabling the leaders of numerous churches to meet for the first time. This helped terminate the isolation which existed amongst the Independent Churches in the rural areas. These leaders for the first time could meet, mix, preach, sing and dance together. The AICs now forged new bonds and relationships which helped them to see and experience a new life in Christian unity. The barriers of religious bias which formerly separated them were exposed and discarded. At meetings the bishops increasingly came out in strong support

## CHAPTER 5

### Muchakata and the war of the trees

The following interviews with Shona Chiefs Chikwanda, Chivi and Murinye were conducted in Shona in August of 1997 by Zirrcan staff members Farai Mfanyane, Taverengwa Chiwara, and Gladmore Charamba, who then translated them into English. Chief Murinye is the patron of Aztrec, and Chiefs Chivi and Chikwanda are active participants. All three chiefs are long-term supporters of the tree-planting movement begun by Inus Daneel in the 1980s. In the tree-planting movement, Daneel's tree name is Muchakata, or 'wild cork tree'. The chiefs interpret Daneel's place in African Traditional Religion as they discuss his role in the environmental movement. Chief Chivi, for example, speculates that Daneel was motivated by his ancestors to begin the tree-planting, and therefore functions as a *svikiro* or spirit medium who communicates the ancestral will to the living. The interviews also reveal the chiefs' interactions with Christianity and their adoption of Christian ideas despite their responsibilities as key figures in the traditional religion. All three express positive appreciation for the inter-religious cooperation that has come about through the tree-planting movement.

#### Chief Chikwanda

Staff: Chief Chikwanda, you are involved in the 'war of trees' among traditionalists. Would you please tell us your experiences in this programme since you became involved?

Chikwanda: Daneel came up with this great idea of fighting the 'war of trees'. The purpose was to beautify the face of the earth by conserving and restoring all the natural resources that have been created by God. With this in mind, Professor Daneel introduced to us the idea of planting trees in those areas where grasses and trees had been burnt by reckless villagers. Zirrcan therefore began to establish tree nurseries. We also began to collect tree seedlings in our nurseries. As this programme has developed, the countryside has begun to

tree seedlings from people running tree nurseries. After doing that, people will gather and start planting trees and that area will improve. Some villagers will come and learn from that kraal head's area. The following day another kraal head prepares the land, organises and invites everyone for tree planting. Trees are very useful because they provide roofing material, firewood, and so on. Some people in other parts of the country do not have firewood.

Staff: How do the ancestors mobilise people to care for the earth?

Chikwanda: Our ancestors are very helpful on water issues. There are some areas where we go to request rainfall. This area is on a farm and it is a sacred shrine (*mapa*) with a depression on it into which we place finger millet. When we have placed the finger millet there, the rain falls and soaks that millet so that, after a given time, it begins to germinate and can then be used for beer brewing for the rain-making ceremony. In that area there is a muchakata tree (cork tree) which we fence around in an African traditional way, using small droppers and tying them together with tree fibre (*kukomba norum-handa*). We sing and dance around the tree, singing some Traditional songs which are related to rain making. We prefer the muchakata tree because we want the rain to fall abundantly (the name 'Muchakata' after all suggests 'abundance'). We want a lot of rain to fall everywhere. That is why we chose 'Muchakata' as Daneel's name.<sup>2</sup>

Staff: And so Professor Daneel was named 'Muchakata' because he brings many things?

Chikwanda: Yes. It's as though he was inspired by our ancestors' spirits to liberate the land.

Staff: Do you think Daneel is fighting to restore some of our long lost traditional customs?

---

2 Each participant in the tree-planting movement is given or chooses a tree name for him- or herself.

Chikwanda: Yes! He is trying very hard. Situations are made good only through God's will – not through people. God tells us that we are all the same but unfortunately we practise racial discrimination by placing some in classes better off than others. But that is only human nature. If you look at cattle, some are black, some are white, others are brown, and some are a mixture of colours. Surprisingly they all stay in one kraal. God tells us, 'That is how I created human beings'. We are staying in one world created by God. Thus everything is made possible by God.

Staff: If you look at our traditional religion, how do you see Professor Daneel's role/attitude?

Chikwanda: A-a. In (the context of) our African customs he is good. He is good. He wants us to stick to our traditional systems. God said, 'I am concerned not about your outlook, but about your heart'. God does not take looks or beauty into account.

Staff: And so you think that because Professor Daneel is opposed to the racial discrimination among us, he chose to abide by our traditional customs and mobilise people to respect one another?

Chikwanda: *Amen!* That is very good. You have given the answer that I wanted to give.

Staff: Does tree planting really liberate the land?

Chikwanda: There is always plenty of rain wherever there are trees. They also supply firewood. We are urging people to plant trees on barren lands, to use old gum trees as fire wood and to replace them with new trees. Some areas were made barren as a punishment. Once God sees the destruction of the land, he punishes so that we know that God exists. Sometimes we have a drought and then all trees dry up, as happened last year. We wondered why it happened. We realised later that God wanted us to go back to our customs.

Staff: So we are trying to save ourselves from this punishment through the 'war of trees'?

Masvingo province. He knew that in all these districts in which he wanted to undertake environmental programmes there are people who are traditionally responsible for them, and so he started talking to the chiefs. The result was the formation of Aztrec by the chiefs. The chiefs have adopted Professor Daneel as one of their own children. As is the custom in African culture, Professor Daneel was given his own clan name. He first approached Chief Murinye with the idea, who extended this invitation to me. In the invitation to join the 'war' he told us that he had seen the need to engage in a war different from the liberation struggle – a 'war to liberate Zimbabwe from a pending ecological disaster'. (*'Uyai vana sekuru tatanga imwe hondo kuno'* – literally, 'Uncle, come here, we have started another war'. *'Hondo yekusima miti'* – literally, 'the war of trees'.) We welcomed the idea and now we see that our natural vegetation is reviving. We are leaving a wealth of natural resources for our grandchildren. We are really happy about this initiative.

Staff: Can you please explain to us the role that Professor Daneel is playing in this 'war of trees'?

Chivi: Professor Daneel is the nerve centre of the programme. In fact, if we could look at him from an African perspective, we would consider him to be a spirit medium, *svikiro*, inspired from above. We are all left wondering how he managed to bring chiefs and bishops to work together for the environment – despite the fundamental inherent differences between the two religious groups. In fact, from what he has achieved, one is tempted to think that he is an inspired prophet. In fact, there are those among us chiefs who think that he is at times possessed by his own ancestral spirits. We think this because the way in which he works sometimes makes us wonder what his source of inspiration is. At the end of the day we conclude that he is inspired by his own ancestral spirits who told him that he should work hand in hand with African communities and live happily among African people. He was very receptive to this advice and is assisting us to implement our environmental projects. As you will appreciate, those whites who did not realise the need for

Staff: From your understanding of our traditional religion, how do you see Professor Daneel fitting in?

Chivi: Professor Daneel does not in any way have a bias toward one of the two religions. In the Christian world he is known as Bishop Moses because of his role in the church and the 'war of trees', and in Aztrec we also have a name for him. This name is 'Muchakata'. His dedication in the 'war of trees' can be summed up in his preparedness to respect sacred places: at Matonjeni he removed his shoes; when traditional dances are held, he participates just like one of us. When one needs to clap hands as a sign of respect, he also claps. He has a level of commitment that is rare in people. He is acceptable even in African religious circles and is accepted as one of our own.

Staff: Chief Chivi, I realise that in our work to re-green the environment there is an element of inter-faith dialogue. On the one hand, we have traditional African religion [Aztrec] while, on the other hand, we have the Christian element [AAEC]. How do you perceive this, considering that there are profound differences in religious principles among different religious groups?

Chivi: The two religious followings complement each other. In fact, neither of the two followings has a more important position than the other. When we held our Aztrec tree planting ceremonies, we invited the AICs' bishops. We even invite them to our village courts and always make a point of praying before we start any meeting. At the conclusion of the meeting we also close with a word of prayer. In fact, although the bishops are Christians, their African cultural background enables them to realise the need for mutual respect between the two religions.

Staff: So we can conclude that a good relationship exists between these two religions in the 'war of trees'?

Chivi: Yes, because neither of the two religions claims superiority at the grassroots level over the other. So we accept the concept and are amazed that Professor Daneel had the foresight to

- Staff: If you consider our African customs, how do you perceive Professor Daneel's role/attitude?
- Murinye: He mobilises. Even on the ancestral side, he does the same. With the bishops, he does the same. Had it not been for Professor Daneel, we would have had no recognition.
- Staff: Do you relate to Professor Daneel because of his appreciation of African norms?
- Murinye: If he had not been playing a good role, we would not have given him the name of 'Muchakata'. We noticed that we (the chiefs) were losing power and so we decided to work hand in glove with him because he was helping us to conscientise our people.
- Staff: In the planting of trees, Christians work together with traditionalists. How do you see their cooperation?
- Murinye: When we were working separately there was no development. We are happy about the churches taking the lead. Therefore, whenever we hold tree planting meetings, we ask them to lead us with a prayer. In this way, everyone tackles the work enthusiastically. Even though Christians work with traditionalists, we find that churches are our avenue to the Creator. Christians send our prayers and requests to God.<sup>4</sup>
- Staff: Bearing in mind that Christians are your children and that they are under your authority, do you see it worth working with them because of their leadership?
- Murinye: That's it. We are proud of them because they help us to discipline cruel people in the villages. If you attend their church meetings, they feel greatly honoured. They preach good news which proclaims that the church has no tolerance for cruelty.

---

<sup>4</sup> In Chief Murinye's comments, we see that although chiefs are the upholders of traditional ways, they are often also sympathetic to Christianity. As community leaders, they are responsible for the wellbeing of all their people, traditionalists and Christians alike (Editors).

## CHAPTER 6

# Bishop Moses, The Earthkeeper

*Solomon Zvanaka*

The composition of a genuinely representative and authentic biography of a person like Bishop Moses in the context of Zirrcan<sup>1</sup> is indeed no easy task. Even a brief account for that matter is somewhat daunting. A properly recorded life of someone is almost as rare as a well-spent one. Without doubt it is hard to 'reconstruct', as it were, the life of someone so close to me, someone I know and with whom I have so much in common.

Professor Daneel's valuable work and contributions are for me both transparent and shrouded in mystery. By choosing as my title 'Bishop Moses, the Earthkeeper' I intend to portray him as someone who is the architect and the personification of a unique and one of the greatest religio-environmental movements in the history of the traditional people and the AICs in Zimbabwe.

In addition, it seems vital to me to highlight the importance of this man, who is the embodiment of this grassroots movement, particularly at a time when the impact of his work is being widely acclaimed by both friends and foes. It is indeed essential to make people the world over aware of the rich contribution he has made to the life of African grassroots society and to briefly highlight what I believe to be the secret of his success. I shall attempt to convey to the reader the historical significance Bishop Moses holds for us, his close associates, the grassroots people. Through religion, he has motivated communities of people who hold different beliefs and worldviews into a 'single and united front' for them to achieve self-development.

### Testament of a man committed to serve

A man of middle age, Bishop Moses sat beneath the shade of a *Muchecheni* (wait-a-bit thorn tree) in front of his house, to protect himself from the

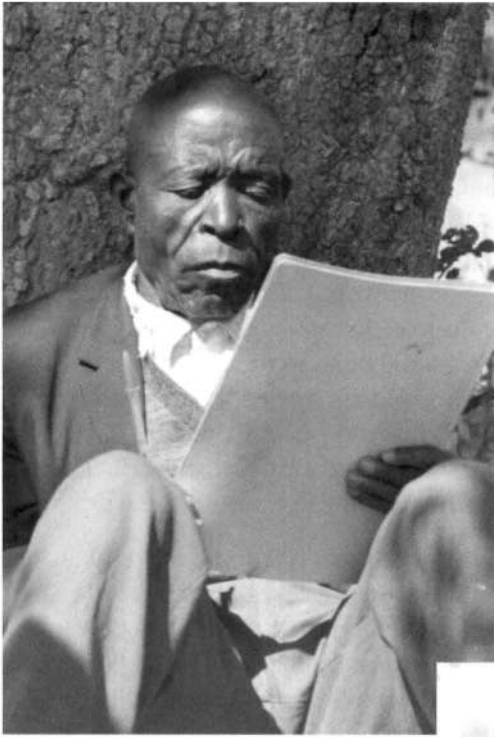
---

1 Zirrcan (Zimbabwe Institute of Religious Research and Ecological Conservation) is an environmental education organisation which was initiated by Prof Daneel in Zimbabwe. It has enlisted the participation of grassroots communities.

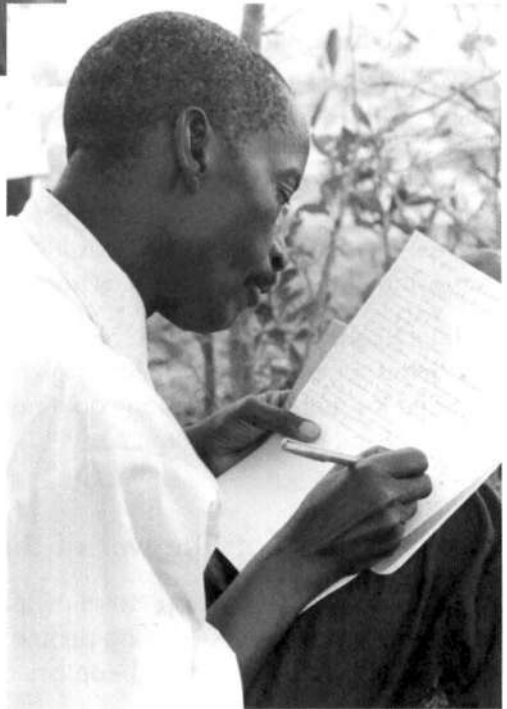
Consequently, Bishop Moses pledged his undying allegiance to his fellow-earthkeepers: traditional chiefs, spirit mediums, bishops and all grassroots communities. To him the underlying principle and basic philosophy of development work among these people is to work through their religious convictions.

## A man with a name and connections

Bishop Moses' early childhood period at the Dutch Reformed Church Mission, Morgenster, laid the foundation for his initial contacts with black Zimbabweans, as he freely interacted with their children. Later in life, when he lived abroad for studies, he established new networks with prospective partners in the as-yet-unknown work with the grassroots people. Further down in history, his work at Fambidzano earned him an international reputation with financial support for a unique ministry in Africa as a result. For over a decade the bishop had directed the operation of the grassroot movement, Fambidzano, showing full accountability in the use of all funds pledged by the partners. Thus he earned himself a good name and became well known the world over. Many regard him with admiration. In the rural areas of Zimbabwe/Masvingo, ears prick up at the mere mention of his name – Bishop Moses. His person provokes passionate, sometimes amusing, discussions and fervent narration of events. I personally admire him. He stands to this day upon a summit, commanding respect and an enigma to many. One fact is certain: the bishop maintains his prominence and a vast following, no matter what he does. Whatever he undertakes impresses even doubtful onlookers by his ardent commitment. Can anyone guess the secret of his formidable stature? Yes, the Bishop is not only admired by friends, but he has become the common man's 'idol'. For the grassroots communities, Bishop Moses has become something of a cult figure, a man endowed with prophetic vision, one who never deviates from his principles: unity, liberty and progress. He has remained the great man of AIC history because of his readiness during the liberation struggle to risk his own life at the height of his popularity and his professional/academic status to ensure the survival and future of formerly obscure African communities with vast potential. As a man with a name and connections Bishop Moses plays a very significant role among the various actors in the environmental liberation struggle: the grassroots people, chiefs, spirit mediums, churches, donor partners, government officials and others.



*Fambidzano's* theological education for AIC leaders. Bishop Forridge attends TEE class in the shade of a *muchakata* tree (top). Revd Chwara writes TEE exam at open-air extension training centre



still had to liberate it from ecological destruction. Then the bishop mobilised traditional conservationists, the chiefs and spirit mediums to form the new front of cadres in this extension of the war of liberation. People may wonder why Bishop Moses initiated another environmental movement, where there were so many already operating. This latter one was unique. It developed a different identity by taking the local culture and religion of the people as its point of departure. The local culture and the indigenous knowledge of the people are always valuable as key factors in operating in the field. In Shona traditional culture, trees symbolise the presence and protection of ancestors to both people and animals. Certain tree species are protected against felling because they belong to the guardian ancestors. Under their shades significant rain-making rituals were conducted, because it was held that ancestral spirits inhabit these trees. Clusters of wild fruit trees, for example the loquat trees, were protected on behalf of senior ancestors, for they were viewed as sacred trees.

Taking these views as the starting point, Bishop Moses initiated discussions with chiefs and spirit mediums on the issues of ecological conservation. These discussions crystallised in the formation of the Association of Zimbabwean Traditional Ecologists (Aztrec) in 1988 in Masvingo at 8 Acacia Avenue (Professor Daneel's residence) (Daneel 1998). The association consists of spirit mediums, chiefs, senior headmen and ex-combatants. The major objective is to promote the redirected liberation struggle in terms of the sustainability of the natural resource base: trees and forestry, wild animals and water resources. As with the political struggle for self-rule, much of the motivation to undertake programmes to 'liberate' nature derives from the guardian ancestors of the land (owners of the soil) and from the traditional oracular deity, Mwari of Matopos. The movement, which started on a modest scale, today counts several hundred chiefs, spirit mediums, headmen and excombatants.

Each year the traditional earthkeepers undertake a pilgrimage to Matopos to consult the Oracle on issues on 'the war of trees'. In 1990, during a visit to the cave, Bishop Moses was declared a son, like any one of the chiefs and spirit mediums. He was fully accepted, and his facilitating role endorsed by the voice of Mwari. At around midnight, the usual consulting time, the priest, Chokoto, and priestess, in a state of trance sitting at this African temple addressed Mwari, using praise names of the creator God, '*Tovera, Dziva, Shoko, Babamukulu*, your children have come from Masvingo. This white man is facilitating their programmes . . .' Having presented gifts of snuff and

of the AAEC (Association of African Earthkeeping Churches) proceed from genuinely African premises in their theology and worship. Their theology is both otherworldly and thisworldly: thisworldly when the ugly experience of poverty and political impotence leads members to seek solace in a kingdom of justice yet to come, and otherworldly when members recognise the present and very real lordship of Christ over all creation. The AAEC started with about 20 churches in Masvingo. It spread to Matabeleland, Midlands and Manicaland Provinces. To date it comprises a very large membership of some 150 churches, representing an estimated 2 million adherents.

Bishop Moses has urged the AAEC to reflect more on its theology of the environment. Bishop Marinda, one of the employees of Zirron, has written a text in Shona, entitled *New theology of environment*, which is used in ecological conscientisation workshops.

Within the Christian circles new forms of communion service are being established, as are new concepts of sin, reconciliation, salvation and confession. In practice what happens is that a congregation goes into the bush to collect seeds from indigenous trees, and then to church, which more often than not is simply and appropriately a large tree. In their colourful robes, crowns and staffs, they offer up the seeds collected in the bush and in return each communicant is given a seedling to go and plant.

## Tree-planting eucharist

Preceding the tree-planting eucharist, and in preparation for it, is the event known as 'ascending the mountain', where members of AICs go into secluded places to make supplications to God for rain. From several holy mountains petitions for rain go up. Each pilgrim has an opportunity to confess his or her sins.

The AAEC conducts tree-planting ceremonies to heal the earth; the event combines with the eucharist. On the day in question, the leader first preaches from a selected biblical text. Then the congregants move into queue towards the communion table. Each confesses his or her sins, which include ecological sins. Sins confessed are not just moral misdeeds committed against other fellow human beings but particularly those against other creatures such as the soil, trees, animals. After confession, singing, drumming and dancing to make the spirit strong, people receive the

the dignity and lost sanctity of God's creation, while traditional guardians of the land earnestly endeavour to liberate the politically regained, but environmentally still lost, land of their supratribal ancestors.

## From Muchakata to Bishop Moses

Professor Daneel received these two names, Muchakata and Bishop Moses, from the traditional and Christian wings respectively. As in the political liberation, cadres at the battlefront were given war names, so the same line of thinking was maintained in the struggle for ecological liberation.

To express their total acceptance of Professor Daneel traditional people renamed him 'Muchakata' – cork tree. Muchakata is a sacred tree belonging to the senior guardian ancestors. It has a dense evergreen foliage. It does not shed its leaves, and therefore provides shade to people when they drink beer or when they perform ancestral rituals. Of particular significance is the rainmaking ritual called *mukwerere*. Muchakata bears fruit which is edible. People and animals all favour the fruit. From the fruit some brew a kind of drink. Strict rules prohibit any felling of muchakata trees.

Traditional people regard Muchakata as a 'sacred' figure like the cork tree in that they are convinced that the spirit of Mwari, their traditional high-god, is the inspiration behind his work. His presence in environmental reform, symbolised by the *muchakata's* dense evergreen foliage, is always required. He should not be 'chopped down'. People can bring their pressing needs to him, the evergreen symbol of ancestral care and protection, just as the communities bring forth their requests to their ancestors 'through' the muchakata tree.

For the AICs the name 'Bishop Moses' was more fitting to bring out the Christian dimension of his work. His work is perceived as that of promoting the liberation of the AICs from social, spiritual, economic and other forces of enslavement, isolation and seclusion, and to empower the grassroots people to exercise self-determination. Whereas the AICs were formerly isolated by the mainline churches, he became the bridge person between the local churches and world Christianity.

Moses of the Old Testament gave the law of God to the people of Israel. Bishop Moses of the AAEC is known for bringing a new law to the AICs: the law of unity and ecumenism, in contrast to rivalry and isolation that existed

Among the AICs, there has also developed a remarkable tolerance of traditional religion, especially among the spirit-type churches. In the past the spirit-type churches viewed ancestral practices simply as heathen, to be condemned outright. Ancestral spirits were regarded as demons to be exorcised in the name of Christ. Christians had nothing to do with these. They would not even associate with traditionalists. Today it is somewhat different. Although they still do not accept ancestral practices, they no longer reject people practising the old faith, as the majority have ceased to be judgmental. They can listen to these people and enter into dialogue. In other words their current witness shows more respect than the old condemning witness. At some of the tree-planting eucharists the churches have administered the holy communion to those chiefs and spirit mediums who consider themselves Christian, a practice unheard of in the past.

The traditionalists in the past often viewed Christians as people who are simply trying to copy the white man's culture. African Christians were taken as prodigal sons who would one day come back to reality. Christ was viewed as the white man's ancestor. No white man honours the ancestors of the black people, but the black Christians not only honour but pay homage to Christ.

The chiefs did not allow Christians to climb mountains for fasting ceremonies in their chiefdoms, alleging that this practice would anger their ancestral spirits. Yet, at the cave Bishop Moses was declared 'our son' by the voice, although he is white. This has affected traditional people's perceptions about the 'white man's religion', and the whole scenario of white ancestors and black man's ancestral spirits.

I admire Bishop Moses as a great ecumenical figure of our time. He has shown loving care to all people irrespective of religion. Traditionalists begin to realise that Bishop Moses' love comes from Christ, so he loves the black people. A staunch adherent of legalist Zionist teachings, I have over a period of many years come to appreciate the work and life of Bishop Moses. I can now easily relate not only to other Christian groups but treat with reverence adherents of traditional religion. I can be among them when they hold traditional rituals, such as the rain-making ceremonies, listening, observing and trying to understand them without feeling that I am defiled, as I would in the past.

# Bishop Moses and the trees

*Larry L Rasmussen*

Sunday afternoon worship at the Zionist congregation in Mucheke Township, Masvingo, Zimbabwe, was vivid. Strong, solid colours; robed figures circling to the beat of drum and jangle of tin rattles; time for instruction, hosted by a reader of scripture and an expositor of the same, verse by verse; more song and more dance and more bright sunlight through the canopy. Not too far into the praise, Bishop Marinda welcomed Bishop Moses, whose own green robe carries a logo between the shoulders across the back. The logo of the AAEC (African Association of Earthkeeping Churches) is an African farmer kneeling, planting a tree in this corner of the African continent, above the words of Col 1:17: 'In Christ all things hold together.'

'Bishop Moses' is a conferred title, not self-chosen. It is the recognition of extraordinary leadership. 'Moses' himself, Inus Daneel, would be the first to say that the AAEC and its sibling partner of traditional Shona religion practitioners, the Association of Zimbabwean Traditional Ecologists (Aztrec), are grassroots peoples' liberationist movements. And he is right. These are remarkably rooted earth-healers who call up what they know best in order to do what they must to keep the creation in the places they live. Theirs is no 'voluntary organisation' or 'NGO' of the usual sort, but alliances of peasant farmers whose subsistence is at stake here. At the same time, their designation of Daneel as 'Bishop Moses' is the acknowledgement that a peoples' movement, no less than any other, requires visionary leaders and organisers and a resolute founder. For the AAEC that is Bishop Moses, a title uttered with full respect and affection and the kind of easy transfer of biblical heroes into the present that these congregations practise without reservation.

So Moses brought a spoken word to the gathered in Mucheke Township, a short homily on the logo itself, and then stepped into the circle of dance and

eco-spiritual ways of Shona culture still alive among traditionalists needed to find expression as comprehensive earth guardianship. This was a task accomplished, with the leadership of Bishop Moses, through the chiefs, headmen, and spirit mediums banded together in Aztrec. At the same time, Shona earth-honouring ways also needed to find genuinely Christian content in AIC churches. That task, with leadership from Daneel, was accomplished in the AAEC. So the primordial ties with earth still felt in these granite hills (the fighters for independence called themselves 'sons of the soil') and the cosmology of the whole community of life in this place found Christian and traditionalist voice in Zirrcan (Zimbabwean Institute of Religious Research and Ecological Conservation), the umbrella for AAEC and Aztrec work.

Yet this transformed and transforming work would be no simple extension or transplant or application or even contextualisation. It is a profound reinterpretation, a reinterpretation of both inherited culture and inherited Christianity, a complicated conversion to earth that drew from the wells of these villagers yet sunk new boreholes as well. Jesus Christ, the peoples' Saviour, would become Earthkeeper and Healer of the land, just as Mwari (the Shona high-god) would instruct traditionalists about a more active guardianship of the land, in keeping with ancestral duties. People-oriented salvation would come to encompass all the earth within reach and the tradition itself would reform the tradition. A new earth ecclesiology took form in the face of compelling need and a genuine love of land under siege by its very stewards.

Yet the point is this: the form transformation took was wholly resonant with the ways of this place. No one called a gathering of the official keepers of thought to render a viable eco-theology and ethic. Rather, the sacred myths, rituals and ceremonies that are the religious practices and substance of this particular African sacred order were enacted by the whole community in its regular efforts to keep the universe from cracking apart. And since local plants and animals and the tan soil itself share the same ontological status with human beings, no abyss needed to be bridged in order to take in the whole community of life as the realm of restoration. No one needed to learn about 'sustainable development' from multilateral institutions riddled with expertise.<sup>2</sup> One can simply pour libations and consult Mwari and dance and

---

2 In fairness it must be said that international donor agencies remain indispensable to the enterprise, and the combination of local knowledge and international assistance is utterly necessary.



Zionist Bishop Forridge receives a certificate for completion of two year course from *Fambidzano's* director of theological studies at TEE graduation ceremony. Not only did Bishop Forridge negotiate with the guerrilla fighters in the Gutu district for the safety of Inus during the *chimurenga* years, but he also co-opted eight Christian guerrillas for several months to help him distribute TEE lessons among local students when regular classes were no longer possible owing to the war

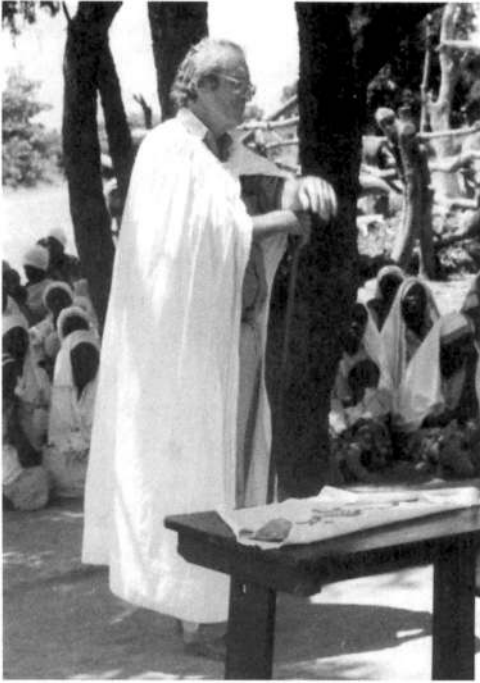
# *Chakarakata and Chimurenga: stories of the Zimbabwean War of Liberation*

*Greg Cuthbertson*

The Matopo Hills have always dominated the spiritual and symbolic landscape of Zimbabwe. They have framed the country's history and culture, and the mountain voices have long spoken of political and religious freedom, from the days of the Ndebele uprisings in the 1890s to the confrontations between Zapu and Zanu guerrillas in the 1970s. The Matopos have religious and political meaning for both the white and black population; they are the site of Cecil Rhodes's grave and the shrine of the African high-god, Mwari, and the burial ground of the nineteenth-century Ndebele paramount chief, Mzilikazi.

The hills have also profoundly shaped intellectual discourses, especially the histories of Terence Ranger and the missiologies of Inus Daneel. It has always struck me how the work of these two scholars has converged and intersected, each drawing on the powerful ancestral orality of ancient Zimbabwe in the construction of their accounts of more recent religion and politics. There is, for example, a symmetry between Ranger's *Voices from the rocks* (1999) and Daneel's *African earthkeepers, volume 1* (1998), each located in nature and the struggle for land and political rights in a postcolonial setting. Their careers have spanned four decades and their interpretations have been complementary, notwithstanding different disciplinary methodologies and approaches to evidence. They have debated with one another at many colloquia, have agreed and disagreed in numerous forums, and have supervised various influential theses on Zimbabwe. In fact, they have profoundly influenced a whole generation of students and scholars in the fields of African and religious studies and their contributions have been recognised by their peers in *festschriften*.

Daneel and Ranger have both focused on religion in the broad sense, away from narrow theologies or hegemonic epistemologies. There has always



Teacher-activist at work: Bishop Moses proclaims the salvation of all creation in Christ (Col 1:17) to fellow Apostolic earthkeepers during a tree-planting ceremony (top). Muchakata addresses traditionalists – chiefs and spirit mediums – about the directives of the ancestral guardians of the land for earth-care (bottom)



Significantly, Daneel understood Mugabe's obsession with the land, an issue hotly debated in Zimbabwe today. In his novel, he recounts the political leader's visit to Gutu and notes how for many of his supporters the land binds generations together and guards the bones of the ancestors, which makes it the 'substance of liberation' (Daneel 1995:42). But the message of Mabwazhe, in Daneel's view, places limits on how the land should be reclaimed:

A warrior has little to say about the killing he has to do. Each war has its own madness. But the same law applies. You have to respect Mwari and his creation! That includes the life of your enemy. We will fight the white man because he has stolen our land, because he oppresses us. Our cause is just. That does not mean just killing all whites. Whichever butchers the other for lust of blood, in defiance of Mwari, is slaying themselves. They snuff out the light of their own spirits (Daneel 1995:60).

This expression of African religion mirrors the flowering of nationalism in Zimbabwe. Daneel regards the resurgence of indigenous beliefs as the glue which brought unity against white rule. Another metaphor, the 'voices of the rocks', heard in Ranger's history of the Matopos, is also echoed in Daneel's account of Matonjeni. He asks if spirits are not to African religionists what the Holy Spirit is to Christians, as he confronts the divisions between Zionists and African religion during the war (Daneel 1995:68).

Daneel does not shy away from the ravages of war (Daneel 1995:90-97). He draws on vast oral sources from years of research and fieldwork to assemble a version of the conflict from the point of view of the Zanu guerrillas. It is an angry war of fear and betrayal. But even in the cauldron of conflict, the Zionist prophet Mushereketo dares to interpret the battle of Musukutwa in spiritual terms. There is the laying-on of hands, the speaking in tongues and the palpable possession by the Holy Spirit as the prophet assures the personal safety of the cadres. The role of the AICs in their support of the guerrillas is carefully constructed in Daneel's rendering of the fierce military battles during the war.

Lydia Chabata provides the biographical conduit between the spirit world and the war in Daneel's *guerilla snuff*. Her father was a Zionist healer from whom she learnt various spiritual practices. Her story offers a gendered angle to the liberation struggle and portrays the spiritual power of women in

the massacre of 150 villagers at Chimungoma. The Old Testament and the *Chimurenga* struggle melded in the rituals of Zionist worship; the battles of Israelites became the battles of the comrades. The judgments were therefore ruthless, full of retribution, and the price of political dissent, divined through religious ritual, was high.

Many insights into the life of Inus Daneel are to be found in *guerilla snuff*, especially in the epilogue, which offers a personal, reflexive view of the Zimbabwean war. The war created a spiritual space for Daneel, who was able to initiate dialogue and foster cooperation between spirit mediums and Zionist bishops in the Association of Earth-keeping Churches. This new religious configuration facilitated the recovery of *Chimurenga* memories and fostered an oral history of independent church prophets. Healing the land was the new reconciling emphasis. It focused on landscape and environment, and encouraged dreams and nurtured African cultures. This was how Daneel made sense of his own place in post-war Zimbabwe:

My western tradition, transplanted to African soil, merges with the dream directives of African ancestors. I can see Mabwazhe with his long bow and magical quiver standing on those high cliffs of Mount Rasa, beckoning us, his Gumbo descendants, to ascend the mountain (Daneel 1995: 197).

His vision at the end of the book is of a restored and peaceful earth where 'even hunters can change', probably a reference to his own experiences of hunting, but also a metaphor of war and its effects on morality. Again, Daneel's own position is examined and his own life is subjected to critical scrutiny in the light of terrible violence and upheaval.

The significance of Daneel's *guerilla snuff* is that, precisely because of its novelistic approach, it does not appropriate the stories of Zimbabwe's heroes for academic purposes. It refrains from the authority of academic discourse and chooses instead to explore a popular consciousness through the fictionalised adventures of its main characters. Daneel has an acute political sense about Zimbabwe which is profoundly captured in this story of the war. Unlike many scholarly accounts of Zimbabwe's liberation, including Daneel's *African earthkeepers*, *guerilla snuff* gives the guerrillas their own (literary) voice, not muffled by theory or interpretation, but proclaiming lyrically African orality and triumphalist popular memory. For Daneel this is a cathartic device used to exorcise his own war trauma and explain the

identifies with the Dutch theologian J H Bavinck, who regards religion as evidence of 'the biblical God's concern for all humanity and therefore a result of God's general revelation' and it accounts for Daneel's receptiveness to the Mwari cult:

I have found it more correct to treat my priestly hosts at the shrines with due respect, to conduct my inquiry with genuine interest in their beliefs to the point of learning from them, and to inform them openly about my conviction that in talking to their Mwari during oracular sessions, I was addressing Mwari, the Creator and Saviour of all creation as I have learnt to understand him from the Bible (Daneel 1998:282).

Daneel's eclectic theology has enabled him to work effectively among a range of different religious communities in Zimbabwe. This is mainly because he has set environmental redemption above particularistic theological creeds and because he sees the prospect of social healing as more important than religious orthodoxy.

Returning to my comparison of Daneel and Ranger, it seems that both are important scholars because of their anti-colonial and pro-Zimbabwean activities, Daneel as an accepted Zimbabwean prophet and preacher, Ranger as a white political activist and historian. Both are natural dissenters, often challenging authority or defending the marginalised and obscure. Because of their involvement in the unfolding of Zimbabwean independence, they have taken a positive, sometimes heroic, view of developments in the country, but this has never blinded them to 'the more nuanced analysis that study of twentieth century Africa requires' (McCracken 1997:183). There are, of course, differences as well: Daneel is a practical project developer and manager, while Ranger is more the public intellectual. Daneel has always insisted on detailed fieldwork, careful observation, linguistic accuracy and religious empathy, while Ranger has sought to historicise and interpret empirical findings and establish an expansive intellectual tradition for Zimbabwean studies.

Daneel has a suspicion of theory and a greater regard for recording empirical evidence, which makes his research valuable as a source. Ranger has perhaps been more interested in generating new ideas and is always ready to change them in the light of shifting historiographies. Daneel feels less comfortable employing postcolonial theory than Ranger and yet has

- Lan, D 1985. *Guns and rain: guerrillas and spirit mediums in Zimbabwe*. London: James Currey; Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.
- McCracken, J 1997. 'Terry Ranger: A Personal Appreciation'. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 23(2)(1997):175–185.
- Phimister, I 1995. 'Comrades compromised: the Zimbabwean and South African liberation struggles compared and contrasted'. Issues and agendas. *Journal of Historical Sociology* 8(1)(1995):79–93.
- Ranger, T 1985. *Peasant consciousness and the guerrilla war in Zimbabwe*. London: James Currey; Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.
- Ranger, T 1999. *Voices from the rocks: nature, culture & history in the Matopos Hills of Zimbabwe*. Harare: Baobab; Bloomington & Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press; London: James Currey.
- Ranger, T 1992. 'War, violence and healing in Zimbabwe'. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18(3)(1992):688–707.
- Robins, S 1996. 'Heroes, heretics and historians of the Zimbabwe revolution: a review article of Norma Kriger's 'Peasant Voices' (1992)'. *Zambezia* 23(1)(1996):73–91.
- Sibanyoni, M R 1995 "'The Fading Songs of Chimurenga": Chenjerai Hove and the subversion of nationalist politics in Zimbabwean literature'. *African Studies* 54(2)(1995):52–72.

they were automatically self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. Although 'Independent' is their middle name, they have not often been looked upon by mission agencies as models of what young churches should be. Why are they not – since they embody the three goals that mission organisations say they set for the churches they are founding?

In this article I want to examine the ironic relationship between AICs and the three-self formula. On the one hand, their very existence proves that the formula had a great deal of truth to it. The failure of missions to apply the three-self formula frequently led to tensions that gave rise to AICs, especially of the Ethiopian type. Once founded these churches grew aggressively, proving that an African-led, African-funded church can thrive. On the other hand, by fulfilling and even exceeding the formula without becoming model churches, the AICs have exposed the formula as an inadequate goal statement. This paradox presses current missiologists to refine the formula.

## Proving the value of the formula

As one who has carefully observed AICs for twenty years (sometimes with Prof Daneel looking over my shoulder to see how carefully I was observing), I am struck by the parallels between what I have seen and what Venn and Anderson saw only with their minds' eye.

### When to start self-government

The Ethiopian-type AICs were basically an attempt to hasten the day of self-government. What they wanted did not call for many changes in theology or polity; they wanted black office-holders. Missions in the late 19th century, a full generation after Venn and Anderson had called for self-government, were still dragging their feet about handing over governing power to Africans. Venn saw self-government as an essential condition of the maturing process; later missionaries wanted to make maturity a condition of receiving self-government. This of course was a no-win situation for Africans, and the problem was not resolved in most places until the end of the colonial era in the 1950s and 1960s.

government; and too few put self-propagation in the first place that Anderson awarded it' (Beaver 1979:94–97).

AICs are essentially self-propagating. Many of them are literally 'living testimonies', tracing their origin to some act or revelation of God. They exist to tell the story of this encounter and to call people to join them in following this living God. Their Sunday collection may be a pittance, far below the level needed to support any clergy, and yet they continue to grow. Their system of governance may be a shambles, and yet they still grow. For them self-propagation is not a crowning achievement built upon self-governance and self-support. Self-propagation precedes and surpasses them both.

The house – church model for three-self development

Venn was quite specific about house churches (which he called 'Christian Companies') as precursors to congregations. These house churches were to be the locus for the development of all three parts of the formula.

One of each company should be selected or approved of, by the Missionary, as an elder or '*Christian Headman*', to call together and preside over the companies, and to report to the Missionary upon the moral and religious condition of his company, and upon the efforts made by the members for extending the knowledge of Christ's truth. Each Christian Company should be encouraged to hold *weekly meetings* under its Headman, with the occasional presence of the Missionary, for united counsel and action, for reading the Scriptures and prayer, and for making contributions to the Church Fund – if it be only a handful of rice, or more, as God shall prosper them (Venn 1971:69).

Venn also proposed monthly meetings of the 'Headmen' in a given area and precise steps for a 'Company' to become a congregation.

Thousands of Zionist house churches in southern Africa are living examples of Venn's proposal. All three kinds of maturation of leaders are going on at this level – governance, finance, evangelisation. The house churches frequently grow to become congregations, erect places of worship, and spawn other house churches, all the while maintaining a link with an AIC bishop somewhere who is playing the role Venn sketched out for the missionary.

## Exposing the inadequacy of the formula

Would Venn and Anderson have rejoiced to see the rise of AICs? Perhaps, to some extent, they would have, for the reasons cited above. However, their successors did not rejoice. As AICs arose, they were often condemned by missions. The problem was not that they were not self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating; it was that they were not 'churches.'<sup>4</sup> They were considered to be syncretistic and heretical groups, unfit for Christian company. They found themselves in the same position as a distance runner who crosses the finish line before all the competitors but is who disqualified because he was not properly registered before the race started – functionally in first place, officially in last.

A certain degree of theological soundness, not explicit in the three-self formula, was always taken for granted by the missions before they applied the formula. Young churches were not supposed to be self-theologising or self-instituting. They were supposed to accept the theology that the missionaries brought and build on the ecclesiastical foundation which missionaries had laid.<sup>5</sup>

Theological deficiencies are part of the reason that AICs do not get much acclaim for achieving all three parts of the three-self formula, but only a part.

---

4 This view prevailed at least until the mid sixties when Harold Turner deliberately and provocatively put the title *African Independent Church* on his two-volume study of the '*Aladura movement*' (my emphasis) in *West Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967). The tide gradually turned but, as late as 1987, Prof Daneel still felt it necessary to include a substantial defence of the churchhood of AICs in the final chapter of *Quest for belonging* (Daneel 1987), especially pp 250–255 and 269–273). Among other things, he defends them against the charge that they are 'tribal churches', ie so 'self-governing' and 'self-supporting' that they are virtually self-contained, uninterested in any links with the global and historic Church. Both his arguments are taken further in an article by G C Oosthuizen, 'Indigenous Christianity and the future of the Church in South Africa', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (January 1997):8–12, which sees AICs not merely as 'churches' but as 'the most dynamic church movement in South Africa' (p 8) and 'examples of inter- and intra-ethnic harmony' (p 10).

5 Theoretically the local churches had latitude to develop their theology and polity. For example, Speer (1902:63, 67) criticised the Methodists for founding churches overseas that were 'organically connected with and subject to the American Methodist Church'. His alternative: 'I believe in one Church of Christ in each mission field. I believe all denominations should unite in establishing one Church.' See also Beaver (1979:34) for a fine summary of Anderson's similar view. In spite of these brave words, the missions too often looked like the spouse who wants to control a partner's behaviour without admitting to himself/herself or anyone else that any strings are being pulled.

miraculously mature in some ways and so immature in others – there must be something wrong with the three-self view of the process of church maturity.

In one sense, they have fulfilled all three criteria of the formula, and yet they are not altogether shining examples of the new churches which Venn and Anderson envisaged. Let us therefore look again at this tried and not-quite-true formula. If it is a faulty yardstick for measuring church maturity, what measure should we use? What are the real criteria we should apply to AICs or, for that matter, to any maturing church?

## Improving the formula for a new era

If we accept that making disciples and gathering them into churches is the heart and soul of mission (as Venn and Anderson did and as AICs do), I suggest that we take a fresh look at our statement of the goal for maturing churches in light of the African experience of the last century. I wish to put forward a new three-self formula which, however unlikely it may be to set the pace for the next century of mission, may make a small contribution to the issues of church planting and partnership in mission.

### Self-governing or self-critical?

To begin the new formula, let us replace *self-governing* with *self-critical*. The new term is broader than the old one and yet more precise about the real standard of maturity. A church may be self-governing for decades without doing any self-critical reflection. It could tie itself in knots with disputes about its form of government or, more often, about which individuals should hold which positions in its government. It could stifle all criticism of the leadership by levelling charges of insubordination against critics and hounding them out of the church. Yet it would still be self-governing.

By contrast, a self-critical church would have to be more mature. It would have to try to open an ear to prophetic voices about the way in which it conducts its own affairs. It could not operate in a dictatorial manner or stagnate under one particular leader or group. Its concerns with mission would have to override its concerns about its government. From top to bottom, it would have to have the humility that is the mark of a mature church, although not always the mark of a self-governing church.

support from overseas without being spoiled by such support because the church already knows what it wants to do. That is what it *will* do with any resources, local or foreign, at its disposal. It will not wait to see what money is coming from overseas before it sets about its mission. Its motivation *precedes* outside assistance and is sufficient to lead to action even if that assistance never comes. Where there is a will, there is a way. The assistance from overseas is not so much 'support' as it is endorsement, blessing, cheering and encouragement from people who are more spectators than coaches.

Where does a church get such self-motivation? In the AICs, it is grounded in the same place as everything else – in some specific act or revelation of God (a vision, a healing, a prophetic call). Many of these churches claim some such divine spark at their origin. Each church is a response to what God has done locally and recently, not only to a report of what he did long ago and far away. These are churches in the style of Paul's Damascus Road experience in Acts 9, an experience that motivated him for a lifetime.<sup>8</sup> Many AICs are a dynamic expansion from some such original experience, spreading out like ripples from a stone thrown into a lake.

The revised goal of being self-motivating implies several new challenges, not all of which AICs have yet mastered. They need to integrate God's local action with his action in Christ and Israel and then to draw their motivation from both places in a balanced way. This involves teaching their own history about the success they have had in motivating – without such a history turning it into uncritical legends about the founder. They also need to reach out beyond their history in order to make new partnerships, as they are increasingly doing.<sup>9</sup> They need somehow to communicate to the mission-founded churches that a faithful church is one which carries on the mission of the missionaries, and not merely or primarily the structures they put into place.

---

8 For two typical experiences of key founders in Zimbabwe, see Daneel 1971:289–293 on Bishop Mutendi and 316–321 on Johanne Maranke.

9 For example, in November 1995 the Organisation of African Instituted Churches based in Nairobi and the Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership in Birmingham, Britain, held a conference on inter-church relations. Another, scheduled for August 1977 in Mombasa, brought about 30 AIC leaders together with about the same number of African leaders from WCC member churches. Several missions, mostly Mennonite, who developed partnerships with AICs in a few countries formed a loose association in 1986 called 'The Network on AICs and Missions'. I edit a small 'practitioners' journal' for the network called *The Review of AICs*, now in its eighth year. The network held its fourth continental conference in Nairobi in August 1998.

prided ourselves upon the fact that no strange elements had produced new and perhaps perplexing developments of Christian thought and life. But to-day . . . we desire to see Christianity established in foreign climes[,] putting on a foreign dress and developing new forms of glory and of beauty (Allen 1912:184–185).

Did he say 'new revelation'? 'Perplexing developments of Christian thought and life'? 'New forms of glory and of beauty'? AICs have certainly shown us plenty of all three. They have shown what Venn called 'specimens of the advantages which will be gained to the cause of Christianity, when the Native Church shall assume before the people the aspect of a national and not a foreign institution' (Venn1971:77). Venn and Allen are talking about fulfilment, theological and institutional fulfilment, as local churches become all that God intended them to be.

This concept of indigenous church 'self-fulfilment' rests on solid biblical ground. In Acts 15 we have a record of the once-and-for-all debate on the question, 'Should we inculturate or not inculturate?' That particular debate was concerned with whether a non-Jewish convert should become culturally Jewish in order to be a true Christian. The answer of the apostolic assembly was of course a resounding 'No!' – so resounding that one may suppose that it would have put an end to cultural imperialism among Christian missionaries for all time. The clear implication was that the church in each Gentile culture would be responsible for inculturating (expressing and fulfilling) the message faithfully in that culture, not for replicating the forms of Christian life and thought in Jerusalem.

To inculturate requires a great deal more theological maturity than merely to replicate the Christian message in exactly the form and style in which the missionaries originally preached it. One must have a very broad grasp of the biblical message in order to draw out its full potential and power for any local situation. One must also have a better understanding of local culture and religion than most missionaries ever attain, or than most Western-style ministerial training institutions in the Third World encourage.

Last but not least, one must be prepared to take risks about the response to the message. While an inculturated message may be less offensive than an imported one because it has less Western cultural baggage, it may also be more offensive because it is clearer about the gospel's demands. A church

appropriate in Nairobi. No one who thinks in a European or American way would even imagine them. But for Independents who are thinking as Africans, processions and white hats are a marvellous part of their witness. The richness and effectiveness of AIC mission springs from this kind of thinking.

Much as the Independents have succeeded in self-inculturation, a number of challenges remain for them on their way to self-fulfilment. First there is the challenge that African culture is a rapidly moving target as the continent hurtles into modernity. If the AICs are only inculturated to harmonise with African traditional cultures, theirs will be a very unfulfilling future as they are left behind by the next generation which has been subjected (like it or not) to the processes of modernisation.

Secondly, there is the challenge of how to draw on historic liturgies and models of church life. Self-fulfilment is not reactionary; an African church does not fulfil itself by rejecting everything Western. But how does an African church select those features of mission-founded churches that can rightly be integrated into the life of a fulfilled African church?

Thirdly, there is the challenge of distinguishing inculturation (a theologically legitimate combining of Christianity and culture) from syncretism (a theologically illegitimate combining).<sup>14</sup> The Independents have frequently and sometimes rightly been condemned for syncretism, the opposite of self-fulfilment as I am using that term. Their 'inculturation' needs some further discussion and sifting and it always will. A self-fulfilling church is a pilgrim church until the final fulfilment at Christ's return.

## Four observations on the new formula

- *The new formula is not as focused on self as it may seem. Self-critical* means staying open to a prophetic, critical word no matter at which level or through which person in the church it may come. *Self-motivating* turns out to mean motivated by God strongly and directly enough that no one

---

14 The word *syncretism* is being changed by some missiologists from a judgmental term into a value-free synonym for contextualisation. I prefer to keep the distinction, or, if not to keep it, then for those who merge the two terms to coin some new term for what I call syncretism. Those who argue that we no longer need a judgmental term (since no mixing of Christianity and a local culture should ever be condemned on theological grounds) have never seen the American prosperity gospel presented on television.

'What kind of churches should we and they be?' Any church that has tried and failed to implement the new three-self formula on its own is ready for serious intercultural partnership, for giving and receiving the help which is both necessary and substantial, regardless of its relative economic position.

Self-criticism, the first criterion, may be the most difficult one to do alone. As the Oromo people of Ethiopia say: 'Unaware of its own bald bottom, the baboon laughs at the others' (Cotter 1996: proverb 998). The harder we try to find our own cultural blind spots, the more we realise our need for help from outside our culture. An outsider may pinpoint in five minutes something we would all overlook for a lifetime.

As for self-motivation, every church in the world needs more motivation and encouragement than it can ever muster from within its own ranks. Cross-cultural visitors can share news and motivating insights. They can never be a substitute for the primary self-motivation rooted in what God has done locally and recently, but they can provide some very welcome assistance.

Self-fulfilment, when rightly understood, turns out to be an awesome responsibility. A self-fulfilling church is a church with a destiny from which it dare not shrink back. It is daily a custodian of the gospel, answerable directly to Christ for how the message is interpreted, proclaimed and lived. No church wants to undertake such a staggering task in isolation from its neighbouring churches and the global Christian heritage. No church could ever be fulfilled alone even if it wanted to be.

## Conclusion

The AICs have exposed the limits of the old three-self formula by achieving it without being complete models of mature churches. Their pioneering experiences after achieving it are experiments at the cutting edge of mission, which point us toward a restatement of the three-self formula: *self-critical, self-motivating and self-fulfilling*. This is the formula we need for a new era in Christian history and mission, the age of a non-Western majority, the age of partnership.

The ACs have not yet achieved this new kind of self-hood. Who has? But they press on. As we strive toward this same redefined target, we would do well to pay attention to what they have already done, to engage them in

# Healing in the Zion Christian Churches of Southern Africa: Daneel's research in Zimbabwe compared with the South African Movement

*Allan Anderson*

### Inus Daneel as research supervisor *par excellence*

At the end of 1996, at about the same time as my invitation to contribute towards this *Festschrift*, I was asked to speak at a staff meeting at Selly Oak on my personal pilgrimage in mission. It was then that I began to reflect seriously on the profound impact that Inus Daneel had had on my own life and thinking. Like Daneel's parents, my parents (and my grandparents) were missionaries in Zimbabwe. When he took up his appointment at Unisa in 1981, I was a struggling part-time, third-year BTh student and a Pentecostal Bible School teacher in Soshanguve (near Pretoria), trying to climb what seemed like an insurmountable mountain of studies. It did not take long for me to become fascinated with his grassroots approach to research and theology in Africa. I began studying for my first degree at Unisa in 1976 and I remained there until I completed my thesis in 1992. From David Bosch I had learned that 'mission' was *missio Dei*, the whole mission of God in the whole world, and a much greater project than I had ever conceived it, almost indefinable but intrinsic to Christian faith, and, in addition, the very reason for the existence of the church. I began to appreciate that every manifestation or definition of mission had to be rigorously scrutinised, and that this was the central task of missiology. I could no longer separate the 'spiritual' dimension of the missionary task from God's involvement in the whole of life (Bosch 1991:9–10).

But it was from Inus Daneel that I learned to treasure the vast riches in the African religious and cultural heritage, and the need to be sensitive to that in mission in Africa. I also learned from him the enormous missiological

Institute for six years. The results of this period of research formed the foundation for the books *Bazalwane* (1992) and *Tumelo* (1993). My doctoral thesis, entitled *African Pentecostalism in a South African urban environment: a missiological evaluation*, was also completed in 1992. That work benefited from Daneel's incisive comments and supervision, generously relayed during long hours of discussions. Daneel's work thus became the pattern for my own studies, born in Africa, about Africans and our Christianity. In this article, I shall attempt to reflect on Daneel's contribution to the study of AICs generally, tracing similarities between his enormous research in southern Zimbabwe, as presented in his three volumes of *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches* (1971, 1974, 1988), and my own comparatively minute research in Soshanguve, with particular reference to the major attraction of healing in the Zion Christian Church. Finally I shall offer some challenges, as I have recently understood them, to current AIC research.

## The growth of Zion Christian Churches in Southern Africa

Daneel has written a considerable amount about Samuel Mutendi's Zion Christian Church (ZCC) in Zimbabwe, but there was little information on the much larger ('star') ZCC in South Africa, which has not been the focus of Daneel's research. These two churches, as well as the St Engenas ('dove') ZCC in South Africa, are each today organisationally distinct from the others, but all have common origins in the movement that originated with Engenas Lekganyane (Daneel 1971:291; Anderson 1992:41). The ZCC movement in Zimbabwe developed quite separately from the ZCC churches in South Africa, especially after Engenas Lekganyane's death in 1948 (Daneel 1971:299). Although these are two quite different contexts, with different countries and languages, and although Daneel's research was conducted mainly in rural areas while mine was conducted in an urban context over twenty years later, there are nevertheless many parallels between the ZCC in Zimbabwe and that in South Africa.

In the 1991 official South African census (CSS 1992:122), almost 10% of the black population who had given their religious affiliation were members of the ZCC. This accorded with the survey conducted in the same year in Soshanguve, where the ('star') ZCC was found to be the largest single denomination. If the census figures for ZCC membership in 1980 and 1991 are accurate, then this church had multiplied threefold during this decade,

and might indeed have a South African membership in excess of three million, but accurate statistics are hard to come by (Anderson 1992:11-12).

Like Daneel (1974:101), my research in Soshanguve sought to establish the causes of this astonishing growth (Anderson 1993:16). We asked members of the ZCC (among others) why they were attracted to their church. The answer was often based on an appreciation of the 'African' nature and orientation of the church. ZCC members referred to the African liturgy of the church, especially the singing and dancing. Their church was specifically geared to fulfil African aspirations and to meet African needs. Daneel (1974:103) has given invaluable and comprehensive details about the adaptations made by southern Shona churches to traditional customs – a factor which remains a significant source of attraction. Sometimes, in our research in Soshanguve, there was evidence of continuity with African traditional ideas, and there is no doubt that this continuity is attractive for people searching for their cultural roots in an urban society where everything is in radical turmoil. The role of dreams in revelation, for example, a respected and visible practice among ZCC members in Soshanguve, is a feature which members find particularly attractive. Daneel observed that God's messages in these churches are often transmitted through the ancestors – something that I was able to confirm in my own research (Anderson 1993:18). Some ZCC members in Soshanguve said that they were in the church because it was the one revealed to them by an ancestor. So too Daneel (1974:151) observed that 'the manifest content of dreams leaves little doubt as to the Church which a person is supposed to join', and this was particularly true of 'spirit-type' churches.

## Prophetic healing in the ZCC

Daneel (1974:186) observed that prophetic healing was the single most frequently mentioned reason which people gave for joining 'spirit-type' churches, particularly the ZCC. Because of the significant number of second-generation Christians now in this church, the ongoing healing offered to these members and to new recruits makes healing one of the most important factors in its continued expansion. In our research interviews too, healing was the most frequently mentioned reason for having joined the ZCC, and it is still one of the main activities of the church. Members often related stories that usually fit into a pattern of period of prolonged sickness, unsuccessful visits to diviners, medical doctors, and other prophets, and

Prophesying is an essential aspect of the ministry in the ZCC. As Daneel (1988a:25) puts it: 'It is the accepted way in which the Holy Spirit reveals His will for a specific situation'. In this sense it forms a part of the pastoral care given for the many different problematic situations which are encountered by African people and which they bring to the prophets for their assistance. Prophets make known the will of God for a particular situation; thus, through the Holy Spirit, they mediate relief. In these churches 'it is taken for granted that this form of communication between God and man belongs to the essence of Christianity' (Daneel 1988a:27).

Prophets also often exert moral restraint on people. One ZCC respondent, for example, told of how a prophet had revealed that he was stealing from his workplace. He would have to stop immediately, or he would land in prison, he said. He immediately obeyed.

One particular case, described in *Tumelo* (Anderson 1993:125), illustrates the dilemma facing African prophets. This incident resulted in a woman receiving prophetic counsel to place the blame on her neighbours when her daughter was struck on the head by a stone thrown by her son. I suggested that if the ZCC prophets had initiated a process of reconciliation, such as Daneel (1974:307) had observed in Zimbabwe, in which both the afflicted and the ones accused of afflicting were counselled within the church fold, then the prophetic advice might have been the beginning of a truly African solution. Finding the cause of the suffering is very important in this context, and this type of prophetic diagnosis may not always be wrong. The diagnosis may produce a psychological catharsis that benefits the afflicted who have a real fear of witchcraft. The spirit world of African traditional thought constructs in its own cosmology the built-in fears and threats that demand a Christian response. The African Christian prophet attempts to give this response, particularly in the healing sessions, when the nature and the cause of the disease are given at the same time. Diagnostic prophetic activity is probably the most common type of prophecy in the ZCC.

## The relationship between prophecy and divination

Daneel has consistently pointed out the similarities and in particular the antitheses between Zionist prophets and traditional diviners. This he often did in reply to Western critics who had said that the prophet and the diviner were one and the same. The similarities that exist between the two explain

spoke the word of God to people, and there was no perceived contradiction between the two. Another member said that a prophet was a 'spirit' in a person inherited from his or her ancestors or parents. Not everybody, it was said, had this spirit; it had to be inherited from parents in order to be available for use. One member said that a prophet was a person with a gift received 'from his own ancestors', a gift that enabled him to see things and prophesy 'by the spirit'.

Similarly, it is believed that in many cases people may go to a prophet for healing but fail to receive it because of disobedience to the ancestors' instructions. The prophet then gives the word from the ancestors, telling the patients what they need to do in order to be healed. A childless couple, for example, may have failed to do certain traditional things at their wedding, thus incurring the wrath of the ancestors. The prophet will instruct them to perform the necessary traditional rituals, without which they will continue to be childless. One ZCC member told us that he had one day heard a voice telling him to look up, and he saw a vision of his father, long since deceased, weeping. He went to the prophets, who advised him to make a ritual killing for his father, who felt that he was being neglected. The prophets in this instance did what any diviner would have done, and they played an identical role, at least in the perception of this member. Nevertheless, because many ZCC members were found to reject the observance of the ancestor cult this probably means that the cult has been confronted by at least some leaders and prophets, although probably not as consistently as Daneel found in Zimbabwe.

## Symbolic healing methods

Healing from illness undoubtedly plays a major role in the life of ZCC members in South Africa, as indeed it does in Zimbabwe. The use of healing symbols is one of the central and most important features of the church's life, and, in the Zimbabwean context, as in the South African one, the Zionist healing methods bear 'direct parallels' to the practices of traditional diviners (Daneel 1974:232). In the South African church, there is not the same identification of the symbol with the bishop, as there was in Mutendi in Zimbabwe, and this may be because, as a result of the enormous growth of the church in South Africa, the bishop has had to delegate control to other ministers. The most commonly used symbol is that of water, which is 'blessed' or prayed for by a minister or prophet for use by the congregants, either as a healing potion itself or else in large quantities to induce vomiting.

clothes to protect wearers against assaults and lightning. Similarly, church members tie copper wires across their gates or in their houses to protect themselves against sorcery and lightning. Almost every church member interviewed stressed the importance of observing the *ditaelo* ('instructions') given in order to be safe. These *ditaelo* are individualised secret and personal rules that the member may not divulge to anyone else. Some church members also attach significance to the church badge, which is given to each member after baptism, as a source of protection. The badge is a token of faithfulness to the church and also functions as a symbol of solidarity and unity with ZCC members everywhere.

Another method of healing used in the ZCC is pricking. For this process, a prophet prescribes exactly where a patient should be pricked on the hands, legs or in the nostrils in order to get rid of 'impure blood', which is traditionally believed to be the source of sickness and pain. Salt is used to induce vomiting and so clean the stomach of its contents and of an excess of bile. Other common faith-healing customs in the ZCC involve the use of a small piece of wood (*kotana*), a sheet of paper waved rapidly over the patient's body, sand from a certain river or dam, or other objects named by the prophets. We witnessed people coming forward to be blessed in the church services, and saw how the ministers patted them on their heads with pieces of paper. It is important to emphasise, however, the fundamental conviction of these believers that all these practices are only efficacious if the person seeking healing has already confessed his or her sins. It is believed that the 'medicine' is useless without a prior confession of sins.

One man told us that the ZCC helps its members to protect themselves against sorcerers by providing them with brown paper, which they take with them when visiting non-members. If they are offered tea or food, they light the brown paper and wave the smoke over the food. This action protects them from possible poisoning by means of sorcery. In the same way, the ZCC tea is designed to be drunk every morning before going to work or school, as it confers additional protection. The tea leaves are to be placed inside shoes. If this is done, the church member will be able to walk without ill effect on places where a sorcerer's spells have been placed on the ground. ZCC ministers should carry holy staffs and whips with them at night to defend themselves against *tsotsis* (hooligans) and to crack the whip at any *tokoloshe* (a particularly troublesome, hairy goblin) which he might encounter. A crack of the whip apparently renders the *tokoloshe* powerless.

ZCC members believe in the importance of healing by the use of symbolic objects, but some point out that the healing does not come because of any intrinsic power in the objects themselves, but because of a person's faith in God (Anderson 1993:79–80). So too, Daneel (1974:233) observes that the similarities between the symbolic healing objects and those of traditionalists are similarities of form and not of content, and they are 'primarily the visual symbolic concretization of the Divine Power, which in itself has no medicative effect'. Nevertheless, we must not overlook the possible danger of misinterpretation, to which Daneel (1974:233) has also alluded, noting that in some cases this is because 'the inclination of the Shona to identify the symbolic object with that which it represents in the ritual context' (Daneel 1974:338). To some people in the Soshanguve research, the healing symbols become something other than symbols of God's power, and are seen as having magical power in themselves. This is particularly the case (as is true of all varieties of Christian expression, both inside and outside Africa) when, with the passing of time, members observe certain rituals because they have become traditions of the church and not because they really understand their symbolic significance. In these instances the forms remain unchanged while the meaning becomes obscured. But this problem is by no means peculiar to the ZCC. All types of church member throughout the world tend to attach magical interpretations to symbols, thereby changing their meaning.

## The legacy and the challenge

I approach this final section with some trepidation, partly because Inus Daneel does not suffer fools gladly (and I may be one of them), and partly because, to parody the prophet Jeremiah, the pot cannot say to the potter, 'Why have you made me like this?' These concluding comments are made, in the first place, as self-criticisms that may sometimes touch on aspects of Daneel's influence. Daneel remains (as I do) a sympathetic *Western* and white observer of African phenomena and, as such, an outsider, no matter how sympathetic (Sundkler 1961:16). More recently, he has encouraged greater African involvement in AIC research, since the lack of such research has been a major weakness in the subject, especially in Southern Africa. The study of AICs, as Tinyiko Maluleke (1993:190) points out, is 'still by and large confined to white missionaries and academics with blacks playing the familiar field-worker role'. It is therefore necessary for AICs to cease to be the subject of a largely white debate. My work (and that of other AIC scholars in

A second and equally justifiable criticism 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 (a rejection which Maluleke (1993:187) considers 'shabby treatment'). 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 rather negative category of 'syncretism'. Often, even in his more recent writings (as in, for example, Daneel 1988a:403 and Daneel 1989:165), he emphasises the discontinuity and distance between 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 1988a:25).

Another possibility from a Pentecostal perspective is that in the New Testament these two senses are combined and find expression in AICs. 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 as white ones, we must ask ourselves whether we appreciate that the AICs are intrinsically *sui generis* worthy, or whether we study them as a backdrop against which we might conceptualise our own concerns and our 'own mission' failures (Maluleke 1996:23). There may be nothing wrong in such an approach so 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? In most cases (including mine), it is the latter. These studies (like most other academic studies) do not fundamentally empower the communities being studied, although they may facilitate mutual understanding and cooperation.

A third, and related issue to which Maluleke (1996:41) draws attention is the danger of categorisation. In his review of *Tumelo* he pointed to the possibility of a continuous rather than a discontinuous relationship between the so-called mission churches and AICs (1994:62). He develops this theme in his later article (1996:41) where he suggests that in 'growing[.] sections (eg worship) of traditional Black churches . . . are becoming "AIC" and "Pentecostal" in both theology and praxis'. I have discovered, since my contact in Selly Oak with African 'mission church' leaders, that this

Maluleke, T S 1996. 'Research methods on AICs and other grass-root communities'. *Journal of Black Theology in South Africa* 10(1).

*Population Census 1991(1992). 'Summarised results before adjustment for undercount'*. Pretoria: Central Statistical Service.

Reason, P 1994. *Participation in human enquiry*. London: Sage.

Sundkler, B G M 1961 *Bantu prophets in South Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

language as those they heal, inhabit the same thought world, and give psychological reassurance.

It is not only pagans who turn to the *n'anga*. Many Christians do the same. As Temba Mafico (1986:400) writes,

The majority of Christians in Africa affirm faith in God but still ardently believe in such superstitions as witches, witchcraft, sorcery, magic and the like. Most African Christians believe in faith healing in the name of Jesus while at church, but are quick to consult a *n'anga* for effective medicines when faced with an illness in the family before they go to hospital or to the revival prayer meeting for healing. Generally the African Christians play it safe by holding fast to African tradition for mundane practical matters and to Christianity for eternal life (Mafico 1986:400).

## Christian reactions

### Early missionaries

To start with, the Christian churches preached a clear message. There could be no mixing of Christian and pagan religions. Christians were drawn out of their pagan environment and settled on mission farms. They were encouraged to marry Christians and to send their children to mission schools. Often the break with family and tribe was total and heroic. As the numbers of Christians grew, it became harder to insist on a separation of the two societies. Christians and non-Christians intermingled, and it became progressively easier for people to keep a foot in both worlds without drawing too much attention to themselves.

Missionary thinking on this point also began to change. Political changes in Africa brought about a new desire for authentic African identity. Christianity was criticised for destroying African culture and devaluing African religions. Christian studies of African Religion began to suggest it was a lot more 'Christian' than people had at first thought. Much was made of the links between, for instance, the commandment to 'honour your father and your mother' (Exodus 20:12) and Shona respect for their departed relatives. Catholics and Anglicans found it easier than some others to replace Shona customs of honouring the dead with requiem masses and other prayers for the departed. Drums began to make their appearance in church, greatly

At first sight it may appear that Fr Muyambi, despite being a Christian priest, is operating as a *n'anga*. Certainly many people, both black and white, have accused him of this. There are, however clear differences:

- In his preaching, he is consistently opposed to every form of compromise with traditional religion. There is no suggestion that a judicious and happy mix can be created between Christianity and traditional religion.
- The methods which he uses for his healing are centred wholly on prayer, the laying on of hands, fasting, holy water and the sacrament of penance. He does not (as do some Zionists, for instance) use methods similar to those of the *n'anga*.
- Unlike the *n'anga*, his diagnosis is solely focused on identifying the nature of the illness. He never attributes the cause of illness to witchcraft, bad family relationships, or the dishonouring of family spirits. It is only the illness that is identified or the possessing evil spirit. Likewise the only thing that he asks patients to do after they have been healed is to keep praying. There are none of the complicated rituals, payments or taboos which follow *n'anga* healings.
- Although he has contact with heavenly beings, who assist him, this is carefully ordered, and not at all secretive. Although only one other person in the community shares this gift, all the senior members of the community are consulted and act in a supervisory fashion, testing the spirits, and seeking, together with Fr Muyambi, to understand the nature of the heavenly contacts.
- Unlike a *n'anga*, he works very happily with hospitals and doctors, and will always refer patients to them if the nature of the illness seems to require it. He himself tends to concentrate only on those disorders for which Western medicine has no remedy.
- Fr Muyambi's ministry has been tested and examined by bishops and priests, both African and European, and, although not all are equally enthusiastic about it, all seem to agree that he is operating wholly within acceptable Christian parameters.

## The fundamental opposition

All the people at the mission were adamant that Shona religion and Christianity could not be combined. Their convictions in this matter were based on the following reasons:

- For many, the fundamental question was one of loyalty and trust. On whom do we rely for protection? On God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, or on our ancestors? It makes no sense to rely on both. The Gospels ask us to serve one master. The nature of love is that we should love only the one protector. Turning to the ancestors tacitly compromises this love.
- A second reason concerned the Christian Shona person's understanding of spirits. In one way, Shona people accept a world of spirits, and regard them as perfectly natural. At the same time, the presence of angels is also widely accepted, particularly at St Agnes Mission. But many of those who shared in our discussions held the Christian view that, at death, all human spirits depart from this world. 'God is a God of order, not of disorder' (I Cor 14:33), insisted Fr Muyambi. 'He does not leave souls hanging around the world to trouble people.' This means that any spirits which are experienced in this world are either angels or demons who are thoroughly evil. What is intended as ancestral veneration is nothing of the kind. Unknowingly people simply offer sacrifice to evil spirits, and not to their ancestors at all.
- Christians also maintain that Shona veneration of ancestors is founded on fear and not on love. Shona society is based more on authority, hierarchy and obedience than on love. This is even more true of the spirit world. It is believed that if people fail to honour their ancestors, they will send sickness and even death. In the same way, people behave well towards relatives and neighbours, not out of love for them but out of fear that they will retaliate through witchcraft, or that the ancestors themselves will punish behaviour that they perceive as being destructive towards the family. Good behaviour in a Shona society appears to be largely prudential, and the power of the ancestors to send sickness and death, or to allow others to bewitch, is the ultimate calamity. Such a perception of the world cannot really coexist happily with the Christian understanding that God is a God of love and that worship of God is fundamentally (or at least ideally) disinterested and unselfish.

## The problem of history

From the Book of Exodus onwards the historians, prophets and psalm writers make it clear that for Israel there is only one God. Other gods exist but they may not be treated as part of the Hebrew pantheon. Yahweh is a jealous God who will tolerate no worship of lesser or evil deities. A simple reading of the Old Testament gives the impression that this belief was established at least at the time of the Exodus and was consistently maintained by the religious authorities, though not always observed either by king or people. The following considerable difficulties stand in the way of sustaining this point of view:

- The dating of the early books of the Old Testament is exceedingly complex. Many of the features on which an account of Hebrew religion relies are probably from later redactions and represent an ideal point of view from a time several centuries later than the events in question.
- The history of the Hebrew people is more complex than a superficial reading of the books may suggest. The received idea that twelve tribes united as one people, entered the land of Canaan from Egypt, and gradually took it over by force of conquest, has long been perceived to be an extravagant oversimplification. That some group of escaped slaves, possibly constituting one or two tribes, came in from Egypt and added their stories to those of others, may be accepted. Other groups came from different directions and mingled with the Canaanite or Aramaic people who were already there.
- History is usually told by the winners, and this is particularly true of the Israelite people's history. The winners in this case were the Davidic monarchy centred in Jerusalem. Their historical narrative favours the centralisation of the country and its religion in Jerusalem and the authority of their king.
- That the people of Israel are so often admonished not to worship other gods shows quite clearly that they were doing so in large numbers. Also, that worship of Yahweh continued at shrines throughout Israel long after the supposed centralisation of the cult at Jerusalem shows that the Jerusalem religious authorities were by no means as well accepted and accredited as they liked to pretend. The considerable social variety among practitioners of the religion (there were, for example, established townspeople in ancient cities like Jericho, well-established farmers, and

that heads of families may offer sacrifice wherever they choose to do so. In contradiction to this, Joshua 22 allows only Shiloh as the legitimate place of Israelite worship.

### *The purification of the land*

Another complexity in the early history of Israel's religion is visible in the contradiction that runs through the Book of Joshua. The beginning of this rather violent book tells of the Hebrew tribes sweeping into and through the land of Canaan and utterly destroying the native peoples at the command of Yahweh. Chapters 2–11 specifically relate the total destruction of all foreign tribes. Later parts of the book, however (chapter 23, for instance), speak of other tribes that continued to exist quite happily among the Hebrews. In this context, one sees the ban on other gods and the total destruction of their images as a continuation of the war on other nations who lived within the land, the very land that Yahweh had promised as a part of the Hebrew Covenant with God.

### *The dead*

There was clearly continual tension between the demands of Yahweh, as they were relayed to the people through the law of the Covenant and ancient religious practices important to them. An example of such a practice (also one of particular importance in any discussion of African religion) concerns the place of the dead. Von Rad comments: 'The surprising number of regulations against the cult of the dead and the rites pertaining to it allow of the conclusion that a particularly bitter warfare was waged against it, as a cult which offered special temptations to ancient people' (Von Rad 1962:208).

In much of Scripture there appears to be little belief in any real post-mortem existence, since it was believed that God's promises are fulfilled in this life. For these people, life after death was a shadowy business, a falling asleep or a long rest. At the very most, they believed in an attenuated existence in Sheol. In contrast to this, the cult of the dead was widely practised. People who were able to make contact with the dead were variously called 'diviners', 'a woman who consults ghosts' (1 Sam 28:7–14), 'knowing ones' (Lev 19:31), 'seeker of the dead', and 'magician' (Deut 18:11). In Isaiah 8:19, the people are attacked because they 'consult the dead on behalf of the living', and in Isaiah 65:4 we hear of 'those who sit inside the tombs and pass the night in secret places', evidently consulting with the dead. In a curious kind of way, the dead were even thought of as being able to confer life, as one sees in the

intended. The country Hebrews, on the other hand, saw no reason to abandon their ancient independence according to which sacrifices and worship took place within the family and the local community and not in a temple far away.

### *The high places*

This brings us to the problem of the high places. Throughout the Deuteronomic revision of the history of the Kings of Israel, we are reminded of the evil of worship in the high places. We have to remember that this was a revisionist view. In several places in the Old Testament (for example Exodus 20:21, Judges 6:19, and 1 Samuel 7:9), it is clear that Israelites could sacrifice anywhere and that anyone (and not only a priest) could perform the sacrifice. Some sacrifices clearly took place within the family because families (as is the pattern in Africa today) tended to constitute whole villages complete with their own priest. Deuteronomy 12 shows that much sacrificial activity and the joyful feasting that went with it would have to take place in people's own towns and villages (as it always had done) simply because 'the place which the Lord your God will choose' was too far away.

Mountains, however, have always been holy places. Yahweh could not be pinned down to any one sanctuary. Amos 5:25 appears to articulate a tradition that sacrifice began only in Canaan (cf Jer 7:22). One must therefore distinguish between those who worshipped Yahweh on the high places, places where he had every right to be (Deut 33:29) and where Yahweh participated in the sacrificial meal (Deut 32:13), and those who worshipped *other* gods in high places.

The political consequences of the destruction of the high places can be seen in the reign of Hezekiah, one of the few occasions when such destruction was really ever attempted. Here it would seem that his motivation was partly economic (to bring tribute to Jerusalem) and partly defensive. Because the cult centres in the hill country were places where food and money were collected for the service of Yahweh, the invading Assyrians naturally utilised these resources wherever they could. Destroying them cut off one of the sources of supply upon which the Assyrians relied. That the motivation was not simply to establish a pure Yahwist cultus may be deduced because the temple of Jerusalem itself remained a place where other local gods were worshipped, probably until the time of Josiah.

## Shrines

The Deuteronomist wished to establish, among many other things, that God alone is the God of Israel, and that the covenant relationship between God and Israel absolutely precluded worship of any other god. Although he condemned worship at any place other than Jerusalem as being of (at least) doubtful legitimacy, he was unable to deny the facts, which were the existence of several shrines, many of which were probably older than the Israelite cult that attempted to supersede them, and the provision in the law itself for sacrifice to be offered at places other than Jerusalem. How does this compare with the experience of the Shona?

The comparison is not exact. Hebrew religion had colonised the shrines and offered sacrifices there and elsewhere which were wholly legitimate in terms of Hebrew religion. The danger for them was that the Canaanite religion might at any stage be revitalised, perhaps because it had never ever been entirely displaced.

Although traditional shrines do exist amongst the Shona (the Mwari cult at Matonjeni in the Matopos is the most famous of these cults), there are hills, or trees, or pools of particular local significance that exist near every village. Christianity has made no attempt to extirpate these shrines. It has either ignored them, characterising them as objects of superstition, or has else forbidden them to Christians since they are incompatible with the worship of Christ. The problem then for the Christian country person is not whether he or she may offer Christian worship in a place other than a Christian church. Rather, like the Israelite peasant, he or she is conscious all the time of other spiritual forces, of places of significance, and of cults and powers all around and about the landscape. Can the Christian afford not to pay some attention to these places?

Alternatively, would the centrality of sacrificial worship in the Old Testament encourage Shona people to see an identity between Old Testament sacrifice and the traditional sacrifices of cattle and goats? Shona Christians in fact deny any meaningful link between the two, largely because Old Testament sacrifices were offered in worship of God. In traditional religion, sacrifices are offered, not to God, but to devils or to intermediary spirits, and such sacrifices are not made to worship God but in order to pacify the anger of spirits.

from the whole system of traditional religion which at best only ensured the status quo and often had a destructive effect on communities.

With that in mind we can see that, for some, any movement away from the God of Christianity towards pagan spirits is not only a failure of love and trust; it threatens the very life of the people and could destroy the whole precarious fabric of civilisation and prosperity that has been created in so short a time.

### The evils of traditional religion

It is important, then, to see that to a committed Shona Christian, at least of the traditional type, worshipping other gods is not only a failure to love and trust in God's goodness, it is a turning towards that which is fundamentally evil and destructive. In this respect, Hebrew exclusiveness offers only a partial parallel. Aspects of Canaanite religion, such as child sacrifice and cultic prostitution, were perhaps seen as fundamentally and inherently wrong in themselves. The main reason for forbidding participation in Canaanite religion, however, was that it breached the covenant on which everything else depended. Committed Shona Christians have a profound sense of the evil in traditional religion and this realisation is reinforced by their conviction that the covenantal relationship with God and Christ must not be compromised.

We may speculate a little further here about the nature of identity. Identity in community is deeply important to African people. African Christians do not understand this as merely a personal option. They feel themselves to be part of a religious community with bonds and responsibilities towards all others. To some extent this replaces the identity they would have felt within traditional clan structures. It is therefore of even greater importance that the new communal identity should not be compromised. In Israelite religion it was often perceived that the wrongdoing of individuals brought disaster on the whole people (cf Achan in Joshua 8:19ff and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 14:42). Similarly in traditional Shona religion, a witch was a danger to the whole village. A man who offended his ancestors brought sickness and death on his whole family. He must be made to conform and do what was right. Likewise in the Shona Christian communities, there are fears of such tainting. Other people's unfaithfulness and participation in the religion of other gods will corrupt the whole Christian community. Apostasy is not a private affair.

# Issues of 'Catholic' ecclesiology in Ethiopian-type AICs

*Stephen Hayes*

With well over 7 000 African Independent Churches (AICs) in South Africa alone, it is impossible to generalise about the ecclesiology of AICs. Even when one tries to classify them, the classes are fluid and the boundaries overlap. Thus, in this chapter, I shall make a few observations about some of the features of the ecclesiology of some AICs.

Sundkler's broad classification of AICs into 'Ethiopian' and 'Zionist' remains a useful one, though it is somewhat imprecise. It corresponds roughly to the distinction made between different kinds of non-AICs (does one refer to them as 'non-African Independent Churches?') - the distinction between 'Mainline' and 'Pentecostal'. Sundkler derived his terminology from the use of the terms 'Ethiopian' and 'Zionist' in the names of the various denominations, but nomenclature is not always a reliable guide. One of the denominations whose ecclesiology I will consider is the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion, which incorporates both words, but whose emphasis, in the minds of its founders at least, lay on the 'Catholic' part of the name. This essay is concerned primarily with the AICs that Sundkler classified as 'Ethiopian', and within that group, with some of those whose ecclesiology may be classified as 'catholic' or 'episcopal.'

Most published material on the AICs has tended to concentrate on the Zionist group. There are several possible reasons that one could suggest for this emphasis. One is that the Zionists, with their colourful robes, tend to be more visible. Another is that they have tended to make more obvious theological adaptations to African culture. A third is that they are largely the product of spontaneous growth, rather than schism. The Ethiopian group, on the other hand, has tended to suffer from scholarly neglect. Many of the Ethiopian denominations have been formed by schism from mainline denominations, and perhaps mainline scholars prefer not to discuss them because, in some cases, the wounds of the schism are still painful, or because they are still seen as rivals. Also, the Ethiopian group have displayed less overt theological

## Three case studies

### Brander and the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion

Samuel James Brander was born at Colesberg in the Cape Colony on 26 September 1861. According to his own account, he was the fifth son of Jacobus Brander, a Mosotho of the Transvaal, and Lydia Brander, an African-American woman. He was brought up as a Wesleyan, and became a transport rider, and then a diamond digger at Kimberley, where he joined the Anglican Church in 1876. He then became an Anglican missionary in the Waterberg, but left the CPSA in 1890 after a financial dispute, and in 1892 joined Mokone in founding the Ethiopian Church.<sup>4</sup>

In 1904 he led a secession from the Ethiopian Church, which had by then amalgamated with the AME Church. The reason for the secession, according to the Rev S W Maeger, when applying for government recognition in 1926, was that the Americans had promised money for a school and it was not built.<sup>5</sup> In 1931, however, Surgeon L S Motsepe, who was renewing the application made by the late Samuel J Brander, said that the reason for the secession was doctrinal. The parent church was Methodist, whereas the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion (ECCZ) adopted Catholic doctrine.<sup>6</sup> While it is possible that this could reflect a later rationalisation of the original reasons for the schism, or a concern that developed later, or even a personal concern of Motsepe's, it seems more likely that it reflects some of the original concerns of Brander, which could have come from his period as an Anglican missionary.

The constitution and canons of the ECCZ were closely modelled on those of the CPSA, and in many respects were an improvement on the model. The 1918 edition of the *Constitution and canons* is a printed document, giving something of the history of the church and the founder. It makes provision for bishops, priests and deacons, and also deans, archdeacons and canons. It provides for the trials of priests and bishops, and it almost certainly reflects Brander's understanding of the church – a high church Anglican ecclesiology.<sup>7</sup>

---

4 Biography of S J Brander, in the *Constitution and Canons of the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion*. SAB NTS 1420 2/214

5 Application for recognition of Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion, submitted by S W Maeger, 18 February 1926. SAB NTS 1420 2/214

6 Letter from Surgeon L S Motsepe to Secretary of Native Affairs, 3 July 1931. SAB NTS 1420 2/214

7 *Constitution and canons of the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion*. SAB NTS 1420 2/214

publication about the African Orthodox Church, under Patriarch George McGuire, which had been formed in the USA. On 15 September 1924, a meeting of clergy and lay representatives of the African Church in Beaconsfield, Kimberley, resolved to form the African Orthodox Church. They appointed Daniel William Alexander as its head to supervise the church, to ordain fit persons, to negotiate with government departments about recognition and the appointment of marriage officers, and to seek affiliation with the African Orthodox Church in America.<sup>12</sup>

The last of these aims was fulfilled when Alexander was consecrated as a bishop in the African Orthodox Church in Boston, Massachusetts, by Patriarch McGuire, assisted by Bishops Robertson and Trotman (Anson 1964:267). Alexander apparently received financial assistance for his trip from Mr Ernest Oppenheimer, the mining magnate, through his secretary, Mr Hodgson.<sup>13</sup> The British Consul General of New York noted that 'it is generally understood that the consecration of clergymen by McGuire is part of his scheme to cause dissension, together with the Marcus Garvey association, among negroes of the British Empire'.<sup>14</sup>

On the recommendation of the American branch of the African Orthodox Church, Reuben Spartas of Uganda made contact with Alexander in about 1928, and announced the formation of the African Orthodox Church in Uganda in a letter to the government secretary in Entebbe early in 1929.<sup>15</sup> Closer to home, the Native Catholic Episcopal Church (also known as the African United Church) amalgamated with the African Orthodox Church, and Alexander sent in a fresh application for government recognition.<sup>16</sup>

In October 1931 Alexander travelled to Uganda to meet Spartas and set up training arrangements for clergy of the African Orthodox Church in Uganda.<sup>17</sup> On Trinity Sunday 1932 Alexander ordained Reuben Spartas and Obadiah Basajjitalo as priests (Welbourn 1961:81). Shortly thereafter, Spartas and Basajjitalo made contact with a Greek priest in Tanganyika,

---

12 Resolution passed at Conference, 16 September 1924. SAB NTS 1455 111/214

13 Open letter to the citizens of South Africa, and especially those of Kimberley, signed by James Z Mdatyulwa. SAB BAO 7263 P 120/4/58.

14 Letter, British Consul, New York to Foreign Office, London, despatch no 295. SAB NTS 1455 111/214.

15 Letter, Sparta to Chief Secretary, Entebbe, 17 Jan 1929. SAB NTS 111/214.

16 Application for registration. SAB NTS 1455 111/214

17 Report of CID superintendent, Uganda. SAB NTS 1455 111/214

temporary marriage officer had been appointed during his absence in East Africa).<sup>19</sup>

In October 1941 the African Orthodox Church was officially recognised by the government. Recognition brought benefits such as appointment of clergy as marriage officers, railway concessions and easier applications for church building sites. After World War II, however, the African Orthodox Church did experience some minor secessions, and Alexander found it necessary to point out to the Secretary for Native Affairs that it had 'no connection with any of the other so-called Orthodox churches organised by the Bantu later'.<sup>20</sup>

In April 1948 the National Party came to power, and introduced its apartheid policy. Within six months the African Orthodox Church was moved to protest against the prosecutions, banishments and deprivations it had caused.<sup>21</sup>

The 34th Synod of the African Orthodox Church, held in October 1958, was something of a triumph. There were parishes in all four provinces, and in all the major cities of South Africa. Although the East African offshoots had by then long since amalgamated with the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, there was a Diocese of Ghana. Several of the clergy who had been ordained in breakaway bodies had been received back into the African Orthodox Church.<sup>22</sup> The work had grown to such an extent that Bishop Alexander felt he needed some episcopal assistance, and also some bishops who could take over when he retired. He invited the African Orthodox Church in the USA to send two bishops so that, together with Alexander, they could consecrate new bishops. Two archpriests were selected as candidates for the episcopate – Ice Walter Mbina and Surgeon L S Motsepe. The latter had recently joined the AOC with a fairly large contingent of members from the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion.

The American Patriarch James I (W E Robertson) and Bishop R G Robertson came to South Africa in 1960 to consecrate Motsepe and Mbina, which they did, together with Daniel William Alexander, on 26 June 1960. But soon afterward things went sour, and a few months later the Americans had suspended Alexander, and appointed Motsepe as 'administrator pro tem'. On their return to America, they tried to keep tight control over the South African

---

19 Memo, KW to Mr Smuts. SAB NTS 1455 111/214

20 Letter, Alexander to Secretary for Native Affairs, 14 January 1947. SAB BAO 7263 P 120/4/58

21 Synod Resolution, 15 October 1948. SAB BAO 7263 P 120/4/58

22 Synopsis of Synod Proceedings, 34th Synod. SAB BAO 7263 P 120/4/58

branch of the AOC, and there was a succession of 'administrators pro tem', each one lasting a couple of years before hiving off with disgruntled followers who were irked by the American interference.<sup>23</sup> As a result, the African Orthodox Church in South Africa dissolved into several factions. Alexander died in May 1970, and was succeeded by his godson, Daniel Kanyiles. Some of the other groups have suffered further splits. In 1993 one of the groups united with the Coptic Orthodox Church, and since then another has asked to be united with the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria.

As most of Alexander's papers are now in America, it is difficult to research his life from within South Africa, but he certainly deserves a more ample biography than has been available up till now. Although the denomination he established disintegrated after 1960, many of the scattered fragments still exist, and I will deal with some of them later. The work he started in East Africa continues to flourish to this day, partly under the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, and partly under the African Independent Pentecostal Church.

### The way to Ethiopia

I have already mentioned how James Mata Dwane had played a major part in bringing about the union of the Ethiopian Church with the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the USA, but had later led a group called the Order of Ethiopia into association with the Church of the Province of South Africa (Anglican). Their concern for 'catholic' ecclesiology may be seen from a resolution passed at their 1914 conference, censuring the Anglican bishops in Kenya and Uganda for their willingness to dilute the principles of catholic order for the sake of ecumenical cooperation with non-episcopal bodies. In part the resolution reads, 'The fundamental principle of the Order of Ethiopia, and the reason that the Ethiopians united with the Church of the Province of South Africa in 1900 was their conviction that the Apostolic Succession of the Historic Episcopate was a necessity of Church life, and that without it there could be no true priests and no true sacraments.' (Verryn 1972:89).

One of the original promises made to the Order of Ethiopia by the CPSA was that it would have its own bishop. There was considerable opposition to this

---

23 SAB BAO 7263 P 120/4/58

received the group into the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and ordained 12 of its leaders as deacons. He returned in December 1993 and ordained several priests. The former Canon Hopa is the leader of the group, and functions as a kind of 'chorepiscopus', without the power of ordination. He wears Western episcopal robes.<sup>24</sup>

The members of the EOCSA now regard themselves as Orthodox, but continue to use the Anglican liturgy and Western-style vestments. With a bishop living in New York, and little opportunity for Orthodox theological training, their situation has been somewhat anomalous – although in 1997 a couple of Ethiopian Orthodox deacons, immigrants living in Johannesburg, began undertaking regular visits to the EOCSA in Port Elizabeth.

It was contact with Anglicans that convinced James Mata Dwane and his followers of a need for apostolic succession in the historic episcopate. Those who followed E L M Hopa have, after a long and somewhat roundabout pilgrimage, found themselves under the wing of the original Ethiopian Church of Ethiopia, and a link to a historical episcopal succession far more ancient than that of the Anglicans. Yet at the same time their ecclesiology has perhaps drifted away until it is different not only from that of the Anglicans but also, in all probability, from that of the Church of Ethiopia. According to Hopa, the Ethiopian Church, which became the Order of Ethiopia in 1900, was not an order but a denomination. It entered into a relation of tutelage with the Anglicans in order to gain three things: a valid episcopate and priesthood; arrangements to include their body within the fold of the Catholic Church; their independence.<sup>25</sup>

The difficulty in the relationship with the Anglicans was caused by the clash between (2) and (3). If the Anglicans had done what the Ethiopians had asked in 1900, and ordained the Ethiopian leaders as bishops of an independent denomination, they would in effect have been deliberately creating a schism in terms of their own ecclesiology, which might be 'independent' but would not be 'within the fold of the Catholic Church' as the Anglicans understood it. Hence the negotiations that led to the compromise of an 'order', which would function in semi-independent fashion.

The difficulties caused by such an arrangement would be even more apparent in the case of Orthodox ecclesiology. The Orthodox 'precedent'

---

24 Interview with the Rev Diliza Valisa of Port Elizabeth, July 1997.

25 Undated paper signed by E L M Hopa.

fairly restricted circle. Jantje Mtoto Gqamana, for example, of the Ethiopian Catholic Church of South Africa, claimed that Nehemiah Tile appointed him as his successor, and that Mokone's Ethiopian mission joined Tile's Church, which then affiliated with the AME Church. This in turn became the Order of Ethiopia, from which the Ethiopian Catholic Church of South Africa broke away. In addition to the idea of an apostolic succession of the historic episcopate, there is also therefore a kind of apostolic succession within the Ethiopian movement itself, traceable back to Tile.<sup>27</sup>

The National Church of Ethiopia of South Africa in its constitution likewise recounts how Saint Tila [sic] ordained Gqamana on his deathbed, and how the latter joined the AME Church, but the National Church of Ethiopia of South Africa had broken away from it in 1914 because of too much American control, and their first church building was Saint Tila's Church in Benoni. Its doctrinal statement is an abridged form of the Anglican 39 Articles.<sup>28</sup>

It was the churches of this Ethiopian, Methodist and Anglican tradition that showed the tendency towards 'catholic' ecclesiology. In the 19th century the Church of the Province of South Africa developed strong links with the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Anglican Communion. This was partly because the first Anglican bishop of Cape Town, Robert Gray, held high church views. As a result of the Colenso controversy, the Anglican Church in South Africa became associated in the minds of people in England with its stand for 'Catholic truth', a feature that attracted large numbers of Tractarian clergy from England to work in South Africa (Hinchliff 1963:137). Thus many Anglican clergy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries held a catholic ecclesiology, and this had influenced many of the early leaders of the Ethiopian movement. Brander had been an Anglican missionary, and said explicitly that he had broken away from the AME Church because he preferred the Catholic to the Methodist doctrine.

The difficulty faced by independent church leaders who held the catholic ecclesiology was in obtaining valid episcopal consecration. Dwane hoped to gain this by affiliating with the Anglicans. Daniel William Alexander hoped to do it by affiliating with the African Orthodox Church in the USA. Many of the others did not achieve it at all. The importance of the apostolic succession through the historic episcopate for leaders like Alexander can be seen in the

---

27 Constitution of the Ethiopian Catholic Church of South Africa. SAB NTS 1422 8/214

28 Constitution of the National Church of Ethiopia of South Africa. SAB NTS 1446 61/214

councils, much less what was taught at them. Indeed, the group from which they claimed their apostolic succession actually traced itself through the Syrian Jacobite Church, which recognises only the first three ecumenical councils. But Alexander himself had a clear idea of what was meant. Mhlonyane's group eventually joined the Coptic Church, which also only accepts the first three ecumenical councils.<sup>29</sup>

Since the 1960s the importance of apostolic succession has been decreasing among Anglicans in South Africa. There has been a trend towards intercommunion with non-episcopal churches. It was largely the Anglican insistence on the importance of apostolic succession that led some of the Ethiopian-type churches to make some effort to defend their claim to have it. When the Anglicans placed less importance on it, there was a lessening of the emphasis on this point among the AICs that used it as a claim to legitimacy. This may be why many of the bishops in the successor groups of the African Orthodox Church have not recently emphasised their claim to apostolic succession. One factor that has brought it to the fore again among some of the Ethiopian-type AICs has been increased contact with the Eastern churches, whether Greek Orthodox, Coptic or Ethiopian.

## Bibliography

The primary sources used have been indicated in footnotes. SAB refers to the central government archives depot, and the archival groups used have been mainly the correspondence files of the Department of Native Affairs (later Bantu Administration and Development) with the various AICs, mainly about recognition for the purposes of appointing marriage officers, railway concessions, permits to buy wine for communion, and exemptions from the Pass Laws.

### Secondary Sources

Githieya, F K 1992. 'The new people of God: The Christian Community in the African Orthodox Church (Karing'a) and the Abathi (Agikuyu Spirit Churches)'. PhD dissertation, Emory University.

---

<sup>29</sup> Personal information, from conversations with AOC leaders.

# Strange are the ways of Zion: a coloured Zionist pioneer

*Hennie Pretorius*

Because the missionary contribution of African evangelising pioneers remains for the most part an untold story, honour cannot yet be given where honour is due. 'The story of the black pioneers of the [19th century] South African missionary history has never been properly told. Most often the white missionaries received all the attention, whereas the black co-workers were relegated to the shadowy background' (Crafford 1991:vii). This essay will suggest that the same holds true of some pioneers of the 20th century. The story of one such trail-blazer of the Gospel, William Louw, as related by his son and successor, is told in the first part, while a reflection on four dimensions of the story follows in the second.

The story, which was told in Afrikaans, was recorded during three interviews. It was then translated into English, edited and returned to the story-teller until he was satisfied with the contents. The latter also responded to a questionnaire used for a broader research project in the Cape Flats. An effort was made to maintain the narrator's tenor, style and perceptions as far as possible. The word 'coloured' (*kleurling* or *bruinmens*) is not used by either the storyteller or by the recorder in a derogatory sense but, in the words of the former, 'as the language of the time'. Some explanations and translations are given in brackets.

Here follows the narrative of John William Louw, William Louw's son.

### The backdrop to a dramatic life

Some of Cecil John Rhodes's soldiers took indigenous wives during their campaign to the north.<sup>1</sup> Their descendants became a new 'coloured' people

---

1 The British South African Company had occupied Mashonaland, conquered Matabeleland, and thus laid the foundation for a new country, Southern Rhodesia.

After being honourably discharged in 1918, he decided not to return to farm life but rather to settle in Johannesburg. There he became a professional boxer. After having being told the *muti* that would assure his success was much stronger in Durban, he left for this coastal city. One day a *sangoma* on the beach addressed him by his name and also revealed his life's ambition, which was to become a champion boxer. He was given water in a can and told to kill his own blood-brother with a spear if he wished to be strengthened sufficiently to fulfil his ambition. He paid what was due but was not happy with the instruction.

## The turning point

Then, as the sun rose one Sunday morning while he was walking alone on the beach adjoining the Umgeni River, he saw a group of Zionists. He followed them to where they were baptising in the river. The spirit then told him to be baptised. The leader at first refused but Louw eventually convinced him that the baptism should take place. He then left the group.

For a whole week he wandered in the sugarcane fields to the north of Durban. Here he received the call to preach the Gospel. He returned to the railway hostel in Durban, where he was charged with trespassing. At first he was classified as insane until a Roman Catholic priest who examined him found that he was not insane but spiritually inspired.

While still in Durban he met certain Irish missionaries, among them a Mr Dowrie, who adhered to Zionist teachings. Because Louw knew the Zulu language and customs, he was used as interpreter in the Durban region between the years 1920 and 1922.

He then returned to Johannesburg with a new vision. Standing under a large tree in an open square next to the Newlands police station, he preached – using Dutch, Zulu and Sesotho Bibles – in such a manner that many were converted. It is clear that his aim, in this informal situation, was not to gather as many converts as possible for a following of his own. Because his motive was not to expand an existing church but to convert souls, he sent the new converts to their local churches. Louw himself was at this time under the aegis of another (that is, other than the Irish) group of white missionaries. It was among these missionaries that he met some of the later well-known African Indigenous Church (AIC) leaders such as Mahlangu, Shembe,



A theology of celebration: throbbing drums, dancing feet and song as Zionists give expression to a liberative Gospel message



to them because he had learned their language during his salt-trading days in Mozambique. Afterwards Louw met the owner of this famous farm (Vergelegen), the British mining magnate Sir Lionel Phillips (who had built the cableway on Table Mountain in 1929). Louw was encouraged by Lady Phillips to 'get the farm on godly lines again' (for evidence of this, see the testimonial signed by her and dated 1 April 1936). At this time he was appointed as the team leader of the men who removed bush at Kirstenbosch, which also belonged at the time to Sir Lionel. Thus Louw's first congregation consisted of Shangaans and coloureds who spoke Afrikaans. He and his old acquaintance, Marole, now referred migrating converts to each other as they left for either the Cape Flats or for Venda.

In 1938 William Louw became acquainted with Dorethea Magdalena Daniels. At the time she was residing at the parsonage of the Rev Isak Steyn of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church at Somerset West, a man with whom Louw shared friendship and many ideas. After he married Dorethea in the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in 1938, the couple moved to the farm Knorhoek at Sir Lowry's Pass. He worked as a farm labourer and evangelised by bicycle in Stellenbosch, the Hottentots-Holland basin, and also in areas as far afield as Paarl and Malmesbury. Besides working as an evangelist, he worked as a 'garden boy' (as a certificate given by a Mr H A MacArthur dated 1 July 1950 testifies).

The Louw couple had seven children, and John William, the teller of this story, was the second. During the 1950s Louw worked under the supervision of the ZCAC, still under the leadership of President Marole, who was also addressed as Bishop. There was also close cooperation with Mr W H de Swart of the Christian Assemblies, to which Louw endeavoured to unite various Pentecostal groups. Later Louw developed a friendship with Pastor J J Louw (no relative), a prominent leader of the Apostolic Faith Mission. Louw and the Zionists were also present at Mossienes (Oostersee), where Pentecostals such as the Latter Rain Mission, which did not associate with the larger Apostolic Faith Mission, gathered in a small hall.

## On the Cape Flats

In 1954 the Louws moved to Philippi on the Cape Flats. They lived at Sherwood Park (Manenberg) which at that time was still a farming area. Louw did evangelistic work among the clay-diggers at Borchers Quarry (near the

become disillusioned after a while. Many of them later returned to the fold. But the younger Louw had a difficult time in keeping the various branches together.

At the moment, groups of the ZCAC exist at Mitchells Plain, Nomzamo (Strand), Elsiesrivier and Kuils River, as well as further afield at De Doorns, Colesberg, Queenstown, Barkly East, Elliot and Umtata. The branches south of the Gariep have a total of some two thousand members. Close contact is maintained with Archbishop Jonas Luhadima at Sibasa, the current overall leader of the Church. [End of narrative.]

## A chip off the Zionist block

Besides the obvious Pentecostal influence, the ZCAC in general and William Louw in particular have, to some degree, been affected by Lutherans and Calvinists. In this respect they are somewhat different from most other AICs, which exhibit fewer Western influences. It is characteristic of the ZCAC that traditional African beliefs and customs do not have the power to influence the members of the church as deeply as is the case among Zionists.

Louw realised that his dual ministry, pastoring coloureds and Africans, was no easy task. Each group had its particular characteristics. 'The Coloured does not dance with his stick [*kierie*], he dances the Cape dances which he knows.' But he was able to maintain unity by being flexible. Although he did not discard Western hymns, he used the traditional Venda tunes and rhythms, combined with words from the Psalms, to create a new songbook. On the other hand, the coloured groups were allowed to make use of modern instruments such as keyboards and guitars during services.

Traditional African marriage customs were respected despite the difficult problems this acceptance caused for Louw. Some of the leaders who had more than one wife insisted on senior positions in the church. His policy concerning polygamy was to tolerate it but gradually to lead people to new convictions.

Unlike other Zionist churches, the use of woollen girdles tied around the wrists, stomach or neck was not allowed (see Makhubu 1988:83). A member who claimed to have been given such wool 'by a prophet from Canaan' would be approached in a pastoral spirit and instructed from Scripture. Members and even leaders continually visited diviners (*toormanne*), who were said to

by the narrator might have been confused with that of American J A Dowie of Zion City, Illinois, USA, who founded the Christian Catholic Church in Zion in 1896. Dowie himself never visited South Africa (Sundkler 1976:14), which suggests the credibility of the name 'Dowie'. One does not easily find references to Lukas Marole in the relevant literature.

The Louw narrative is an example of the use of oral sources which, in terms of AIC historiography, have become an indispensable tool. Whereas researchers of African history and church history often supplement archival material with oral sources, AICs would prefer to supplement oral sources with written ones (Pretorius 1995:63–76; 119–122). Because sources are limited, the challenge is to save from oblivion thousands of stories such as Louw's. In such a manner 'mosaics', building blocks, will be manufactured for the revision of AIC history.

Because Louw's church is an indigenous church, it is useful for situating the ZCAC within the broader Independent Church movement. Is this church exceptional and, if so, in what respect?

In comparison with the same phenomenon among blacks, church independence among coloured people is not very evident. According to the 1951 census, only 4,5% of coloureds belonged to Christian groups other than mainline churches. Ninety-seven per cent of the former, that is, of all Independents, were Pentecostal-type churches (Gerdener 1958:142). (For notes on the Volkskerk van Afrika and the Calvinist Protestant Church of South Africa, see Schlosser 1958:59–70; Barrett 1968:286–287.) Figures based on the 1980 census indicate that, once again, 4,5% of the coloureds were adherents of 'African Indigenous Churches', a term which is unfortunately not defined (Kritzinger 1989:22). (For comparison with the 1951 figure, the 1,9% denoted as 'Apostolic faith' should be added, thus totalling 6,4%.) Compare these findings with the 29,3% of blacks belonging to AICs (Kritzinger 1989:22), and the difference becomes striking.

Why is church independence in South Africa more popular among blacks than among coloureds? Aeschliman (1986:211), who studied fifty independent groups of coloured people on the Cape Flats over a period of seven years, argues convincingly that, after the arrival of the whites, they were included in the religious practices of the dominant group, 'Thus they have no unique religious tradition such as that with which the black peoples of South Africa are so richly endowed'. He adds that the well-known division into

Secondary aspects of the narrative can easily be corroborated by authoritative sources.<sup>2</sup> The information on Phillips' ownership of Kirstenbosch and his building of the Table Mountain cableway is not quite accurate, however.<sup>3</sup> Such evidence adds credibility to Louw's storytelling, though.

On the other hand, there are major inconsistencies that could detract from the narrative's dependability. After his conversion in Durban, Louw lived in Johannesburg during 1922 and 1923. He met some of the leaders at this time, notably Mahlangu, Shembe and Lekganyane. But information provided by Sundkler (1976:62–63) indicates that Mahlangu was in Johannesburg at the time but was occupied with keeping his own church (founded prior to 1914) together. Therefore the impression given by the narrative that he was part of a loose group of Zionists who held services on Sundays is not substantiated. Shembe did stay in Johannesburg when he was baptised by W Leshega, but that was from 1906 to 1911 (Sundkler 1976:164, 169). As he had established his own church village, Ekuphakameni, in 1916, it is not conceivable that he was living in Johannesburg between 1922 and 1923. Lekganyane lived in Basutoland between 1920 and 1925 (Sundkler 1976:66; Schlosser 1958:185). Louw was said to have met Limba in East London. This was after 1923 and a few years before 1927, when Louw arrived at Cape Town. In reality Limba was in Cape Town from 1914 until 1927, in which year, according to Mqotsi and Mkele (1946:108), he moved to the Eastern Cape Province. In spite of this, one should remain open to possibilities and explanations of what may seem to be discrepancies; some of these leaders, for example, may have briefly visited the places where they are said to have met Louw.

- 
- 2 For example, Buester was one of two missionaries who established the first Berlin Mission station in Venda in 1872 (for the place called 'Buester', close to where the ZCAC was founded, see Du Plessis 1956:348–349). The 'Griquas from Kokstad' were most likely some of the migrants who had left Griqualand East in 1918 to settle at Plettenberg Bay (SESA 1973, vol. 5:357). An explosives factory had existed at Somerset West since 1902, see SESA 1973, vol. 3:173. For Sir Lionel and Lady Florence Phillips' ownership of Vergelegen, see Postma 1996:34.
  - 3 After Rhodes owned Kirstenbosch, it became part government land. However, in 1913, Phillips initiated legislation which led to the formation of the Botanical Society and the establishment of Kirstenbosch Garden (SESA 1973, vol. 6:406; Tucker 1995:49). The cableway was indeed opened in 1929 with A. Hennessy as founder and chairman of the Cableway Company (SESA 1973, vol.2:650). As prominent guests, Phillips and his wife were present at the opening ceremony on October 4 (Rosenthal n.d.:66). In both instances, Phillips, a first-rate engineer and a nature lover, played a significant role.

Two factors in the biographical particulars of the narrative reflect serious contemporary social realities: the senior Louw's unending efforts to earn a living (as no fewer than ten types of employment are mentioned, the sceptic might even call him a drifter), and racial relations. Discrimination on grounds of colour is found early in the narrative. The Buys people were not allowed the status of whites and were classified as coloureds. In spite of this, the Louw family later maintained a lasting unbiased relationship with some of their white Afrikaans neighbours at Bandelierskop. Again, it is unlikely, given the time and place (the Anglo-Boer War, the far Northern Transvaal), that amicable relations would be possible between the family of Kleinbooie Louw, who joined the British forces, and their Afrikaner neighbours. The story reflects how, at least since 1922, discriminatory practices were part of church life. The apparently unimportant forbidding of black men to extend a hand of greeting to white women may be seen as a symbol of what was developing on the broader social level. Louw's friendship and cooperation with blacks and whites suggests that he often took the role of a go-between, and implies a reconciler.

As for the quality of the narrative, besides the historical discrepancies there are a few aspects that raise questions. First, the translation and production of a hymnbook calls for high standards of linguistic, poetic and musical skills. Would the German Lutherans have been contented with craftsmen who obviously lacked the training for such a major task? Second, why is the period of 36 years (1954–1990) describing William Louw's ministry so brief and blunt compared to the elaborate and vivid account of the previous 40 years (1914–1954)? Third, to what degree is the narrative coloured by J W Louw's insight into and knowledge and perceptions of Xhosa culture?

There are two important issues related to the Louw story but scarcely mentioned in it, and which should not be overlooked. First, the famous LMS missionary Robert Moffat is referred to in connection with the Buys people. However, nothing is said about Dutch Reformed Church missionaries Alexander MacKidd and Stephanus Hofmeyr, who were pioneers in the Soutpansberg area. Not only did they have considerable influence on the Buys community but the Buys people – in spite of a rebellion caused by, among other reasons, tensions between coloureds and blacks – made a memorable contribution to the mission work of the DRC in Northern Transvaal and Zimbabwe (Crafford 1992:72–74, 90–100; Hofmeyr 1890:chapters 2, 8, 11 and 12; Maree 1962).

standing support which he received from Cape Pentecostals. No fewer than sixteen different denominations, groups of churches or their representatives are mentioned in the narrative, mostly in positive vein.

Louw's major contribution was probably his uniting and maintaining the co-existence of the black and coloured members of his own church in a harmonious way. Given the differences in religious background, worldview and the separateness which apartheid encouraged, this was no mean achievement. Louw's exemplary relationship with white Christian groups extended from the early 1920s, when black AFM workers experienced discrimination, until his funeral in 1990.

Louw was not able or perhaps not even interested in initiating a permanent ecumenical structure, nor was he part of the mainline ecumenical organisations that constitute the ecumenical age in South Africa. However, his attitude of seeking cooperation and unity with other minor Christian groupings has borne lasting fruits, in particular in his own church and among Zionists generally. His son has inherited his ecumenical spirit.

## Missiological reflection

When considering William Louw's missionary career, one is instinctively reminded of one of the greatest missionaries of all time, Paul of Tarsus. 'With Luke's estimate of the importance of Paul's conversion neither the historian nor the theologian can quarrel. We cannot imagine the spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire apart from the work of Paul' (Bruce 1974:209). While an in-depth comparison of the two is not justified, certain elements in J W Louw's story are found in the Lucan narrative on Paul, despite the more than 18 centuries that separate them. In both cases we find the following:

- Important years of preparation, which were of immense value for their later ministries
- Dramatic conversions (on the road to Damascus and in the sugarcane field of Durban), which proved to be pivotal
- Extended missionary travels, in most cases on foot (*'loop met die voet tot sover jy kan'*)
- A great variety of 'market-places' (Acts 17:17–18), public platforms from which Gospel preaching was launched

## Bibliography

- Aeschliman, D 1986. 'The Independent Churches of the Coloured People of the Cape Flats.' In *Religion Alive*, Oosthuizen, G C (ed). Johannesburg: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Barrett, D B 1968. *Schism & renewal in Africa*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, J A 1991. *They fought for King and Kaiser: South Africans in German East Africa 1916*. Johannesburg: Ashanti.
- Bruce, F F 1974. *The Book of Acts*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Collyer, J J 1937. *The campaign in German South West Africa 1914–1915*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Collyer, J J 1939. *The South Africans with General Smuts in German East Africa 1916*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Crafford, D (ed) 1991. *Trailblazers of the Gospel: black pioneers in the missionary history of Southern Africa*. Pretoria: IMR, University of Pretoria.
- Dowley, T (ed) 1965. *The history of Christianity*. Berkhamsted: Lion.
- Du Plessis, J, (ed) 1965. *A history of Christian missions in South Africa*. Cape Town: Struik.
- Gerdener, G B A 1958. *Recent developments in the South African mission field*. Pretoria: NG Kerk-uitgewers.
- Groves, C P 1955. *The planting of Christianity in Africa*. Volume 3. London: Lutterworth.
- Hofmeyr, S 1890. *Twintig jare in Zoutpansberg*. Kaapstad: J H Rose.
- Kritzinger, J J 1989. *The South African context for mission*. Cape Town: Lux Verbi.
- Makhubu, P 1988. *Who are the Independent Churches?* Johannesburg: Skotaville.
- Maree, W L 1962. *Lig in Soutpansberg*. Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel.
- Millin, S G 1950. *King of the Bastards*. London: Heinemann.

# Interpreting the interpreters of AICs and other grassroots Christian communities in South Africa

*Tinyiko Sam Maluleke*

### General crisis in theology and call for change

Because of the societal changes associated with the formal demise of apartheid, theological interest in 'ordinary people' has reached not only a high point, but also a crisis point. Basic to this crisis is a double-edged uncertainty about the relevance of theology to 'ordinary people', and the latter's need for theology. This has profound implications for the social significance 'of theology itself, especially the so-called progressive theologies. It is for this reason that Villa-Vicencio (1994) has 'wondered' whether South African churches and theologies have been of any use since 27 April 1994.

A few theologians, church leaders and scholars of religions have expressed keen awareness of the crisis and a few proposals have been made for 'the way forward'. For Krüger (1995:3), 'all of the critical Christian theology produced in South Africa over the last twenty years amounted to a mopping up operation of a political problem'. He sees the crisis in South African theology as being so fundamental that nothing short of an abandonment of its basic premises, that is, orthodoxy, will suffice. Taking a somewhat wider view of the causes of the crisis<sup>1</sup> by linking it to the momentous events of the 1990s in Europe, the Soviet Union and South Africa, Villa-Vicencio (1992a, cf Maluleke 1994a) suggests that the new global situation requires something 'more' from both the church and theology.<sup>2</sup> This 'more', according to him, would mean that theology would include a deliberate and systematic concern for (new) issues on nation-building, human rights and the economy.

- 
- 1 See also Bosch (1991), whose entire book is premised on an awareness of the global crisis, albeit for him a crisis in Christian mission. Like De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio, he argues that the business of being Christian and/or being the church cannot simply be carried on without reference to context: historical context viewed diachronically, but also futuristically.
  - 2 With regard to South Africa, Villa-Vicencio makes similar proposals for theology in the light of changing and changed situations (Villa-Vicencio 1992b, 1993).

of little consequence – even if inevitable. The type and aim of connection to the grassroots is more important. It seems to me that South African theologies have reached a high point in the praxis of flirtation with ‘the people’ or ‘the grassroots’. At times like this it may be advisable to take stock of a few South African theologies that have consistently endeavoured to connect to grassroots. These are various theological approaches, all of which appealed to a public grounding of one sort or the other: black theology, African theology, contextual theologies, the Kairos Document (1985), and lately something called the theology of reconstruction.<sup>4</sup>

The question we must pursue is: In what ways are present-day Christian activists, missionaries and researchers engaging in something that is qualitatively different and better than what has been done before? Let us remember what Steve Biko said: ‘The first people to come and *relate to blacks in a human way* in South Africa were the missionaries’. Yet, while relating to blacks in this way, the missionaries were not only in ‘the vanguard of the colonisation movement’ (Moore 1973:42):

... [they] confused the people with their new religion. They scared our people with stories of hell. They painted their God as a demanding God who wanted worship ‘or else’ ... Knowing how religious African people were, the missionaries stepped up their terror campaign on the emotions of the people ... By some strange and twisted logic they argued that theirs was a scientific religion and ours was a superstition.

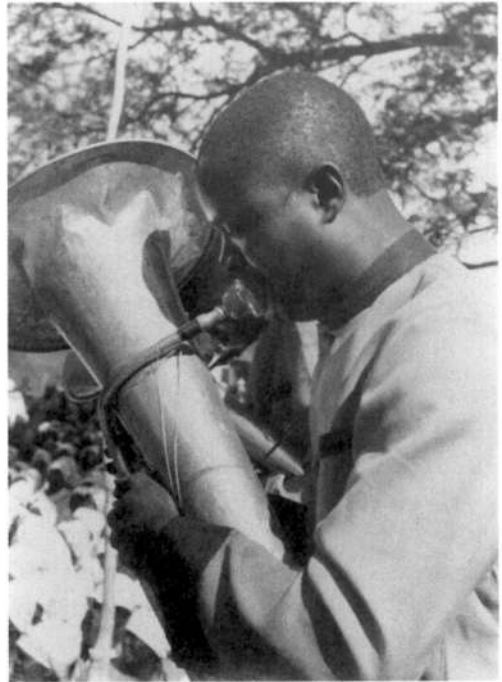
Therefore, we must not be satisfied with the humaneness of modern-day ‘missionaries’, be they researchers who move permanently into a squatter camp, those who fly in and out of the township, or those who take their shoes off and seek refuge in the African Zionist headquarters. If the nature of theological connection to real people and real issues is to be meaningful (and thereby saved from becoming a mere cliché), we must begin analytically and fearlessly to scrutinise the validity and worth of the very notion of theological connection to the people. Furthermore, we must

---

4 Though not yet an established theological model in comparison to others, much theological discourse in post-apartheid South Africa has been frequently punctuated by expressions of the need for reconstruction, nation-building (cf Pityana & Villa-Vicencio 1995) and pluralism (cf Krüger 1995, Lubbe 1995). Two major works, so far, which have been devoted to a theology of reconstruction are Villa-Vicencio (1992a) and Pityana (1995). Sections in De Gruchy (1995) also point to a patronage of essential ideas in Villa-Vicencio (1992a).



Trumpeters herald the new dispensation of Zion in Africa: *Ndaza* kudu-horn blower (top) and ZCC band-master (bottom) trumpeting in honour of an incarnate Christ in Black Jerusalem



more works on the AICs than (Pippin) Oosthuizen. In the 1990s we saw the emergence of Allan Anderson (1991, 1992, 1993), who elected to describe a wide range of AICs as 'African Pentecostal Churches'. It would not be inaccurate to say that Sundkler, Oosthuizen, Anderson and Daneel<sup>5</sup> remain the eminent AIC scholars of our time.<sup>6</sup>

### *Resultant profile and deductions*

What does the above overview tell us? From the earliest times, interest in AICs seems to have been a missionary preoccupation. Missionaries, missionary bodies and missionary newspapers have been by far the most interested in studying the AICs – the 1925 Native Churches Commission notwithstanding. In fact, by and large, interest in AIC studies has been very much a white male affair. Some notable exceptions are Schlosser (1958), Martin (1964) and Kruss (1985).

The reasons for missionary interest in the movement are not difficult to appreciate. The AIC movement was seen as an 'uneducated' and therefore dangerous challenge to historic missionary churches. This movement was seen as an ecclesiastical counterpart to the political 'native problem'. Interest in AICs was, therefore, neither neutral nor sympathetic. Note must be taken that, starting in the 1890s, and until 1960, almost *all* missionary comments on AICs, however researched and academic their basis might have appeared to be, were ultimately deprecatory and scathing. Even Sundkler (1948), whose work we have singled out as the most in-depth and influential, initially concluded that these churches were 'a bridge back to paganism'.

What is the meaning of such massive and durable negative evaluation? We cannot understand its meaning until we recognise that many AIC studies were not about the AICs at all – but about the researchers and their churches. To put it differently, it was not so much the AICs that were being studied;

---

5 Although Daneel has concentrated on Zimbabwean AICs, he has had strong South African connections. As a professor of missiology at Unisa, he imparted a lot of his knowledge and skills to the South African AIC scene. Allan Anderson was one of his students. However, because Daneel's field research was done in Zimbabwe, we will not include him in our detailed discussions.

6 I suppose that, with his recent publications, Naudé (1995) should be counted amongst some of the up and coming AIC researchers. But we hope to discuss his contribution briefly at the end. Two other names worthy of mention are Pretorius (1993, 1995), who has done a study of some Ethiopian churches in Transkei and work on AIC historiography, and West (1975), who studied separatist churches from an urban perspective.

being a scholar will automatically transform one into 'an interpreter of the rhythm of Black voices'.<sup>7</sup> Research is often motivated not only by passionate interest in the subject in hand but also by adequate financial backing. If it were the case, hypothetically, that black theologians find AICs uninteresting, and not a priority from a research point of view, we would have to accept that respectfully. On the other hand, it could simply be that many existing studies of black theologians on AICs are not stimulating enough. Yet the painful point, that it is by and large whites alone who have spoken when it comes to research on AICs, must be made and taken cognisance of by both black and white theologians. In this, as is recognised by prominent white AIC researchers themselves, there is a considerable impoverishment of AIC research in general.

While there is nothing comparable to Sundkler's work (1948) amongst black scholars and church people, there are a few contributions by blacks which are worthy of note (see Millard 1995:40–49). At the sixth annual General Missionary Conference (1926), the Rev B S Diepu read a paper entitled 'Native separate church movements and their relation to the problem of evangelism'. In the *Yearbook of South African Mission* (Dexter 1927?), one of the two articles<sup>8</sup> on separatist churches belongs to the Rev L Mzimba (not the secessionist Mzimba but a son of his and a member of the separatist church). Mzimba's article (1927?) is important because it is written by an insider.<sup>9</sup> Another article of note is the one by Mayatula (1972).<sup>10</sup> This article is noteworthy for three reasons: its early date, its discussion of AICs from within the framework of black theology and because Mayatula was himself a member of a Zionist church.

Several articles by black people also appear in Oosthuizen's book (1986), which was the result of a consultation. Notable amongst these are Ngubane (1986a) and Setiloane (1986). Then there are the theses of Khuzwayo

---

7 It is important to remember what Mosala once said of qualifications to do black theology. He (1989:143) points out 'that not all black people [can] do black theology and therefore black theology does not amount to any theology done by any group of black people'.

8 The other article on AICs was written by the prolific Rev Allen Lea.

9 Note that Mzimba chose the term 'African church' instead of 'separatist church' as his brief had required.

10 This paper was read at the Consultation of the Missiological Institute at the Lutheran Theological College, Mapubulo, Natal, 12–21 September 1972. The other paper on AICs in this conference was by Sprunger (1972), a white missionary. All the conference papers were published under the editorship of Becken (1972).

needing attention was 'the link between Black Theology, the African Independent Churches and African Traditional Religions'. This is the background to the articles by Ngubane (1986b) and Mosala (1985). In an article devoted to an account of the historical origins of black theology, Motlhabi (1986:50–52) devotes a considerable amount of space to the AICs. It is its holistic approach towards the black community that caused black theology to appear to be uninterested in AICs.

One is not denying that there may have been individual black theologians who were simply not interested in AICs per se – most of them having been non-members of these churches. However, the apparent absence of AIC studies in black theology must be understood within the context of the holistic approach explained above. It therefore makes sense that references to AICs began to be made only at a time when black theologians saw the need for narrower and sharper ideological clarity, that is during the 1980s (Maluleke 1995b). Given the political and ideological exigencies of these times, it was no longer enough for black theology to refer to the 'black community'. Nor could black theology be assumed to be the theology of *all* of the black community. Not all sections of the black community were the interlocutors of black theology, nor was any theology done by any black theologian necessarily black theology. It was in the process of the search for more precise interlocutors that the AICs were mentioned more frequently in black theology circles.

However, Mayatula's vision (1972:175) of young black intelligentsia [who have their] eyes fixed towards these churches' did not produce a deluge of direct reflection on AICs. Later in the eighties, Takatso Mofokeng made references to the significance of 'popular religion' among the oppressed black people but he eschewed the AICs themselves.<sup>15</sup> It has often been said that black theologians have chastised AICs for their lack of overt political activity. Clear, unambiguous, consistent evidence of this tendency in black theology is difficult to sustain.<sup>16</sup> If black theology, and by implication black consciousness, criticised AICs, it was in the context of its critique of all '*non-whitisms*,' be they on the shop floor, in Bantustans, black politics or in black religion. If anything, the few black reflections on the AICs reveal a nuanced

---

15 Mofokeng seems to have finally settled for the category of the black working class as acceptable interlocutors for his theologising.

16 Daneel's evidence for black theologians' disdain for AICs is very tenuous; in fact, anecdotal (see Daneel 1984d:65).

### *A black theological perspective – Mosala*

Could the AICs become serious interlocutors for black theology? There was a time in the early 1980s when Itumeleng Mosala, provoked by Karl Marx's condemnation of religion as an opium of the people, even toyed with the idea of embarking on a major study of the AICs – an idea which had the support of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). The idea of a major study did not materialise but Mosala (1989b) did some preliminary research in the African township of Mangaung near Bloemfontein. On the basis of this research, he compiled an essay-type report on AICs and the Bible.

In terms of basic research methodology, Mosala's research was very similar to those of white researchers on AICs. Focusing on two different congregations of the same African Independent Church (Mosala 1989b:9), he used interviews, questionnaires and participant observation. However, Mosala departed from the approaches of white researchers in terms of the theoretical framework and starting points. Operating from a Marxist and historical materialist perspective, Mosala (1989b:5) intended to go beyond a treatment of these churches in terms only of their spectacular features so as to avoid multiplying the confusions and extending the mythologies (Mosala 1989b:4). He used a cultural studies paradigm which was strongly undergirded by a historical materialist emphasis. Culture is here understood in a historical materialist sense so that the connection between culture and material existence makes culture in class-structured societies necessarily class culture (Mosala 1989b:5). For Mosala, therefore, culture is much more than a set of ephemeral behaviours and habits. From this preliminary research, Mosala makes a few tentative proposals. I will consider only those that are relevant to the subject of this essay.

Mosala regards AICs as a sub-culture within a *dominant* and a *parent super-culture*. The dominant super-culture would be mission Christianity as represented in mainline churches and African culture. The parent culture which Mosala posits as equally important is the black working class to which the majority of AIC members belong. It is in his differentiation between dominant and parent cultures that Mosala departs from the theoretical frameworks of many AIC scholars. Many missionary AIC scholars, who also regard AICs as representing a sub-culture, would only recognise the dominant cultures as a resource in their interpretation of AICs and not the parent culture. On this point there has been (one may add) little difference between black and white AIC scholars. Mosala laments the neglect of the working-class parent culture in AIC studies. In other words he hints that

### *Government commissions*

Although the government's intentions were probably less than noble, it must be given credit for the earliest, most systematic and deliberate study of separatist churches through its Native Churches Commission – a commission whose report was published in 1925.<sup>20</sup> Even prior to this commission, there had been another one, the 1903–1905 Native Affairs Commission.<sup>21</sup> The chief research tools of these government commissions were verbal interviews and questionnaires. It appears that the commissioners moved from district to district and conducted interviews with individuals who were deemed relevant to the matter under investigation. The following categories of interviewees emerge: 'loyal Black mission members', newspaper editors, white missionaries and Independent Church leaders (cf Millard 1995:67f). A significant omission in the interviewee profile is the category of ordinary members of the separatist churches. Many questions can be asked about such matters as the legitimacy of the all-white male commission, the legitimacy of its objectives in conducting the interviews, the validity of the commission's almost exclusive reliance on (recorded) interviews, the choice of interviewees and the authenticity of the evidence presented before them – at least by some of the groups they interviewed. However, the unmistakable method employed must be acknowledged as such.

### *Allen Lea*

Then came the work of the Rev Lea (1926), the earliest monograph by a white missionary into the AICs. As indicated in the prefatory note, Lea regarded the government commission into separatist churches (1925) as an important inspiration not only for his own interest in the separatist movement but to many scholars. Material from the commission findings is acknowledged by Lea as an important source of information for his own work. In essence, Lea's is a literature study using all written information available to him as well as his own experience as a practising missionary. To that extent, it is an academic inquiry into separatist churches. In the book

---

20 According to Lea (1926:13), this commission was occasioned by the Bulhoek Massacre. His own verdict on the Bulhoek Massacre is as follows: 'The tragedy of Bulhoek in May 1921 is a sad instance of the blending of a poor understanding of the Christian Religion with a foolish desire to get rid of the White man' (1926:15).

21 Both commissions were instituted for reasons of control due to fears around what was perceived to be a growing anti-white feeling among the natives. The 1925 commission was specifically triggered by the Bulhoek Massacre.

had daily opportunities of coming into contact with the leaders and common people of the Independent churches,' he writes (Sundkler 1948:14). Other occasions for observation were created by the arrangement of meetings between AIC leaders and mission church pastors and evangelists, and the attendance by Sundkler at preaching and purification services and other meetings of the Independent Churches 'whenever my own regular mission work allowed me' (Sundkler 1948:15).

How was Sundkler received amongst the AICs? 'Almost without exception, my African assistants and I were received as honoured guests at their church services' (Sundkler 1948:15). What about his Zulu assistants? These were mainly drawn from his students at the Lutheran college in Natal.

After some initial training in the art of observation and note-making, they were in two consecutive years, 1940 and 1941, posted in different areas of Natal and Zululand, for a period of some weeks at each place. Detailed life stories of local leaders and ordinary church members were recorded, church services, dreams and visions related. All their notes were, as in the case of my own field work, written in Zulu (Sundkler 1948:15).

Finally, Sundkler was keenly aware of his value premises or what he called 'the problem of bias'. He says hypothetically, for example,

What would have been the outcome of this investigation if the observer had been, let us say, a Pentecostal soul winner, or an African nationalist, or a sociologist who would not necessarily have to be a professing Christian? ... The writer's valuations and ideals enter into the investigation - from the collecting of the material itself, which is the fundamental stage, to the final stage (Sundkler 1948:16).

Sundkler moves then to explicitly state his value premises. He is aware that 'I am myself, both as a Protestant missionary and as an investigator, a part of the problem, and I affect its future development by my missionary activity or inactivity'. One can hardly get a clearer awareness of the nuances of interpretative problems than in Sundkler. The following are the value premises that Sundkler (1948:17) admits to: in his observations, he evaluates the AICs 'in terms of continuous principles which have been delivered to the Church'; and he also assumes that enforced racial discrimination was a factor in the emergence of AICs.

## *Oosthuizen*

As indicated above, Oosthuizen<sup>24</sup> has written and influenced the writing of much research into the AICs. We shall pick up on only one of his earlier works, in which he gives a fairly clear indication of his research method. Oosthuizen introduces himself as a minister of the Reformed Church and first full-time lecturer in Christian theology at the University of Durban Westville. In a study on pentecostalism in the Indian community, Oosthuizen (1975) describes his method. He describes his acquaintance with the Indian community of metropolitan Durban right from his arrival there in 1968. From 1970 onwards, he conducted regular visits to and interviews with members of Indian Pentecostal churches. These contacts established a position of confidence 'between a White Dutch Reformed University lecturer and White and Indian Pentecostal pastors' (Oosthuizen 1975:2). Oosthuizen indicates that he conducted fieldwork over a period of two and half years. The chief tool of research seems to have been 'an extensive questionnaire on Indian culture and the Pentecostal churches ... as well as one on statistics'. The distribution and use of questionnaires were delegated to a senior student of Oosthuizen's who

... together with the investigator contacted various students and individuals in the different churches to assist in the interviewing of individual Pentecostal members, lay workers and pastors. Each questionnaire took about 4–5 hours and sometimes much longer as the interviewer had to explain the meaning of certain questions to some of the semi-literate members.

On top of these, Oosthuizen also conducted personal interviews with members and pastors. Like Sundkler and his helpers, Oosthuizen and his assistant were 'often invited to speak at the services we attended and through participation ... were accepted as members' (Oosthuizen 1975:3). The key for Oosthuizen, as it had been for Sundkler, was participation. Indeed he summarises his method as the drawing up of an extensive questionnaire and the selection of field workers who conducted the interviews; observation-participation; and the collecting and analysing of written documents. The groups interviewed were pastors and ordinary members of selected Pentecostal churches. It does appear, however, that

---

24 Since 1984 Oosthuizen, who started his teaching career at Fort Hare, has been director of the Research Unit for New Religions and Independent Churches attached to the University of Zululand.

in African Pentecostal Churches for over two decades'. He also describes himself as a member of an APC who is also involved in theological education. His works are the fruit of participant research conducted at Soshanguve, a township on the outskirts of Pretoria. With the help of assistants and questionnaires, and proportionate random sampling, Anderson was able to interview a reasonably representative portion of Soshanguve residents. Another tool used by Anderson was a tape recorder. As an appendix to his book, Anderson (1992) attaches the questionnaire that was used.

For his third monograph Anderson conducted a second-phase research into Soshanguve. Unlike the earlier one, which he describes as being more quantitative, the second one was designed to be more qualitative. 'We wanted people to talk about their churches and their convictions rather than answer a stereotyped questionnaire' (Anderson 1993:9). The assistants were armed with less structured but probing questions plus tape recorders. The same assistants would later translate the interviews into English. The 'dominant theme of the interviews was the accommodation and confrontation between the churches and the African Traditional world view'. A distinct bias in Anderson's research, which sets him apart from West (1975), was that, instead of concentrating on interviewing the leaders, he interviewed ordinary church members.

### *Philpott and Naudé*

Neither Naudé (1995)<sup>25</sup> nor (even less so) Philpott (1993)<sup>26</sup> is an AIC researcher in the strict Sundklerian tradition. However, I consider them relevant to our discussion on three counts: they are part of the 'madness' of empirically based theological interest in 'grassroots' communities: a ZCC peasant congregation for Naudé and an urban squatter community for Philpott; both intend to make at least a methodological contribution towards a genuinely 'South African liberation theology arising out of the religious experiences of ordinary oppressed people' (Cochrane in the Foreword to Philpott 1993); and both represent, in my opinion, the most sophisticated ideological awareness of the merits and the demerits of participant-observer-based research theories and methodologies within South Africa.

---

25 See my review of this book in Maluleke (1996).

26 Philpott (1993:40) does indicate the preponderance of Zionist churches in Amawoti and what he calls popular religion. See my review of this book in Maluleke (1944b).

- The ultimate goal is structural transformation.
- There is an involvement of the researched in the control of the research process.
- It focuses on oppressed groups.
- It tends to be qualitative rather than quantitative.
- The researcher and researched work as equals.
- Accountability is to both the 'scientific' community and 'grassroots'.

Philpott is keenly aware of three 'crucial themes' in all research, namely participation, knowledge and power. It is significant that he emphasises participation, not so much of the observer (which is built in anyway) as of the researched in all levels of the research process. The crucial question is how Philpott went about applying the above insights in the conduct of his Bible study group meeting at the Amawoti squatter camp.

His research was conducted over a period of four years (July 1988 to December 1992). From 1989 Philpott, a 'white and privileged theologian and researcher' (Philpott 1993:18), together with his wife, took up residence at the Amawoti squatter camp. During this period 'the researcher was involved in a wide range of community activities through the Ilimo Community Project' (Philpott 1993:19). Philpott's research focus was a Bible study group consisting of community members 'who were also staff members of the Ilimo Community Project' (Philpott 1993:19). Whilst living in the Amawoti squatter camp, Philpott was approached by a group from the community '[who] initially expressed interest in discussing questions which they had concerning Christianity' (Philpott 1993:25). The final Bible study group consisted of staff members in the community organisation which was headed by Philpott.

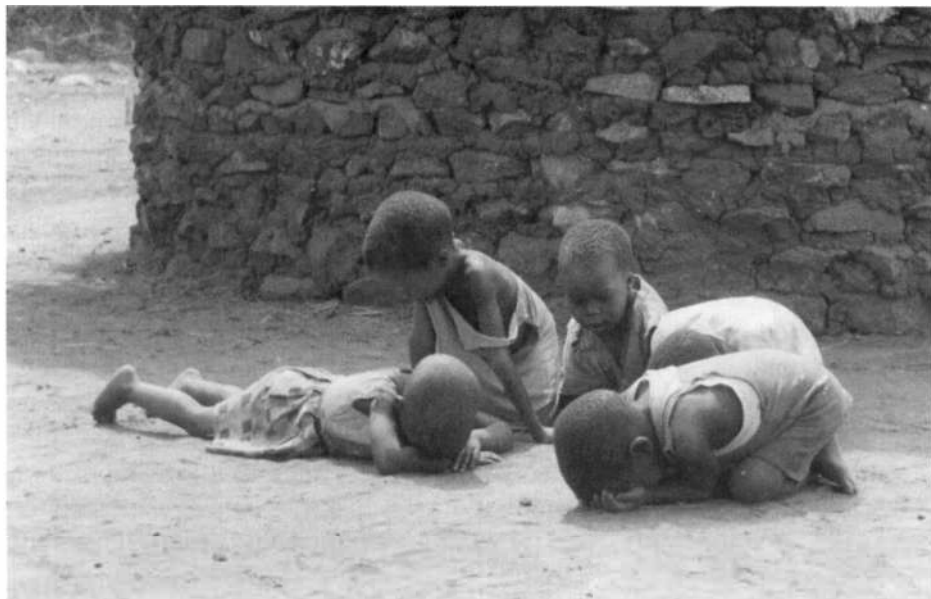
The Bible study group met weekly and conducted their Bible studies in a discussion group format rather than one in which the researcher preached (Philpott 1993:26). After meeting for a period of three months, without focusing on any particular theme or passage of the Bible, the group took a break for two months. After this they met again, this time with a clearer focus. Biblical passages about Jesus were to be their focus and the 'researcher identified the kingdom of God as a central theme of the studies, particularly as presented in the parables' (Philpott 1993:26). To record the

near Venda, were poet-theologians engaged in a *multi-dimensional*<sup>28</sup> religious experience. For Naudé therefore, it is crucial for a researcher into religious communities to grasp the epistemological significance (and problematic nature) of religious experience in its multi-dimensional totality. Once this has been grasped, one or more dimensions may be selected for data collection and another may be assumed as a methodological starting point. For example, in his study of the hymns of the rural ZCC congregation, Naudé derives his research material from the narrative dimension (singing, prayer, preaching, etc) and yet as a methodological starting point he chooses the experiential dimension. Note how his epistemological ideology affects Naudé's (1995:8) definition and aim of his research:

This study is a study in Christian theology. It seeks to understand phenomenologically the meaning of the positive, mediated, communal, religious experience of a small African congregation. Through an analysis of the narrative dimension (freely sung hymns), and implying the other dimensions of a religion, this study attempts to construct the poorly developed doctrinal aspect. I hope that this will illustrate a doing of systematic theology on the basis of experientially transmitted oral theology and that this will enhance the African voice in ecumenical dialogue.

Assuming that the experiential is an important window into religious experience, Naudé briefly reviews the 'experiential quality of three major theological currents' (Naudé 1995:8ff), namely post-Enlightenment European theology, liberation theology and African theology. He sees recourse to experience (rather than rationality) as being the common denominator of all these theologies. However, he points out that, of the three theological trends, African theology relates uniquely to experience in that 'it does not react to a preceding form of rationality ... [and African theology] must be seen as a pre- or rather non-Enlightenment context' (Naudé 1995:19). For Naudé therefore this pre-enlightenment experiential African theology is an alternative to the dominance of Western and liberation theologies, both of which basically and merely respond to the experiential poverty of the Enlightenment.

What I have described above are the theological and ideological presuppositions with which Naudé approaches his study of the hymns of a rural ZCC congregation. It is against this background that we must understand his characterisation of the Itsani ZCC congregants as poet-theologians, bathing



In all AICs no celebration and proclamation in worship is complete without prayer



(1984d) point of departure, namely that all African theologies are concerned with liberation. The avoidance of intellectual black thought in observer-type theological research is short-sighted and dangerous. I have felt for a long time, for example, that too large and too artificial a wall is often built between AICs and other black churches. The reality is that growing sections (for example worship) of traditional black churches – the so-called mission churches – are becoming AIC and Pentecostal in both theology and praxis. It therefore does not make sense to be too rigid in separating Mission Churches and AICs.

- Between Philpott and Naudé we have (participant) observer-based research methodologies at their most critical and most sophisticated. In this case one may only express a wish that all observer-research theologians may take careful heed of the valuable reflection of these two authors. Yet the myth of objectivity continues to plague many observer-research theologians. All too often, the researchers try hard to persuade us that they are letting the sources speak for themselves, when their own voices are actually drowning the sources. Let this be established once and for all: the sources can speak for themselves only before we lay our hands, eyes and minds on them!

Even for Philpott and Naudé, their well-thought-out theoretical reflections on methodology are more easily said than done. Philpott's promise of involving the community in the entire research process goes up in smoke. What Philpott gets out of his research project in Amawoti is qualitatively more than the community benefits from him. A careful reading of Naudé reveals that he is listening more to himself and his academic colleagues than to the ZCC peasant congregation. How much could he see and hear after three brief visits? Besides, his findings are greatly marred by gross mistranslations and misspellings of African languages.

- Genuine humility and genuine modesty must inspire all theological research. The tongue-in-cheek confession that one is 'a white and privileged theologian and researcher' (Philpott 1993:18) is quite patronising and superfluous to the integrity of one's research. White researchers must meaningfully identify specific shortcomings such as language, fear, racism and privilege and then go on to show and take practical steps to remedy these shortcomings, if they are genuine

had to deal with the questions, 'What am I, as a white person, part of the oppressor group, doing amongst black people? What right do I have to be here? Will I cope with being here? Will I understand what happens here?' If erstwhile white researchers could brush these questions aside on the basis of either a white-man's-burden missionary conviction or belief in scientific objectivity, both these premises are so weakened that they are unable to offer complete solace for modern researchers. That the researchers and the methods are overwhelmingly white whilst the researched are overwhelmingly black is a serious methodological issue needing considered attention and not cliché-type excuses. We must constantly ask ourselves, 'What is going on here?' To that extent we may need to be analytical even of the well-publicised hospitality of grassroots communities to researchers.

The point I am making is that researchers – all researchers – are not neutral observers and collectors of data. Nor are they viewed as such by the 'grassroots' communities in which they work. To that extent therefore, no one is 'qualified' to do grassroots research. But none less so than the researcher who is unconscious of the race-class-gender-*ladenness* of his or her research activity.

- The question of theoretical frameworks and interpretative strategies and categories raised by Mosala is crucial. AIC researchers must bid farewell to their purported theoretical innocence and theoretical indifference. They cannot present AICs from the point of view of the 'ordinary members' of these churches. Researchers must therefore be upfront and thoughtful about their interpretative strategies. Are African culture and mission Christianity the best or only categories against which these churches can be studied? Unfortunately even these categories are often approached and discussed in stereotypical, unproblematic, uninnovative ways so that they end up 'multiplying the confusions and extend[ing] the mythologies'.
- Finally, are grassroots researches of any value for South African theology? Most definitely. Theology is not and should not be a closed system. It cannot afford to be a closed system during our times. For this reason, the double-edged uncertainty with which I opened this essay is a necessary one. What I must point out, however, is that there is no such thing as a purely grassroots theology, devoid of intellectualism. Therefore the difference between what I have called grassroots theologies and

- Du Plessis, J 1911. *A history of Christian missions in South Africa*. London: Longmans, Green & Co.
- Hewson, L A 1952. *An introduction to South African Methodists*. Cape Town: Standard Press.
- Institute for Contextual Theology 1985. *Speaking for ourselves*. Braamfontein: Institute for Contextual Theology.
- Kiernan, J P 1990. *The production and management of therapeutic power in Zionist Churches within a Zulu City*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen.
- Kruger, M A 1971. *Die Zion Christian Church: - 'n religieuse Bantoebeweging in 'n tyd van ontwrigting?* Potchefstroom: PU vir CHO.
- Krüger, J S 1995. *Along edges: religion in South Africa: Bushman, Christian, Buddhist*. Pretoria: Unisa Press.
- Kruss, G 1985. Religion, class and culture: indigenous churches in South Africa, with special reference to Zionist-Apostolics. MA thesis, Cape Town. University of Cape Town.
- Kuzwayo, A W Z 1979. A history of Ethiopianism in South Africa with particular reference to the American Zulu Mission. MA thesis, Pretoria: Unisa Press.
- Landman, C, Pretorius, H L & Rykheer J. *A preliminary bibliography of published material on the African Independent Churches*. Pretoria: Unisa Press.
- Lea, A 1926. *The Native Separatist Church Movement in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Juta & Co.
- Lorum, C T 1926. 'The Separatist Church Movement'. *International Review of Missions* (Special double Africa Number) (1926):476-482.
- Lubbe, G 1995. 'The role of religion in the process of nation-building: from plurality to pluralism'. *Religion and Theology* 2(2).
- Lukhaimane, E K 1980. The Zion Christian Church of Ignatius (Engenas) Lekganyane, 1924 to 1948: an African experiment with Christianity. MA dissertation, Pietersburg: University of the North.

- Hope: South African Essays in Honour of Beyers Naudé*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Mosala, I 1989a. 'Prospects for the future and building alliances'. In Maimela, S & Hopkins, D (eds) 1989. *We are one voice: black theology in the USA and South Africa*. Braamfontein: Skotaville.
- Mosala, I 1989b. 'Race, class and gender as hermeneutical factors in the African Independent Churches' appropriation of the Bible'. Pretoria: Human Science Research Council, (unpublished).
- Motlhabi, M 1986. 'The historical origins of black theology'. In Mosala, I J & Tlhangela, B (eds) 1986. *The Unquestionable Right to Be Free*. Maryknoll: Orbis.
- Mzimba, L 1927(?). 'The African Church'. In Dexter, J (ed) 1927(2) *Christianity and the natives of South Africa: a year-book of South African Missions*. Lovedale: Lovedale Press.
- Naudé, P 1995. *The Zionist Christian Church in South Africa: a case-study in oral theology*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen.
- Nolan, A 1988. *God in South Africa: the challenge of the Gospel*. Cape Town: David Philip.
- Ngubane, J B 1986a. 'African church independentism: an attempt at inculturation'. In Oosthuizen, G C (ed) 1986 *Religion alive: studies in the new movements and indigenous churches in Southern Africa*. Johannesburg: Hodder + Stoughton.
- Ngubane, J B 1986b. 'Theological roots of the African Independent Churches and their challenge to black theology'. In Mosala, I J & Tlhangela, B (eds) 1986. *The unquestionable right to be free*. Maryknoll: Orbis.
- Oosthuizen, G C 1968. *Causes of religious independentism in Africa*. Alice: Fort Hare University.
- Oosthuizen, G C 1975. *Pentecostal penetration into the Indian Community in South Africa*. Durban: Human Sciences Research Council.
- Pauw, B A. 1975 *Christianity and Xhosa tradition*. London: Oxford University Press.

- Vilakazi, A 1986. *Shembe: the revitalization of African society*. Johannesburg: Skotaville.
- Villa-Vicencio, C 1994. 'Are we still of any use? A question of social significance'. In Du Toit, C (ed) 1994. *Sociopolitical changes and the challenge to Christianity in South Africa*. Pretoria: Unisa.
- Villa-Vicencio, C 1992a. *A theology of reconstruction: nation building and human rights*. Cape Town: David Philip.
- Villa-Vicencio, C 1992b. 'Learning to say a theological "Yes". A new challenge for the church in South Africa'. *Word and Action/Woord en Daad* 32 (Dec/Jan 1992):11-18.
- Villa-Vicencio, C 1993. 'Beyond liberation theology: a new theology for South Africa'. *Challenge Magazine* (1993).
- West, G 1991. *Biblical hermeneutics of liberation: modes of reading the Bible in the South African context*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster.
- West, M 1975. *Bishops and prophets in a black city*. Cape Town: David Philip.

This account is part of a wider study (Hodgson forthcoming) and revolves around the tension between a lived Christianity and a received Christianity, between a this-worldly salvation and an other-worldly salvation, between a people's hagiography and the hagiography of an English religious community, the Society of the Sacred Mission.

Over the years Mantsopa's followers have invested the places associated with her at Modderpoort – the cave chapel, her grave and the spring near her old home – with sacred meanings rooted in their African past. From the 1950s onwards, a growing confidence among black people in trying to integrate their Christian faith with African consciousness and express such an incarnated spirituality corporately in order to meet their immediate needs, led to the development of an informal Mantsopa pilgrimage movement. However, such an African initiated popular religion, both within and without the Anglican Church, was bound to conflict with the English missionaries' concern to maintain the integrity and authority of Anglican doctrine and practice in the name of St Augustine. This led to overt competition for the legitimate ownership and interpretation of a shared set of sacred symbols which, in turn, were invested with quite different patterns of meaning by the religious aggregations involved.

In the South African situation of the time, such a religious conflict had implications far beyond the 'gospel and culture' debate. On the one hand, the missionaries had charge of the mission farm and sought to control access of black pilgrims to their holy places, and to regulate the forms of worship allowed on mission property so that they conformed to Anglican norms. On the other hand, the pilgrims were searching for spiritual liberation and a sense of belonging in the midst of intense alienation, oppression and suffering. Their primary need was to be linked to the ultimately real whose characteristics would necessarily be determined by their socio-cultural and political experience. The cultic practices associated with Mantsopa offered them direct access to, and control of, spiritual power as they sought a healing that embraced the whole of their lives. For many, this was integral to their ongoing struggle for political liberation, a strategy for survival that incorporated the realisation of an African spirituality beyond white control. Symbolic power was intimately connected with political power.

expanding kingdom, the boundaries of which were defined by those who recognised his authority (Sanders 1975; Thompson 1975). According to African custom, the land belonged to the people, there being no concept of individual ownership, but the principal chief had the power to apportion its settlement.

As an old woman, Mantsopa recalled how her people, the Mokoena of Monaheng, suffered the horrors of famine during the *Lifaqane*.<sup>5</sup> They were unable to sow crops at Mekoatleng because of the constant raiding. The 'children of the famine' had to be fed on game instead of *mabele* (millet porridge) as soon as they were weaned, the San showing the Koena how to trap wild animals in branch-covered pits lined with sharp stakes. Mantsopa had been taken captive by 'the Mankoane, who swept down the country in pursuit of Pakalitha and his Mahlubi (Hlubi)', scattering her people northwards. As the famine continued, her Zulu captors and her own people began to eat human flesh. Mantsopa's father was eaten by people of the Crocodile clan, the very family into which her grandson Nteke later married. After six months, some of her people came to trade animal skins for corn with her captors. Her master overcame his wife's objections to her meeting them, saying, 'Let a Mosuto visit a Basuto'. On the second visit she fled. Her earlobes were forever distended from wearing huge Zulu earrings.<sup>6</sup>

There is a Sotho proverb, 'Marry me, my uncle's son, that the cattle may remain in the kraal'. Accordingly, it was proposed that Lekote, son of Makhetha, should marry Koena-li-fule (Mantsopa), his uncle's daughter. But Lekote died shortly after the dowry cattle had been handed over and so his elder brother, Selatile, 'married her for the grave', allowing her children to take Lekote's name.<sup>7</sup> After the murder of Makhetha by younger brothers of Moshoeshoe, Selatile was given prime land at Lehlajoeng (Lekhalong) on the west side of the Caledon River (later called Modderpoort). Koena-li-fule's children were born here and she took the name Mantsopa ('MaNtsopha), mother of her firstborn, Ntsopa. Her other children were Motsielehi, Tsiu and Sebilane.<sup>8</sup>

---

5 The children had cried in fear when they heard the lowing of the invaders' stray cow; they thought it was a jackal which had come to get them – so unaccustomed were they to having cattle around.

6 Norton, *SAJS*, p2. Moshoeshoe's grandfather was also eaten by raiders. Mantsopa described how a victim was cooked alive in a pot, one joint of a finger being cut off. Fr Norton was taken aback when she asked him, 'You, did your folk eat men?'

7 For information on Makhetha, see Thompson 1975:45–46, 57–58.

8 Personal information from Samuel Joel Selatile, 1982.

## Mantsopa as a seer and war doctor

After Mantsopa settled at Modderpoort she began to foretell future events. Her authority in doing this seems to have been legitimated by her inheriting the spiritual gifts of her uncle, Mohlomi. Mohlomi, son of Monyane, served as a much-revered seer, traditional doctor, and political adviser to Moshoeshoe, there being no distinction between the sacred and the profane in the African worldview.<sup>9</sup> As war doctor, he was credited with the power of prophecy as well as being able to influence the course of battles. But Sotho tradition remembers him as a 'messenger of peace', who said, 'It is better to thrash the corn than to sharpen the spear'. Moshoeshoe is believed to have followed Mohlomi's advice to 'govern only by peace', this being the crux of his success. Mohlomi was thought to have a special relationship with *Modimo* (God). He travelled widely and won renown as a healer and rainmaker (*Moroka-pula*).<sup>10</sup> On his deathbed, around 1816, he fell into a trance in which he supposedly met with his ancestors. He later prophesied that after his death 'a cloud of red dust will come out of the east and consume our tribes. The father will eat his children'. This was fulfilled in the *Lifaqane* a few years later.

In 1833 Moshoeshoe moved decisively to obtain some measure of protection against his enemies. In a diplomatic move, he sought the foreigners' power in education and technology by inviting members of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society to become established within his kingdom. These missionaries could not avoid political involvement, since border conflict with the Boers continued to escalate over the next thirty years, and land disputes were settled by a succession of British officials at the Cape according to ever-changing political alignments and government policies. Moshoeshoe was determined to keep Britain as an ally. In spite of this, and even though the Sotho remained undefeated in 'wars' against the Boers and the British, their territory was systematically whittled away in peace settlements as the

---

9 L B J Machobane, 'Mohlomi: doctor, traveller and sage', *Journal of Southern African Historical Studies*, 2 (1976):5–27. See Thompson 1975:24–27, and Sanders 1975:21–24, for a critique of the Mohlomi tradition.

10 For information on Basotho 'doctors', 'diviners' and 'seers', see AT Maboee, *Modimo: Christian Theology in a Sotho Context*, ed B Domeris and J Hodgson (Lumko, 1982); G Setiloane, *The image of God among the Sotho-Tswana* (Rotterdam: A A Balkema, 1976), 46–63, 205–206.

harmony for the Sotho (Thompson 1975:165–166, 207 note 3 for primary sources, 212).

Before the war of 1865–1866 with the Free State, Mantsopa and other diviners confidently prophesied victory, but this was not realised. Mantsopa's directives were supposedly ignored.<sup>13</sup> The anguish of the Sotho, already suffering from the scorched earth policy instituted by the Free State, was exacerbated by the loss of two-thirds of their best arable land in the peace treaty that followed, and Moshoeshoe now sought to come under British rule. Initially this was refused, but continuing conflict finally led to annexation by the British in 1868 and the establishment of 'Basutoland' as a Crown Colony. The border with the Orange Free State was finally fixed along the Caledon River, as in present-day Lesotho, giving the Boers the 'conquered territory' to the west. Mantsopa and fellow Sotho residents were threatened with expulsion.<sup>14</sup>

## Mantsopa as a transitional figure

At this stage Mantsopa became a transitional figure. While continuing to function according to past traditions, she also sought to incorporate the spiritual power of the incoming culture, but on the Sotho's own terms. For her, the *Modimo* of Sotho belief was supplemented by an intercessory divinity, the '*He, Him*' of her prophecy, who became identified with the God of the missionaries. Also, rather than using the customary divining bones, she was inspired by visions (Thompson 1975:207). Joseph Orpen, sometime adviser to Moshoeshoe, notes that in 1862 Mantsopa augmented her considerable authority by claiming 'to have been to heaven to see God'. She and a blind boy called Katsi now professed to preach 'the God of the missionaries', except that, whereas the missionaries received inspiration second-hand from a book, they were directly inspired and could identify the missionaries' mistakes. They taught that

---

13 Thompson 1975:233. Fr Norton, SSM, records that Sotho chiefs got into difficulties through failing to follow Mantsopa's advice to 'leave the cattle alone and only fight the owners'. 'What does the woman with short skirts know?' they rashly argued. 'The War of Sir John Brand (1865–1866)' (parallel texts in Sesotho and English), Norton Papers, UCT Libraries.

14 This was at the Second Treaty of Aliwal North. Basutoland finally became a separate British Protectorate in 1884.

practice, possibly showing Zulu influence. During the severe drought of 1862 she travelled throughout Lesotho at Moshoeshoe's behest.<sup>19</sup> Such was people's reverence for her that they swore by her name, as they were accustomed to do with the name of a chief, 'Tsetle nkhone Mantsopa'.<sup>20</sup>

Mantsopa's role as adviser to Moshoeshoe ended abruptly with the British take-over in 1868. Significantly, she was baptised that same year by the French missionary Theophile Jousse, and given the name Anna (Annah).<sup>21</sup> The missionaries had been expelled from 'the conquered territory' three years earlier, and had only just returned. Meanwhile, a revival led by Sotho evangelists swept through the country, resulting in many converts being made (Ellenberger 1933:18–21). The withdrawal of the French Protestants to Lesotho coincided with the coming of the Anglican missionaries to Modderpoort, and Mantsopa joined the new church. But her relationship with the spirit world was 'in her blood', and she continued as a rainmaker. She was apparently stopped from practising 'black magic' (medicines for incisions, etc), but she still used herbs. Because 'her spiritual gifts were used to help people, and not to make herself great', her reputation grew and people came from afar to consult her.<sup>22</sup>

Professor Gabriel Setiloane describes Mantsopa's rainmaking practices as they were experienced by his maternal grandmother as a child:

Little girls of pre-puberty age used to be sent to go and beg her for rain. She would fill their pots with water from a creek nearby, and send them home with an injunction not to look behind them, but to hurry to cross the Caledon to the side on which their home was because then 'rain would be following hard on their footsteps', and, if they tarried, the river would fill up and be uncrossable. Sure enough, as they arrived at the river the first drops of heavy rain would begin to fall, and by the

---

19 For information on Sotho rainmaking, see P Bereng, *I am a Mosotho* (Roma: National University of Lesotho, 1982), 33–35; C Murray, 'Ritual belief and practice', in *Transformations on the Highveld: the Tswana and Southern Sotho*, (ed) W Lye & C Murray (Cape Town: David Philip, 1980), 122; J Sechefo, *Customs and superstitions in Basutoland* (Roma, n.d.), 16–17; Setiloane 1976:74–76.

20 Khakhella interview.

21 Thompson 1975:207 note 3, 316. The Taung chief Moletsane was the other notable convert. Mantsopa's son Tsiu had four wives, but all his children became Anglican Church workers.

22 Interviews with Dr Khakhella, Maseru, 8 February 1986, and Mr M Damane, Roma, 30 August 1983.

welcomed the bishop's promises of Anglican missionaries despite the vehement protests of long-established French and Methodist missions (Hinchliff 1963:77–80; Sanders 1975:271, 273, 276). But priests were not forthcoming and so Twells, a staunch Tractarian, tapped into the newly restored Catholic life in the Church of England and established a monastic order, the Missionary Brotherhood of St Augustine of Hippo (SSA), to serve his diocese as a self-supporting community.<sup>26</sup> With Canon Beckett at their head, five brethren left England in 1867 to become the first Anglican religious in Africa.<sup>27</sup> Because of continued unrest in the 'conquered territory', they were unable, until April 1869, to settle on the farms at Modderpoort which had been bought by Bishop Twells.<sup>28</sup> Canon Beckett describes the move:

After unloading our wagon we turned our attention to the ordering of a cave, in which we have made our temporary abode. By building up a wall of stones we have contrived to enlarge the area, so as to get a room 12 ft. by 14 for a chapel, besides a small sleeping room, screened off by a large detached stone. Both rooms we have much improved by digging away the floors, so that I can now stand upright in the chapel and *sit* upright in the bedroom. We are now preparing to make bricks with which to build up the exposed side of the cave, and make it proof against the cold weather, which we begin to feel. As yet

---

26 Whereas St Benedict founded an order for laymen to live apart, St Augustine, as a bishop, founded the Augustinian Order of Canons to train clergy to work amongst people. Similarly, the SSA would live simply, holding all things in common, their daily rule of life consisting of prayer, study and manual labour, with fasts; and festivals being strictly observed. They would do any kind of mission work at the bishop's behest. See the confidential 'Letter to the English Committee promoting the mission to the Orange Free State', *Bloemfontein Occasional Papers II* 1865:7–23. The SSA Rules were later published in the *Quarterly paper of the OFS Mission (QOFS)* 18 (October 1872):4–5.

27 The group consisted of Henry Beckett ('a Cambridge man' like Twells and a Canon of Cumbrae), John Williams, William Crisp (ordained later), a carpenter and a bricklayer. A surgeon had gone ahead. See the unpublished 'Account of St Augustine's brotherhood, Modderpoort, 1865 onwards', by Father Carmichael, SSM (Diocese of Bloemfontein archives (DBA), FAB207). In 1874 Bishop Webb founded a women's community in Bloemfontein, the Community of St Michael and All Angels.

28 They had two disastrous years at Springfield, a hired farm near Bloemfontein, but successfully built up the new Anglican mission at Thaba'Nchu, as detailed in the unpublished 'Journal of William Crisp 1867–1900' (copy in my possession). See also *QOFS* 2 (May 1868):2–11; and C Lewis & G Edwards, *Historical records of the Church of the Province of South Africa* (SPCK: London, 1934):401–404.



As rain starts falling during rain ceremony at Vembe shrine, Matopo hills, priestess Itombiyamazulu symbolically enacts with calabash the creator-God's apportionment of life-giving water to creation (top)

Drenched in the downpour the priestess thanks Mwari for a prompt response to her rain request (bottom)



local marriage customs which necessitated confession and public penance, if not excommunication.<sup>37</sup>

Initially, the SSM was asked to specialise in 'native work' (thus reinforcing racial segregation in the local church), and developed the mission field in Lesotho, Thaba 'Nchu and the northern Free State. Later on, white parishes were added to their care.<sup>38</sup> Part of their large holding of land was leased to local farmers and this provided some income. Perhaps the SSM's most significant contribution was to establish Modderpoort as an educational centre for African and coloured people, offering a range of education from primary schooling through to teacher training.<sup>39</sup> The government legislation in 1954, however, precipitated the schools' closure. Between 1957 and 1965, the buildings housed a Test School for African ordinands, preparing them for theological education, but apartheid legislation was again enforced. Since then Modderpoort has been used as a conference and retreat centre (Hinchliff 1963:236-239).

The SSM attempted to stimulate African vocations to the religious life, but when the first group of postulants was professed in 1932, it was into their own order, the Community of the Servants of Christ (*Mothaka oa Bahlanka ba Krestu*, the MBK), that they were inducted, and they wore brown cassocks instead of black. Racial discrimination was excused on grounds of their not having received a classical Kelham training. Father Patrick Motsemoholo Maekane made his life vows in 1942 and, as sole survivor of the community, had a gifted if somewhat eccentric ministry in indigenising the religious life in Lesotho.<sup>40</sup>

A widespread network of readers and catechists formed the backbone of the SSM's work in Lesotho, and they would gather at Modderpoort for the greater festivals.<sup>41</sup> The cave became the focus of special services in honour of the

---

37 See *St Augustine's Mission Journal*, 1910-1932, and regular published SSM reports.

38 By 1945 SSM was looking after three quarters of the Orange Free State Anglicans, with 71 mission churches under its care.

39 These included a coloured school, an African primary school, and a co-educational high school and teacher training college for black people (opened in 1929) with a practising school. See Fr Firkins, SSM, 'Moederpoort', *The Church Chronicle* 6 (1930):361-362.

40 See Hodgson, 'Ecclesial communities', and Sr Theresia Mary, SPB, *Father Patrick Maekane, MBK* (Lesotho: CPSA, 1987). Fr Patrick founded a Sotho women's order, The Handmaidens of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Mother of Mercy.

41 The rebuilt priory church was consecrated in 1903 and the large mission church in 1937.

countrywide, as did black Methodist ministers. The Rev Andrew Losaba, former moderator of the Methodist Church, regards Mantsopa 'as a black prophet who was literally speaking to God and sending a message to God. This woman, and Ntsikana, are the most outstanding black people who proved to me that the blacks had contact with God all the time'.<sup>45</sup>

SSA records note that a Ladybrand farmer used the cave temporarily before them, as did a Sotho family. According to the Mantsopa tradition, the cave was hers; 'it was the place where she used to confer with the spirits of her ancestors. She gave it to the missionaries.' To Koena Christians, including her descendants, this was 'an acted parable of their handing over their sacred place to God, and they rejoiced always in the opportunity of worshipping in it when they happened to be in those parts'.<sup>46</sup> This folk tradition is strongly contested by the SSM, epitomising the struggle to interpret and control a shared set of sacred symbols which legitimate quite different needs. For African Christians, the cave tradition authenticates the prestige myth that

... Mantsopa gave the fathers the cave, and so she approved of the church. Therefore, people who follow after her must also approve of the church. They identify her as opening the way. Many of the things she prophesied came true after she died and so when the church came with its prophetic message, she was more and more believed.<sup>47</sup>

What is certain is that Mantsopa remained living in a house across the poort until her death in 1906. As a centenarian, stories of her early life were recorded by Father Norton, SSM, but he makes no mention of contemporary folklore. During the Boer War she is said to have advised the SSA fathers of an impending Boer attack, enabling them to build a fort and, while waiting for ammunition, to use a big tree to simulate a canon as defence. Tradition also credits her with healing the sick through prayer and with water, so authenticating the healing cult that has arisen around her spring, cave and grave.<sup>48</sup>

---

45 Interviews with the Rev Chris Kokoali, 1982; the Very Rev Israel Qwelane, Dean of Maseru, at Modderpoort, 1982; four Methodist ministers including the Rev Andrew Losaba, Zwelitsha Methodist manse, 22 October 1978.

46 Selatile testimony, January 1982; Fr Fowler's undated account; interviews with numerous black pilgrims and local clergy, 1982-86.

47 Interview with the Rev Chris Kokoali, 1982.

48 Tradition from Leonard Botha's grandfather, Brightside, Ladybrand, 28 August, 1983.

blankets to ward off the cold. After a long wait, they filed slowly and reverently into the cave and up the rough candle-lit steps to the altar, while a number of self-styled ushers controlled the flow. After having knelt before the altar in twos and threes to pray, they left written notes and offerings of money on it. Like the Zionists, they collected soil from under Mantsopa's stone on the way out, marking their foreheads with the sign of the cross or rubbing it on their bodies. Small children were sent under the stone to scoop out soil to take away. Most people went directly from the cave to pray at Mantsopa's grave in the cemetery close by, placing a stone on the growing mound and possibly other offerings. The more sturdy then crossed the railway line to Mantsopa's Poort to collect water from the spring, as had the Zionists before them.

After lunch it was the clergy party's turn to visit the cave. After prayers in the priory chapel, they moved in procession to the cave, singing St Augustine's hymn in Sesotho all the way. A robed cross-bearer, an assortment of acolytes with candles, and a thurifer swinging generous quantities of incense were followed by the robed choir, a brass band of elderly uniformed scouts with trumpets and drums, the white mission priests and two bishops, all fully vested. Bishop Fortescue Makhetha, the retired suffragan bishop of Lesotho, was the only African cleric. The small bishops' party went into the cave and formal prayers were offered, including the Collect for St Augustine's Day, together with clouds of incense, I being the sole audience. Out of sight of the masses, this seemed to be a way of reinforcing the liturgical power of the church's authority over this hallowed place.

The diocesan bishop with attendant acolytes then climbed above the cave and, with drums rolling, blessed all those gathered below and the land beyond as far as the Maluti Mountains in Lesotho. Finally, the church party processed to the cemetery. There was a slight hiatus when women kneeling around Mantsopa's grave remained seemingly oblivious to the bishop's presence. More formal prayers were offered, including more at the graves of the founding fathers, but by now the African following had fallen away. The bishop's perambulation was an impressive attempt by the church establishment to take ritual control of all the sacred sites at the mission, together with the landscape beyond.

There was little sense of engaging with the outward expression of a peoples' spirituality. What was evident was, rather, a desire to suppress it. Paulo Suess argues that 'it is a constant fact of history that a non-inculturated Church always places popular religion in danger of paganism, heresy or syncretism'.

and maize pits, would be typical offerings to an African *ngaka* (diviner, doctor or holy person) or to the ancestors as a sign of respect. Blue and white beads and prayer sticks are probably left by diviners or Zionist prophets in search of supernatural power. Other items such as coins, letters, race cards, photographs, certificates, and candles relate to new contexts with new meanings. In the past the slaughtering of animals was allowed as part of the celebratory feast to feed people from afar. But because of the association with ancestor rituals this was stopped and money is now offered instead. On Boxing Day the altar is piled high with cakes and sweets as gifts from children.

Because Mantsopa is believed to have slept on 'her' stone, the soil around it has become charged with her aura or *numen*, as in traditional belief. Through the soil, Mantsopa's sacred power is supposedly transmitted to her followers, as if they were able to own something physical of God, something which might confer healing, good fortune or protection.<sup>50</sup> Ash is also taken from the ash heap (*thuthubulu*) where she lived and it is used to mark a cross on the forehead, as is also done with soil. This usage links pilgrims directly to Mantsopa, and it is not a sacramentally mediated penitential rite before God, as is the signing of ash on foreheads by a priest on Ash Wednesday. People also claim to communicate audibly with Mantsopa by sleeping in the cave. One woman who had asked her for rain maintained that Mantsopa blamed the drought on lazy clergy who were not praying. (The father concerned says that he prayed with her and it rained!)

The burial place is sacred because the ancestor is 'sleeping' there. If a person has been absent at the time of burial, the time-honoured ritual involves taking a small stone, spitting on it, placing it on the grave, and saying, 'Please sleep well for us'. Mantsopa's followers might say, 'Rest in peace'. Because she is an ancestor to them all, her grave is piled high with stones. Potsherds found on the grave would retain their traditional use as containers for burning odorous herbs as incense to the ancestors in the ritual of asking for protection from evil powers or as a means of purification. Seeds of maize and corn would have been buried with the deceased to

---

50 Soil around the grave at Roma of Lesotho's first Roman Catholic missionary, Fr Joseph Gerard, who died in 1914, is also thought to have miraculous properties. His body was exhumed twice, in 1940 and 1956, and was found to be perfectly preserved. For a discussion of the symbolic associations of the sacred (*numen*), see the interview with Dr Khakhethla, 1986; T L Manyel, OMI, *Religious symbols of the Basotho* (Mazenod, 1992), 80-90.

response has meant that the deepening cleavage between popular religion and the church has had more radical implications. There has been no informed objective critique that might have assisted black Anglicans to explore a relevant African theology.<sup>54</sup> Field research in the 1980s has shown a hardening of attitudes, even among those SSM fathers who had initially been sympathetic to Mantsopa.

- 'We have been preaching the gospel here for 120 years and it still runs off like water off a duck's back.'
- 'Discussion in our clergy chapter has shown that the Basuto do not believe in redemption through the blood of Jesus, but in the protection of their ancestors, in salvation through family. This is quite contrary to the Christian gospel.'
- 'I appreciate that Mantsopa is mother to the Basuto and I don't object to people having a special person. I do object to them worshipping her as an ancestor. The faith in Mantsopa is overriding, stronger than their faith in salvation in Jesus. If anything is wrong in their lives they go to Mantsopa or the ancestors, not the church.'
- 'The Basuto go through life being protected from witchcraft whether this is for a car or a child. People don't say the Rosary. They wear it because it is a charm or a protection.'
- 'A native Roman Catholic catechist was found lying naked on Mantsopa's stone. I think he was looking for help at the wrong stone.'

The mission's earlier sympathetic approach is found in a framed photograph of an aged Mantsopa with her daughter on the cave wall. The text recalls her renown during her lifetime as a seer and bringer of rain, and how she retained her reputation 'as a holy woman with charismatic authority in prayer and healing' after her baptism. The text continues: 'Belief in the power of the ancestors to aid those who still live on the earth is typified by the devotion which many express when they come to Modderpoort to seek help in their daily life.' Other frames contain a photo of the founders' graves, histories of the SSA and the SSM, and a more recent notice signifying that the altar is at the heart of the cave:

---

<sup>54</sup> For a discussion of God and the African past, see A Walls, *The missionary movement in Christian history* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996) 94–100.

This supports the argument that Africanisation in the church must come from a lived experience and not from preconceived plans from on high (Sempore 1986:51).

## Bibliography

- Cumpsty, J S 1991. *Religion as belonging*. New York: University Press of America.
- De Kock, L 1996. *Civilising barbarians*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.
- Ellenberger, V 1933. *Landmarks in the story of the French Protestant Church in Basutoland, 1833–1933*. Morija: Sesuto Book Depot.
- Greinacher, N & Mette, N (eds) 1986. *Popular religion*. Edinburgh: Concilium, T & T Clark.
- Heinau, E 1987. 'Popular religiosity and Christian Faith'. In Greinacher, N & Mette, N (eds) 1986. *Popular religion*. Edinburgh: Concilium, T & T Clark.
- Hinchliff, P 1963. *The Anglican Church in South Africa*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd.
- Hodgson, J. 'Stones the builders rejected': *ecclesial communities of the excluded within the Anglican Church in Southern Africa*. Forthcoming.
- Sanders, P 1975. *Moshoeshoe: Chief of the Sotho*. Cape Town: David Philip.
- Sempore, S 1986. 'Popular Religion in Africa'. In Greinacher, N & Mette, N (eds) 1986. *Popular religion*. Edinburgh: Concilium, T & T Clark.
- Suess, P 1986. 'The creative and normative role of popular religion in the Church'. In Greinacher, N & Mette, N (eds) 1986. *Popular religion*. Edinburgh: Concilium, T & T Clark.
- Thompson, L 1975. *Survival in two worlds: Moshoeshoe of Lesotho 1786–1870* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

hanging on the wall of the living room, thus acting as a constant reminder of where the centre of the world is. But it goes much further than that; the notion of *qiblah* or 'prayer direction' gives orientation to a Muslim family's entire life. Not only does it determine the direction in which to pray five times a day, but also how beds, toilets and graves are positioned. It provides the focal point towards which the whole life of a Muslim is oriented. It thereby expresses the particularism of Islam, since it implies at once the centrality of the Arabic language and the life pattern (*sunnah*) of the Arabic prophet.

I have always found the symbolism of *qiblah* and *hajj* fascinating, to the extent that it attracted me to become a Muslim. In this regard I often thought of the words of Walter Freytag, the well-known German missiologist:

... understanding involves a two-way traffic. For you do not 'understand' until you have been touched (affected) yourself, until you get a new insight into who you are yourself ... In the study of other religions you can amass information about their scriptures and doctrines. But you have not understood them until you have been compelled to interpret your own Gospel in entirely new terms. You have not really understood another religion unless you have been tempted by the insights of this other religion (Warren 1961:164).

To begin to understand another religion is to be tempted by it, to come under its spell and to begin to feel in your own bones why it attracts its followers and keeps them loyal.

In the racist and divided South African society of the 1970s and 1980s the *hajj* radiated an egalitarian and inclusive message that spoke to me very strongly. The well-known Iranian Muslim scholar Ali Shariati expressed this message of the *hajj* as follows:

The scene is like the day of judgment. From one horizon to the other, a 'flood of whites' appears. All the people are wearing the Kafan [the white calico shroud in which Muslims are buried – JNJK]. No one can be recognized ... Names, races, nor social status make a difference in this great combination. An atmosphere of genuine unity prevails. It is a human show of Allah's unity ... In this desert all the nations and groups merge into one tribe. They face one Kaaba (Shariati:10f).

Personally I am delighted at this powerful symbol of unity in Islam, this 'treasure' of which Muslims are the custodians. But I am not jealous or

illiterate – being moulded into becoming one humanity, levelled by the grace of God. This is the most egalitarian and therefore the most subversive action in the church's repertoire. The Japanese American theologian Kosuke Koyama said during a visit to South Africa in 1983 that the reason that the Dutch Reformed Church could support apartheid and justify it theologically was that it did not have a well-developed eucharistic theology. Our pilgrimage towards the table of the crucified Christ unites us into a single humanity before the face of God. And that makes racism, sexism, snobism, capitalism (and any other form of apartheid on earth) strictly impossible.

But the Lord's Supper only becomes a pilgrimage when you are willing to get up from your seat and walk to the table with your brothers and sisters to eat bread and drink wine, and when you are willing to wait for all the others to finish eating and drinking. Such pilgrimage does not happen when people remain seated in their pews and are served communion where they are, as if they are bosses and madams. In terms of Victor Turner's ritual theory (Turner 1969), it is when participants become 'liminal', through being set apart from the surrounding society, that *communitas* develops among them and the ritual succeeds in 'doing its work'.

The Lord's Supper only becomes a pilgrimage to the centre of the world when the memory of Jesus is central to it; when a believing community re-tells the story of Jesus' life and death and re-enact his deeds until, through the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit, he becomes our contemporary. Then the walls of time melt away and the cross arises before us, so that we find ourselves standing at the centre of the world, before the very heart of God. This communal re-enactment of the words and deeds of Jesus, given its reality by the Holy Spirit, makes the Eucharist into a potent celebration of his presence, which dismantles the power of abstract and metaphysical thinking in the church.

During the *hajj*, pilgrims walk back and forth seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwa, to commemorate the frantic search of Hagar for water to save the life of her child, Ishmael. They also throw stones at two pillars that represent the 'satans' who tried to prevent Abraham from offering his child in obedience to God. By ritually re-enacting the deeds of Abraham and Hagar, pilgrims become the contemporaries of those prophets and so experience the presence of God in a new way. In a similar way, by the Holy Spirit, Christians travel to the heart of reality through communally reliving the last meal and the death of Jesus.

The skirt of Hajar was the area in which Ismail was raised. The house of Hajar is there. Her grave is near the third column of Kaaba.

What a surprise since no one, not even prophets, is supposed to be buried in mosques but in this case the house of a black maid is located next to Allah's house! Hajar, the mother of Ismail, is buried there. Kaaba extends toward her grave. As a result, Allah's house is directed toward her skirt!

There is a narrow passage between the wall (Hajar's skirt) and the Kaaba. When circumambulating around the Kaaba, Allah commanded that you must go around the wall (not through the passage) otherwise your *Hajj* will not be accepted.

Those who believe in monotheism and those who have accepted Allah's invitation to go to *Hajj* must touch this skirt when circumambulating the Kaaba. The grave of a black African maid and a good mother is now part of Kaaba; it will be circumambulated by man forever!

Allah, the Almighty, in His great and glorious divinity is all alone by Himself. He needs nobody and nothing. Nevertheless, among all His countless and eternal creatures, He has chosen one, mankind, the noblest of them.

From among all humanity: a woman  
From among all women: a slave  
And from among all slaves: a black maid!

The weakest and most humiliated one of His creatures was given a place at His side and a room in His house. He has come to her house and become her neighbour and roommate. So now there are two, Allah and Hajar, under the ceiling of this 'house'!

One finds this paradoxical identification of the Most High with the lowest of the low at key points in the biblical story:

I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians ... (Exodus 3:7f).

Thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are

But mission also means to listen to people – so intently that their views force you to think about your own faith in a completely new way . . .

Does all this mean, though, that I eventually withdraw into my Christian cocoon, so that I can smugly tell Muslims, 'What you have in your religion, I also have in mine!' If that were so, this encounter would have changed little in my life, except perhaps to strengthen the spirit of competition between Christians and Muslims. That would leave me inwardly more closed to Muslims than before the encounter, while giving the impression that I am more open – immunised against the ongoing challenge of Islam. That is why my pilgrim theology has a third dimension, the journey into the *future*.

## Forward to the future

Christ, the centre of the world, not only moves around on the periphery of *society*, but also on the boundaries of *time*. The adapted apocalyptic of the apostle Paul – the dynamic overlap between the 'old age' and the 'new age' – means that we are also called and drawn *forward* to a *new earth*. This dream of a new world of justice and peace means that Christian pilgrimage is not an escape from the world but a journey into the future of *this* world. It is a never-ending commitment to make this world more and more like the new world: without tears, without oppression, filled with love and justice. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we sigh and groan with the whole of creation as we long for the coming of God's kingdom. That is why the metaphor of Jesus as the bright *Morning Star* (Revelation 22:16) is so attractive to me. He announces the new day and is the guarantee that it is coming. We do not live at five minutes to twelve, as some preachers of doom would have us believe. No, we are living at five o'clock in the morning – it is becoming light in the east and the morning star is shining. Christians are people who are awake in the early hours of the morning and aware of the day that is dawning. They are the ones who have received the Holy Spirit as the firstfruits and guarantee of the end. But time and again we discover that we are not the only ones who are awake. In the half-light of the early morning, where we can see only dimly – as in a first-century mirror – we meet all kinds of people who are already awake.

The future is therefore wide open. In the end we do not travel to the Morning Star, but *under* him and *past* him into the new day. And so we find ourselves on this road surrounded by people of various religions – and of no religion – moving towards a new and human world. The image of Inus Daneel planting

trees in Zimbabwe, together with members of African Initiated Churches (AICs) and followers of the African traditional religion is deeply etched in my consciousness and has contributed significantly to the shape of this pilgrim theology. Under the slogan '*Pamberi nehondo remiti!*' (Forward the war of the trees!) he is on his own journey, together with fellow Africans, to God's future. When Christ eventually relinquishes his role of mediator, and God becomes all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28), the glory of the Morning Star will be swallowed by the sunshine of the day.

In the light of all this, the final salvation (or otherwise) of myself and people of other faiths and ideologies is not a central question in my pilgrim theology. Instead of asking the isolated question of what happens to people after death, I prefer to concentrate on the question of the *direction* or *quality* of a person's life here and now. In this I have been deeply challenged by insights from other religious traditions. The *Bhagavad Gita* says that we should do what is right without desiring a reward:

He who . . . abandons attachment, and thus acts, is not stained by sin, like a lotus leaf unstained by water (*Bhagavad Gita* 5:10).

Action which is enjoined and is free from attachment, and is done without passion and hate by one who does not wish for the fruit, is said to be of the character of goodness (*Bhagavad Gita* 18:23).

Like a lotus leaf, unstained by the water on which it floats, we need to do what is right without being stained by the desire for any reward. In similar vein the Muslim mystic Rabi'a of Basra said that a life of goodness should not be motivated by the fear of hell or the desire for paradise, but purely by love for God. Similarly, there are statues in which one hand of the Buddha has abnormal fingers: they are all of equal length, so that they touch the ground simultaneously, without forming a cupped (or 'grabbing') hand, expressing the fact that enlightenment means to overcome the desire to have and even the desire to be.

Faced by this evidence of authentic spirituality and humanity, it seems to me that the dividing line between the saved and the lost does not run *between* Christianity and other faiths but *through* Christianity as well as through all other faiths or ideologies. On the day of surprises some of the first will indeed be last and some of the last will actually be first. For this reason I gladly bear witness to Christ, in word and deed, to everyone I meet, and I gladly receive the witness of people from other faiths, allowing their

- Bunyan, J 1953 [1678]. *The pilgrim's progress*. London & Glasgow: Collins.
- Knitter, P F 1985. *No other name? A critical study of Christian attitudes towards the world religions*. Maryknoll: Orbis.
- Shariati, A nd. *Hajj and freedom*. Durban: Muslim Youth Movement.
- Turner, V 1969. *The ritual process: structure and anti-structure*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Warren, M 1961. 'The thought and practice of missions'. In *Basileia: Walter Freytag zum 60. Geburtstag*. Stuttgart: Evangelisches Missionsverlag.

deeper insight than I could otherwise have acquired in two years. For all this I am very grateful. I am also grateful for his openness to my thinking, which tends to be radical at times. Where we disagreed, he always gave me a fair, if critical, hearing and did not impose his own views – of which I in turn was sometimes critical. It was, for me, a free and fruitful learning climate.

In this essay I present what strike me as some fundamental conceptual differences between the African and the Western outlook, specifically as they affect worldview or, in the Western sense, religion. I do so from a non-Christian point of view, and obviously from the point of view of a white person who was brought up to 'think European', however much I may have immersed myself in my African lifeworld.

Understanding these differences could deepen and enrich cross-cultural communication and interaction on our subcontinent. In the present context they may also provide a fresh slant on the theology (enacted or otherwise) of AICs. The traditional theological loci – Christology, ecclesiology, pneumatology, etc – are no doubt useful analytical tools. But I have always felt that Christology in particular, as understood in traditional Christian theologies, is not directly applicable. What Inus has often described as a 'weak' Christology may simply be a very different one! Not being a theologian, I am skating on thin ice but shall return to this point nonetheless in my conclusion.

I should point out that I use the terms 'African' and 'Western/European' in a very generalised way. I am fully aware that neither of these worldviews or cultures is homogeneous, and that both are continually evolving. Both are fraught with their own inner contradictions and differences. A Spanish peasant Catholic may have more in common with Shona traditionalists than with German Protestant (or even fellow Catholic) theologians. Many of my black neighbours in Yeoville, Johannesburg, may have more in common with me than with rural black Zimbabweans – or, for that matter, with rural fellow South Africans. With these qualifications, however, the distinction still has some validity and remains useful for cross-cultural comparative purposes.

My respect for the African worldview, which is only beginning to take its place among the philosophies of the world and which is still greatly underestimated, even by some black African intellectuals, is evident in what follows. So is my intolerance of any preconceptions about the superiority of a technologically advanced but spiritually repressed, if not impoverished, Western civilisation.

submit, assumes, indeed insists on, *continuity* as a fundamental requirement of human life and wellbeing (Appiah 1992:203).

I am not saying that discontinuity necessarily implies fragmentation and conflict, although it may produce these effects. Neither does continuity necessarily imply a lack of dynamics and innovativeness, though it may give rise to such effects. I am not arguing the merits or demerits of either position at this stage. I am merely looking for categories that will help to explain how African and Western outlooks differ.

The disparity between continuity and discontinuity is perpetuated in at least two other major differences between the two worldviews. The first is the pervasive role of *kinship* in Africa, as opposed to Western *individualism*. Kinship is the very warp and weft of African societies, regulating tribal life and intertribal relations in formally intricate, highly differentiated ways. It extends, moreover, into the spirit world, knitting physical and metaphysical realities into a seamless fabric. That is the ideal. To modern urban Western people, one major ideal is individual self-actualisation, which the nuclear family and society are expected to permit. Clearly this complicates social regulation and places great strain on social stability, as modern history abundantly proves.

The second difference has to do with status. Post-Enlightenment individualism has radically affected many notions about human life and society. One of these is the notion of the essential equality of all human beings, canonised in revolutionary manifestos like the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the American Declaration of Independence. Pre-colonial African societies had a very real democracy of their own, but it was predicated on lines of kinship with its built-in principle of seniority. In the Zimbabwean context Herbert Aschwanden (1989:122) observes:

In Karanga society, there is no equality of position between two persons. Within a lineage and extended family, two persons can never hold the same position. 'Equality of status is a root of evil', they [his Shona informants] say.

Such an approach inevitably gives rise to *hierarchies*, as opposed to the Western democratic ideal of *equality*.

---

1 See eg Van Niekerk 1995

If one links the last two differences with their conceptual roots, continuity and discontinuity, a certain logic starts to emerge. In my context the question is: how does this logic affect the religious thinking of the two broad groups under consideration?

Western discontinuity (and its offshoots, equality and individualism) clearly creates problems for theism. As Appiah (1992:186) points out, 'If God's answer is sought to any questions of a technical character it is to those questions that have remained recalcitrant to scientific management – questions about one's relations with others – and questions that could not even in principle be addressed by science – questions of value.' (This actually suggests one solution to the dilemma of relevance, so evident in the work of many 20th-century theologians.) African hierarchical continuity, by contrast, readily explains God as the self-evident apex of the entire cosmic structure: the first and, therefore, the greatest ancestor of all. The problem here is how this continuity can be maintained in practice as the human life world becomes ever more hybrid and diffuse.

## Continuity versus discontinuity

In a non-literate society, creedal consistency is obviously not easy to monitor. Even my limited field research produced diverse explanations of the same custom or ritual, not to mention fascinatingly different God concepts. These individual, sometimes highly creative, interpretations within a commonly accepted framework show that conservatism and innovativeness are not necessarily mutually exclusive; continuity is not equivalent to stasis.

A striking example was the way in which young guerrillas from distant areas were accepted as 'sons of the soil' by local ancestors during the Zimbabwean liberation struggle, and these same ancestors abandoned their traditional aversion to European artefacts by extending their aid and protection to gun-carrying freedom fighters (Lan 1985). Expedient to the point of pragmatism as this may have been, these ancestors' mediums acted in accordance with a pattern evident throughout Zimbabwe's pre-colonial history. Invading conquerors always had to establish good relations with autochthonous occupants and their forebears:

The historical process of accretion of immigrant ruling and client groups resulted apparently in a series of layers of authority, with the

existential level this is reflected among the Shona in the notion that offended ancestors will 'open the door' of their living descendants to harmful spirits, rather than inflict harm on their kin themselves.) Within that framework, however, innovations – artistic, philosophical, technological – are readily accommodated if they further human wellbeing and do not disrupt social harmony. Continuity takes precedence over knowledge about the pre-existent structure of the cosmos, which humans discover in the course of living their cosmically ordered lives. To such a worldview the iconoclastic Western deference to science would actually be hubristic, just as the African reverence for ancestors struck Western believers as idolatrous.

The ancestors vividly and palpably embody the very continuity on which African belief rests. They are the immediately accessible part of the cosmic communication system. And the communication is reciprocal; the reality of spirit possession is not questioned. When Daneel (1987:259ff) contrasts indigenised (AIC) Christian pneumatology with belief in the power of ancestral spirits, characterised as a manipulable force that can be 'given' to people, he appears to be contradicting his own earlier observation of traditional Shona practice (Daneel 1971:178):

Even in the magical manipulation of the diviner, Mwari [the supreme God] is not merely a distant observer, because He is the source of the forces at work. Should such forces become perverted in the hands of a sorcerer or witch and thereby pose a threat to the social cohesion of His people, it is on His behalf that punitive measures are undertaken.

This apparent ambivalence strikes me as a result of the author's apologist stance on behalf of AIC Christianity in the face of orthodox Christian criticism – a stance which has been vindicated by widespread acceptance of his initially revolutionary approach. (My own stance on behalf of the African worldview is analogous, and, I hope, ultimately as persuasive!)

Personally, I find the adamant rejection of ancestral spirits, notably among some Zimbabwean Zionists whom I interviewed, perplexing. In the traditional worldview ancestors are simply go-betweens, rungs in the cosmic ladder leading up to the creator God, 'the one who was there first'. To most Shona traditionalists, and many Christians, the 'white' God of the Bible and the indigenous Mwari, known by many other names as well, are one God who is merely worshipped differently in different cultures. Appiah (1992:184) quotes the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe as saying, 'I can't imagine Igbo

eucharistic rituals, is symptomatic of the discontinuity that underlies the Western worldview.

African tribal life, by contrast, is permeated with metaphysical reality. Blood and water are both vital fluids, sustaining life here and now. This makes them profoundly meaningful and valuable and so, quite naturally, they are assigned metaphysical symbolic meaning in rituals which, as naturally, form part of everyday life. Aschwanden uses the example of the calabash, an ordinary household utensil, which is symbolically identified with the uterus. 'That he [his Karanga informant] is very much aware of the obscurity and contradictory nature of the symbol shows [in] his own interpretation: "They are two things, and, yet again, only one"' (Aschwanden 1982:15). In my own interviews I was told the same about other symbols, notably 'blood' and 'soil'.

Appiah (1992:184-185) points out that Christianity, when forced 'to retreat in the face of science', opted to demythologise doctrines, which were then assigned purely metaphoric or symbolic meaning. He comments, 'But even if . . . this is consistent with the main traditions of Christianity or Judaism, to treat the religious beliefs of traditional cultures as likewise symbolic is radically to misrepresent their character.' He insists that symbols arise 'out of the fundamental nature of religious beliefs, and that these fundamental beliefs are not themselves symbolic' (Appiah 1992:181). The beliefs are literal, with direct existential meaning and implications. Their ritual, ceremonial expression is symbolic.

The same sort of literal belief cum symbolic identification, to use Aschwanden's term, informs kinship ties here and now. Among the Shona the depth and reality of this belief is reflected in the powerful symbol of blood. Ancestral blood – which in extreme tribal and even national crises like drought and epidemics is said to 'boil' – is fully identified with the vital fluid circulating in the bodies of living people. Aschwanden (1982:23) writes:

The symbol of the blood – because of this conscious equation with the ancestral spirits – is the strongest of all the lineal ties. It not only lends a religious aspect to the tribe, it also puts the individual under an obligation towards his consanguines. How could he ever seriously oppose a member of his own tribe? It would mean opposing his *vadzimu* [ancestors].

This clearly has both socially cohesive and socially divisive implications. Close kinship ties within a blood line, and at least some caution when

synthesis. This the Independent Churches, particularly those of the Spirit-type, offer to do (Daneel 1987:80).

Daneel is writing as a Christian missiologist, but one can readily extend his argument to include other forms of spirituality. The segregation of spirit from matter, body from mind, is not just a problem in Africa. It culminates, for instance, in a self-contradictory segregation of economic expediency from ecological sustainability, which is threatening the human race, flora and fauna, and the planet as a whole. Specialists in many fields all over the world are increasingly recognising this. Intellect has manifestly failed to accomplish its high mission. Yet the discontinuities of the Enlightenment continue to regulate human life on earth.

In such a context the integral worldview of Africa's peasant past cannot be dismissed as naive or primitive. It should be recognised – above all, by black African leaders – as one of humanity's rich resources in the creation of a more sustainable, more satisfying and more wholesome life style for all creatures on earth.

*If God created us, we are all kin. If not, we need a new and better theory.*

## Equality versus hierarchy

For a white African woman, the area of male and female equality is problematic. Both in Zimbabwe and in urban South Africa I am meeting more and more black sisters who agree. In a patriarchal society women are regarded and treated as 'minors from the cradle to the grave and therefore under the guardianship of men' (MCDWA 1985:16). Traditionally Shona widows were (and in Zimbabwean customary law still are) 'inherited' by a male relative of her late husband, presumably on the principle that his family paid the bride price for her. The children of divorced couples automatically went to the father. Birth control consisted in female abstinence from sexual relations during prolonged periods of breast feeding, while the husband satisfied his sexual appetite with other wives or even concubines. Such a system – and it has its parallels in contemporary Islamic and other societies, including Western ones – can only remain stable if women are physically, psychologically and economically dependent on male protection. In Zimbabwe, as elsewhere in the world, this situation is increasingly changing.

It is such ties of respect that regulate village and tribal life. Status inheres in the position rather than in the person of the incumbent. This is the essence of what I consider to be African, or at any rate Shona, democracy. Gelfand (1973:12) describes the ideal:

According to many, a man may be judged by his manners and the respect he accords to another person. Possessed of good manners he behaves in the same way to all no matter in what situation he finds himself or what the social status of the other party, He never forgets the other person ... Every man should be humble, never proud or aggressive, though station, age and family position are respected; but no-one is allowed to create the feeling that he is superior for any other reason than that of his slot in the social hierarchy. Every person (*munhu*) deserves to be accorded respect in virtue of his being a human being.

This sounds very like the essentially liberal notion of *ubuntu*, so fashionable in local academic circles at present. To me the message is more down to earth: being a human being means having ancestors; and ancestors have their reprisals if their kin are maltreated. (This message has a very clear logic of its own, rooted in a continuous theology that does not include the eating of an apple and the great divide of the 'Fall'.) It applies even to chiefs, who are at the top of the this-worldly hierarchy. Once I asked a chief whom I was visiting whether I could not have one of the millet ears from the field below his homestead to beautify my flat in town. He said that he was sure there would be no problem. He then personally accompanied me to the owner of the particular field, a young peasant woman. He put my request to her and she gladly gave me the millet ear, as well as some mangos from her grove. But the chief could not consent on her behalf.

Yet the same woman could never approach the lineage chief directly with a request or problem. She would have to proceed via her village headman, who would pass the matter on to the ward headman, who would then take it to the chief – that is, if it could not be settled at village or ward level. The chief, being in many cases remote from the hurly-burly of village life, does not know the details. He presides over the proceedings in his court, whether they are requests or disputes. He hears all parties out, and it can take hours or days; he listens to his counsellors' interpretation of the facts in terms of tribal custom and precedent. His verdict, although final, is not a judgment in the Western sense but simply a reflection in the current context of the time-

honoured rules of the soil which are known to all. Without the power of the soil the chief is no different from anybody else. 'Chiefs have flesh', one of my informants told me. 'This flesh is not the chief. The spirit of the *svikiro* [ancestral medium], that is the chief.' As far as I could determine, chiefs are very much aware of this.

The implications of such a worldview are intriguing. It makes nonsense of Western notions of democracy. One person, one vote presupposes the equivalence of all people and their votes, as well as their human judgment. African – at any rate Shona – custom insists on the *equal worth* of all persons, but flatly denies their *socio-political equality* and emphatically subordinates their judgment to that of the ancestors. (Ironically, I observed a similar hierarchy among democratically elected Zanu-PF politicians in Harare. Respect for seniority apparently overruled personal judgment of character or astuteness in a way that I found quite bewildering. Analysts of African politics should perhaps bear this ambivalence in mind.)

In the traditional order the principle of seniority resulted in a system of go-betweens. A young man will not pursue the woman of his choice personally. All formal overtures and marriage negotiations are conducted by an intermediary, just as the paternal aunt, and the village and ward headmen are the stepping stones to the head of a household or a tribe. The line extends beyond this life; the ancestors, hierarchically of course, are go-betweens between their descendants and God. One chief told me, matter-of-factly, 'Jesus is just the ancestor of the whites'. Functionally, at any rate, his interpretation strikes me as appropriate.

## Conclusion

That brings me to the point raised at the beginning of this chapter. I repeat I am not a Christian theologian. The same point may have been made, more adequately, by African or other theologians already. But I have observed Christianity in interaction with African belief in various countries – Lesotho, South Africa, Zimbabwe – and in different contexts. One instance strikes me as particularly relevant here.

When I was doing my honours degree in Religious Studies I had to submit a mini-dissertation. I was permitted to do a somewhat unusual one, in that it entailed a trial run in field research: a study of Jackson Hlungwane, a

I am not suggesting that Christians, black or white, should accept Jackson's gospel. His is the visionary mind of a superbly creative artist and, like William Blake's, it is not always easy to grasp. But it would be interesting to look for equally novel 'dogmas', even if less startling, in AIC sermons, rather than interpreting them as more or less 'proper' in terms of Western theologies. When Inus examines Shona AIC approaches to the ministry (Daneel 1987:143–150), for example, he does so from the angle of the royal, priestly and prophetic offices. However thoroughly he contextualises these categories – and he does – they are not necessarily congruent with Shona religious thinking, although they no doubt overlap. The preachers' own conceptions – *in their own right* and *in their own terms* – could be vital keys to the cosmology of African believers. It may turn out that Christ the Healer takes precedence over Christ the Crucified. New and different theological insight could be rejected as heretical, as in the case of the Swiss missionary. On the other hand it could enrich, broaden and deepen Christianity worldwide, embattled as it is in an age of rationalism and burdened by its long and chequered history.

Among the questions that theologians and scholars of African religion could look at are the following:

- Is it *possible* to have total equality among people and grant precedence only to God? If not, why not? If so, how? (Blanket answers like 'Western democracy' should be carefully scrutinised; they tend to have hidden agendas and strategies.)
- What is the difference, if any, between the spirits of the ancestors and the Holy Spirit of Christianity? (Many of my Shona peasant interviewees referred to the 'holy *spirits* [plural] of the church', and saw them as different in a purely cultural (not a functional) sense.)
- What is the difference, if any, between the animal sacrifices of African and other (including Judaic) traditions and the suffering or death of figures like Prometheus and Jesus? In other words, what is the difference between propitiation and expiation, and what does it imply for human living and belief?

Expiations, atoning deaths, are remote from Western reality. It may be helpful to consider, by way of alternative or complement, a duly revered and propitiated spirit, fully in touch with here-and-now human realities, guarding our door (be that spirit Christ's or my grandfather's), provided we recognise

# On the interplay between political and therapeutic *ngoma*: a case from Malawi

*Matthew Schoffeleers*

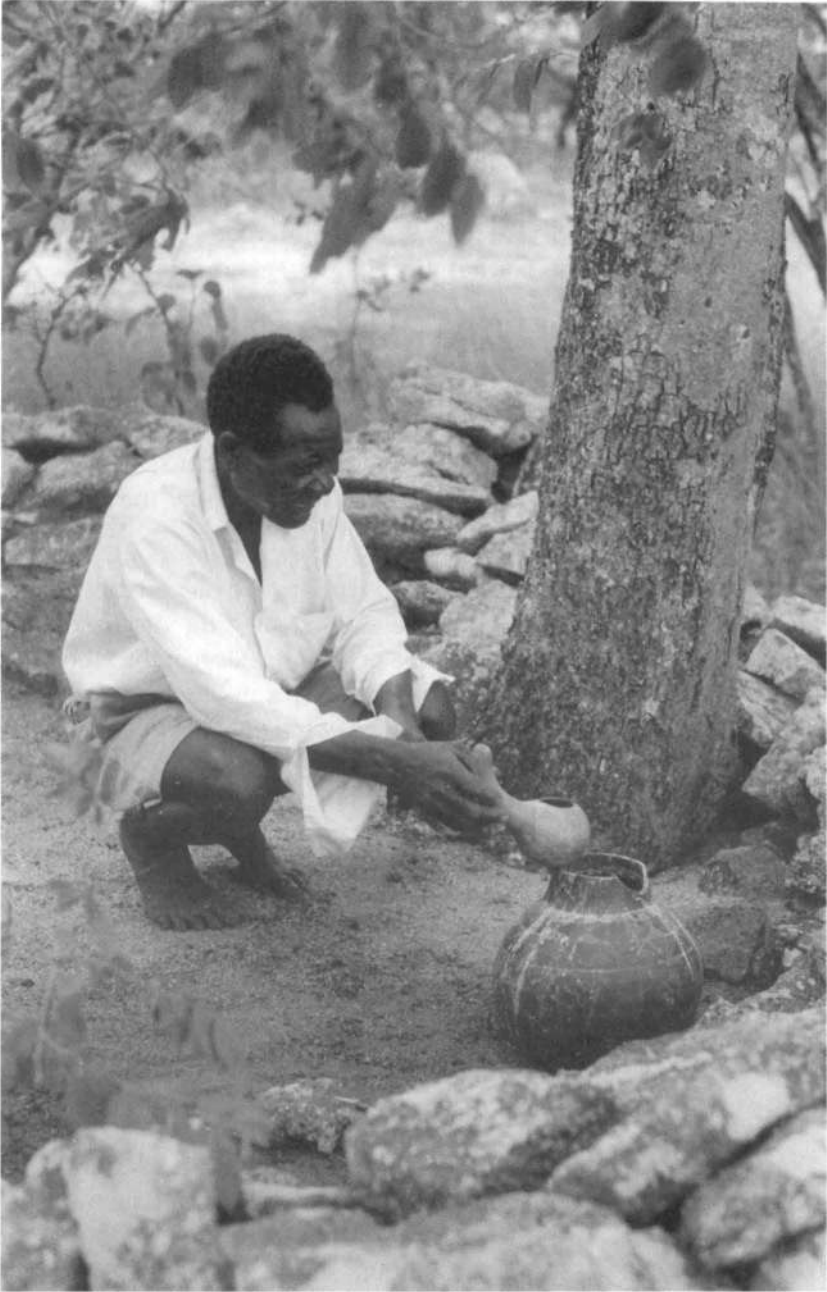
### Introduction

A few years ago John M Janzen published his *Ngoma: discourses of healing in Central and Southern Africa* (Janzen 1992) in which he highlights the striking similarity between healing rituals over large parts of sub-Saharan Africa, the term *ngoma* referring to the drumming, dancing and handclapping which often accompany such healing sessions. There are numerous types of *ngoma* pertaining to a variety of professions and functions, but in this chapter we shall limit ourselves, following Janzen, to politics and healing.

Although Janzen acknowledges the political alongside the therapeutic *ngoma*, he has paid relatively little attention to the former. One of the consequences of this omission is that he deprived himself of the chance to elucidate their interrelationships. The one observation he makes in that connection concerns a negative correlation, that in centralised state systems the therapeutic *ngoma* tends to become marginalised to the extent that the state itself takes responsibility for public health (Janzen 1992:74-79). Apparently the political elite view therapeutic *ngoma* as a potentially hostile factor.

Marginalising therapeutic *ngoma* may curb the emergence of charismatic healers critical of the political establishment. Yet critical charismatic healers, however relevant, are exceptional.

A more important factor in integrating the therapeutic and political *ngoma* is the earth cult, which functions as a healing cult for the community as a whole. There are many such cults in sub-Saharan Africa (Schoffeleers 1979). They have variously been called earth cults, rain cults, and rain and fertility cults. From the political viewpoint they are to be characterised as territorial cults, since they are centrally concerned with the political life of a specific land area, and since their constituency is a group identified by its common occupation of and rights in that land area.



*Mukwerere* rain ritual. A plea for rain is made to the senior guardian ancestors of the land. The beer libation symbolises the close ties between the living and the living dead

repaired, but always fully rebuilt. This happens when the valley is hit by a drought or other natural calamity. Droughts are viewed as the deity's reaction to serious instances of social disorder. They thus generate a protracted discussion amongst the population about their possible cause or causes. When this has been going on for some time and tensions have risen sufficiently high, the deity's medium becomes possessed and the political hierarchy is summoned to his hut to be told why Mbona feels offended.

Possession may be provoked by three interrelated types of events, namely environmental calamities, offences against the social order, and offences against the cult. In fact, it may be difficult in any particular case to determine which of the three is to be regarded as the activating factor, since from the perspective of the actors' nature, society and cult form an indivisible triad. Environmental and climatic disturbances are routinely explained in terms of social disturbances and vice versa, while both again are connected with the cult as the censor of public mores and as the possessor of the means of expiation. Whatever the immediate cause of possession, it invariably involves a pronouncement on the social and moral condition of the community. Moreover, the message transmitted by the spirit medium is always centrally concerned with the policies of the chiefs and with the relationships between the chiefs and the population. Characteristically, the chiefs have to bear the brunt of the medium's criticism, because they are accused either of siding with the central government against the population, or of failing to put an end to social abuses within their territories. While this may be said of any chief, Tengani, as the most senior chief, is especially vulnerable.

As to his role in the rebuilding ceremony, four items are invariably mentioned: first, that on that occasion he has to wear a slave's outfit; second, that the roof of the shrine is to be built upon his head; third, that afterwards he is to commit incest with one of his 'sisters', and, fourth, that he will die 'within a year or so'. It is said that for the last reason some of the incumbents in the past took to flight rather than participate. From the mid-1930s onward the Tengani incumbents have refused to take part in the ritual, as it had been declared irreconcilable with the Christian faith. But in the olden days, it is maintained, as soon as Tengani's consent had been obtained, people began to collect grass, reed, poles and everything else needed for the ceremony. The following is a somewhat idealised account by the officials Chapirira and Kumbiwanyati:

## Divine kingship

Frazer, the initiator of the discussion (1963:189 ff), begins his study of divine kingship with an evocation of Diana's priest at Nemi, whose task it was to defend a tree. Only a runaway slave was allowed to break off, if he could, one of its boughs. Success in the attempt entitled him to fight the priest in single combat, and if he killed him he reigned in his stead until he was himself slain by someone stronger. To Frazer, the death of the divine king of Nemi, as well as divine kings elsewhere, and their succession by a younger and more vigorous person, was thought to be symbolic of the renewal of nature (Frazer 1963:13). Frazer also discusses the related phenomenon of public scapegoats, including scapegoats in classical antiquity (Frazer 1963:736–768). It appears for instance that the Athenians regularly maintained a number of 'degraded and useless beings' at the public expense; and when any calamity, such as plague, drought or famine, befell the city, they sacrificed these outcasts as scapegoats. Divine kings and scapegoats thus functioned in similar contexts, the fertility of man, beast and land, but their conceptual affinity remains unclear in *The golden bough*.

Frazer has exercised considerable influence on students of comparative religion. Even the earlier social anthropologists lauded him as one of the founders of their discipline and one of their foremost representatives, but those of later generations were less enthusiastic. Few anthropologists saw in his ideas on divine kingship anything more than an ill-conceived theory of cultural evolution. A breakthrough occurred with Gluckman's Frazer lecture of 1953, 'Rituals of rebellion in South-East Africa' (Gluckman 1954), republished in *Order and rebellion in tribal Africa* (Gluckman 1963:110–136). Although Gluckman regards Frazer's treatment of divine kingship as suffering from oversimplification, he nevertheless acknowledges the important fact that Frazer at the very outset had recognised the political dimension of the institution by raising the problem of the priest-king involved in a 'ritual of rebellion'. More specifically,

He (Frazer) stressed that these agricultural ceremonies were *connected with the political process*, and that the dying god was often identified with secular kings. He drew attention also to the rebellious ceremonial, for he described the widespread installation of 'temporary kings' who were sacrificed or mocked and discharged after a few days of ostensible rule (Gluckman 1963:126; italics added).

particular conflicts are settled, not by alterations in the order of offices, but by changes in the persons occupying those offices (Gluckman 1963:127–128). People may hate the kingship in resenting its authority, but they do not aim to subvert it. For it is the kingship and not the king who is divine. The rebellion is waged to defend the kingship against the king: 'If this emphasis on potential rebellion in practice made the nation feel united, is it not possible that civil rebellion itself was a source of strength to these systems?' (Gluckman 1963:130).

There have been critical reactions to Gluckman's interpretation of *Incwala* (Beidelman 1966; Norbeck 1967). Turner, while agreeing with Gluckman's interpretation of the structural aspects of the *Incwala* that are clearly present in its rites of separation and aggregation, draws attention also to the interstructural parts (Turner 1967:108–110). By this he refers more specifically to the liminal phase of the ritual, a day and a night of seclusion, when the king is divested of all the outward attributes, the 'accidents' of his kingship, and is reduced to its substance, the 'earth' and 'darkness' from which the normal, structured order of the Swazi kingdom will be regenerated 'in lightness' (Turner 1967:109–110). Turner's comment, though not explicitly critical of Gluckman, is nevertheless relevant to the discussion in hand because he veers away from the structural-functionalist framework, so characteristic of Gluckman, to offer an alternative theory of ritual, which he later elaborated in *The ritual process* (Turner 1969). However, saying that a certain ritual allows for a variety of interpretations is not enough. It would be more satisfactory if that variety of interpretations could be shown to be logically interconnected.

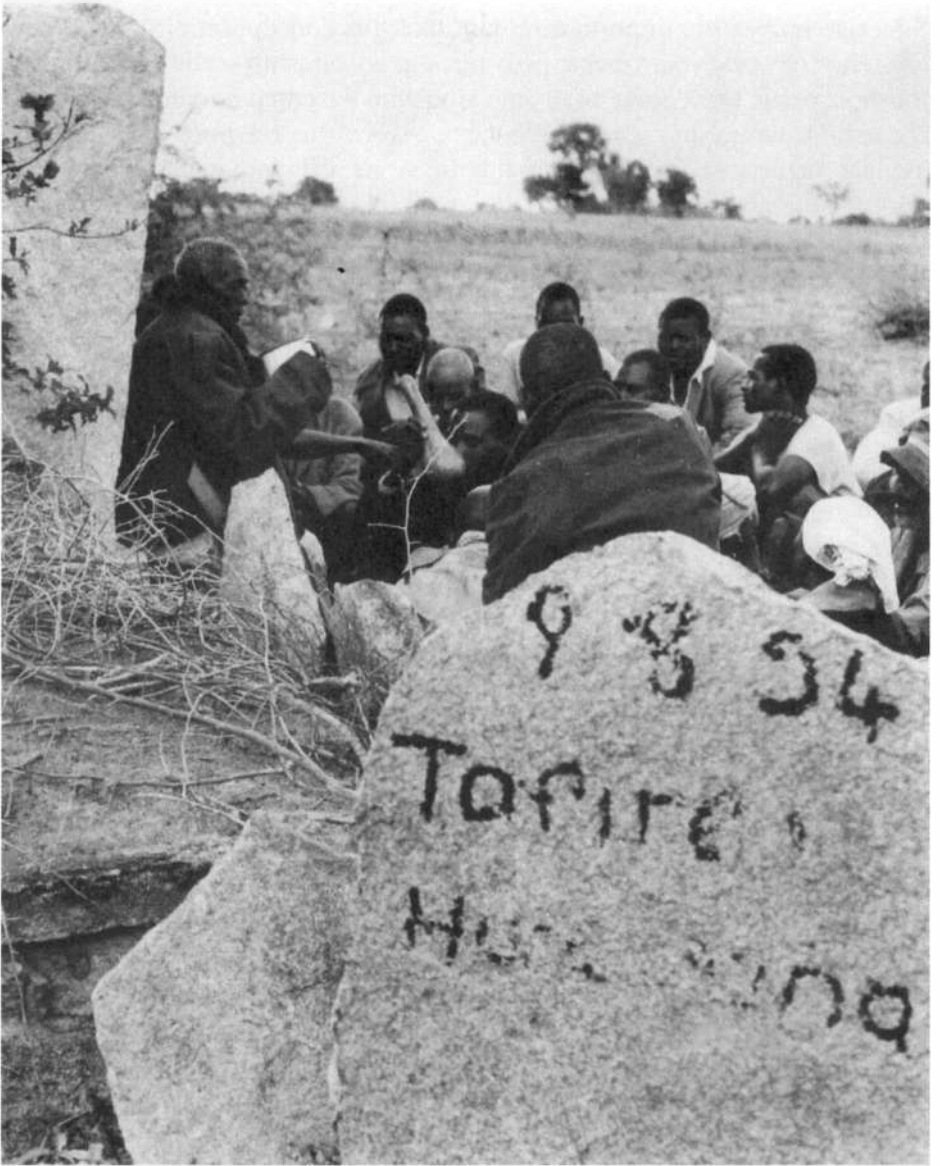
The French literary critic René Girard claims to have made a step in that direction by means of a reinterpretation of Frazer's scapegoat concept (Girard 1977). Girard starts with the observation that our desires are to a large degree mimetic, even if we are not aware of it. What proves attractive to others may thereby become attractive to us. Although he would probably not go so far as to maintain that virtually all our desires are mimetic, the tenor of his theory is that our desires are mimetic to a much larger degree that we would care to admit. Where many people seek the same thing, scarcity may be one of the consequences, followed by open conflict and the outbreak of violence. Violence in its turn may escalate to the extent that it threatens the continued existence or viability of a community. In such a crisis people tend more and more to resemble each other. They make use of the same tactics and the same arguments, and in the end they may even forget what started

the conflict. Increasingly, those involved may mentally become one another's doubles or twins (Schoffeleers 1991). The process of undifferentiation that causes that multitude of doubles to come into existence evokes the idea of a contagious disease, which is what the birth of twins in some societies is believed to bring about. If that process is not halted one way or another it will involve ever larger segments of society.

One way to solve such a crisis is to identify a scapegoat, who will then be lynched or expelled. However, once the killing or the expulsion is over, and peace is restored to everybody's relief, people begin to realise that their scapegoat was not only the cause of their discord but also of the unanimity and peace that followed. In his person, fascination combines with adherence. The scapegoat thereby acquires the traits of a sacred being (Otto 1917) whose salutary potential may be activated again by repeating the original event in ritualised form, first and foremost in the form of sacrifice. Persons destined to serve as scapegoats at some later stage were sometimes required to commit certain moral transgressions that prepared them for their future role. They might be forced to eat certain forbidden foods, or commit certain acts of violence.

Turning to Africa, Girard considers a group of sacred monarchies, situated between Egypt and Swaziland, in which the king is required to commit an act of incest, either real or symbolic, on certain solemn occasions – notably, at his enthronement or in the course of the periodic rites of renewal (Girard 1977:104). In societies where the incestuous act is no longer actually consummated – if, indeed, it ever was – a symbolism of incest persists. As Luc de Heusch has pointed out, the important role played by the queen mother can only be understood in that context (de Heusch 1958). In Girard's view, committing incest prepares the king for his role as scapegoat and thereby as a sacrificial victim. He must be looked upon as a future sacrificial object (Girard 1977:11–12).

Girard's ideas have been fruitfully used in a recent study of scapegoat kings in south-eastern Sudan (Simonse 1992). To be able to see the connection between the sacrificial dimension of kingship and the generation of consensus, Simonse develops two models or 'scenarios' which generate contrasting forms of social organisation, the *enemy scenario* in which the antagonists are groups of more or less equal strength, and the *scapegoat scenario* in which there is serious disproportion between the party of the victim and that of the victimisers. In the enemy model, the typical situation



Elders of an extended family commune with their lineage ancestors during beer-libation at grave-site

means of existence; and indirectly via the functioning of the seasonal cycle. State politics, rain and health thus constitute an indivisible triad. By providing a legitimate channel of protest against undesirable state policies, earth cults are a major locus of rituals of rebellion.

In the chapter's second part we introduced the Tenganis as being involved in rain rituals of its own as well as those of the Mbona cult. Whenever the dynastic rituals were successful, the ruling chief would be left in peace, but should the rain fail, he would be suspected or accused of political malfunctioning and summoned to take part in the rebuilding of the shrine. This, it is believed, would unfailingly produce rain, but the chief had to pay for this with his life. Upon his death he would join his predecessors and transform into a major rain-spirit himself. The Tenganis thus embody a real paradox. They are at one and the same time the most autocratic and the most dependent of the traditional chiefs, as well as the most respected and the most deposed.

Having defined Tenganis as belonging to the category of divine kings we next reviewed the discussion initiated by Frazer. The latter was seen to hover between two scenarios for the death of the divine king. One centres on the king's failing health, establishing a direct link between the king's health and the country's health. The other scenario centres on the king as a scapegoat being held responsible for the society's woes and being killed or driven out in return. This allowed for a political interpretation of the king's death. Gluckman has developed that line in a systematic fashion by this theory of ritual rebellion. The sentiments of hatred expressed in certain *Incwala* songs and ritual activities were considered genuine and directed against the king, but they were to be interpreted as part of a cathartic mechanism and expressed no revolutionary intent.

The crucial element added by Girard is that the *Incwala* and similar rituals are not sufficiently explained as a rite of rebellion against the king, a way of venting communal anger. It is also to be seen as a way of establishing, renewing or consolidating social consensus by the whole of the community turning against the king. This in its turn reinforces the king's sacrality as he is at one and the same time the paragon of evil and a source of blessing. Royal incest, which is such a conspicuous feature in sub-Saharan Africa, thereby receives an altogether different meaning. It is not just something 'good to think' as the structuralists would have it (Lévi-Strauss 1962), but also the summation and confirmation of the evil perpetrated by the scapegoat.

- Gluckman, M 1963. *Order and rebellion in tribal Africa*. New York: Free Press.
- Homans, G C 1965. 'Anxiety and ritual: the theories of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown'. In Lessa, W A & Vogt, E C (eds) 1965. *Reader in Comparative Religion*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Janzen, J M 1992. *Ngoma: discourses of healing in Central and Southern Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Krige, J D & Krige, E 1943. *The realm of a Rain-Queen*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Kuper, H 1944. 'A ritual kingship among the Swazi'. *Africa* 14 (1944):230–256.
- Lévi-Strauss, C 1962. *Totemism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Lan, D 1985. *Guns and rain*. London: James Currey.
- Muller, J-C 1980. *Le Roi Bouc-Emissair: pouvoir et rituel chez les Rukuba du Nigéria Central*. Québec: Serge Fleury.
- Norbeck, E 1967. 'African rituals of conflict'. In Middleton, J (ed) 1967. *Gods and rituals*. Garden City, NY: The Natural History Press.
- Otto, R 1917. *The idea of the holy*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Schoffeleers, J M (ed) 1979. *Guardians of the land: essays on Central African territorial cults*. Gwelo: Mambo Press.
- Schoffeleers, J M 1991. 'Twins and unilateral figures in Central and Southern Africa: symmetry and asymmetry in the symbolisation of the sacred'. *Journal of Religion in Africa* XXI, 4 (1991):345–372.
- Schoffeleers, J M 1992. *River of blood: the genesis of a martyr cult in southern Malawi, c AD 1600*. Madison: Wisconsin University Press.
- Simonse, S 1992. *Kings of disaster: dualism, centralism and the scapegoat king in south-eastern Sudan*. Leiden: E J Brill.
- Turner, V W 1967. *The forest of symbols: aspects of Ndembu ritual*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.
- Turner, V W 1969. *The ritual process*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

# Bibliography of the writing of Marthinus L Daneel

## Books printed

- 1970a *The god of the Matopo Hills – an essay on the Mwari cult in Rhodesia.* The Hague: Mouton.
- 1970b *Zionism and faith healing in Rhodesia – aspects of African Independent Churches.* The Hague: Mouton.
- 1971 *Old and new in Southern Shona Independent Churches. Volume 1, Background and the rise of the major movements.* The Hague: Mouton.
- 1974 *Old and new in Southern Shona Independent Churches. Volume 2, Church growth: causative factors and recruitment techniques.* The Hague: Mouton.
- 1987 *Quest for belonging – introduction to a Study of African Independent Churches.* Gweru: Mambo Press.
- 1988a *Old and new in Southern Shona Independent Churches. Volume 3, Leadership and fission dynamics.* Gweru: Mambo Press.
- 1988b *Christian theology of Africa: Study Guide.* Pretoria: Unisa Press.
- 1989 *Fambidzano – ecumenical movement of Zimbabwean Independent Churches.* Gweru: Mambo Press.
- 1995 *Guerilla snuff.* Harare: Baobab Books.  
(Author's Pseudonym: Mafuranhunzi Gumbo)
- 1998 *African earthkeepers. Volume 1, Interfaith mission in earth care.* Pretoria: Unisa Press.
- 2000 *African earthkeepers. Volume 2, Environmental mission and liberation in Christian perspective.* Pretoria: Unisa Press.
- 2001a *African Christian Outreach.* (ed) Volume 1, *African Independent Churches.* Pretoria: South African Missiological Society.
- 2001b *African earthkeepers.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press.

- 1983a 'Black messianism: corruption or contextualization?' *Theologia Viatorum* 11(1):1-27.
- 1983b 'Charismatic Healing in African Independent Churches'. *Theologia Evangelica* 16(3):27-44.
- 1983c 'Communication and liberation in African Independent Churches'. *Missionalia* 11(2):57-93.
- 1984a 'The banks of Jordan'. In König, Lederle & Möller (eds) *Infant Baptism – The Arguments for or Against*. Roodepoort: Cum Books, pp. 144-148.
- 1984b 'Black messianism: corruption or contextualization?' *Theologia Evangelica* 17(1):40-77.
- 1984c 'Life around the pool in African Independent Churches'. In Hofmeyr, J & Vorster, W S (eds) *New Faces in Africa – Essays in Honor of Ben Marais*. Pretoria: Unisa Press, pp. 36-79.
- 1984d 'Towards a THEOLOGIA AFRICANA: The Contribution of Independent Churches to African Theology'. *Missionalia* 12(2):64-89.
- 1985a 'Charismatiese genesing in die onafhanklike kerke in Afrika'. In Lederle, H & Theron, C (ed) *Dit is Ek, die Here wat julle gesond maak – Opstelle oor goddelike genesing*. Pretoria: Christelike Lektuursentrum, pp. 92-129.
- 1985b 'African Christian Independency'. Co-authors Chirenje, Mutero, Dillon-Malone and Gort. *Mission Studies* 2(1):76-81.
- 1987 'Fambidzano – ekumeniese beweging van die Shona Onafhanklike Kerke in Zimbabwe'. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 13:47-88.
- 1989 'The encounter between Christianity and traditional African culture: accommodation or transformation?' *Theologia Evangelica* 22(3):36-51.
- 1990a 'Exorcism as a means of combating wizardry: liberation or enslavement?' *Missionalia* 18(1):220-247.
- 1990b 'Fambidzano: een rondreizende theologie-opleiding'. *Wereld en Zending: Oecumenish tijdschrift voor missiologie en missionaire praktijk*, 19e jaargang, 3:215-218.

- 1994a 'African Christian theology and the challenge of earthkeeping'. In Mouton, J & Lategan, B (eds). *The relevance of theology for the 1990s*. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, pp. 435–476.
- 1994b 'African Independent Churches face the challenge of environmental ethics'. In Hallman, D (ed). *Ecotheology: voices from South and North*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press/Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publication.
- 1995a 'Contextualizing environmental theology at Unisa'. *Religion and Theology* 2(1):87–110.
- 1995b 'Mwari the liberator – oracular intervention and Zimbabwe's quest for the "Lost Lands"'. *Missionalia* 23, no. 2: 216–244; also in Cox, J (ed). *Rites of passage in contemporary Africa*. Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, pp. 94–128.
- 1996a 'African christianity and environmental reform: A Zimbabwean case study'. In Phiri, I et al (eds). *The role of Christianity in development, peace and reconstruction*. Nairobi: AACC
- 1996b 'African Independent Churches face the challenge of environmental ethics'. In Gottlieb, R S (ed). *This sacred earth – religion, nature, environment*. New York and London: Routledge.
- 1996c 'Earthkeeping in missiological perspective: an African challenge'. *Mission Studies* 13(25–26):130–188.
- 1996d 'Environmental reform – a new venture of Zimbabwe's traditional custodians of the land'. *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*. Birmingham, UK.
- 1998 'African Independent Churches'. In *Encyclopedia of politics and religion*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly.
- 1999 'African traditional religions and earthkeeping'. *African Studies Center Working Papers*. Boston University.
- 2000a 'Church and eco-justice at the African Grassroots'. In Tucker, M E, Ruether, R & Hessel, D (eds). *Christianity and ecology*. Religions of the World and Ecology Series. Cambridge: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions.

- 1977b Rabenero, A C. Review of *Old and new in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol 2. *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 22: 228-229.
- 1988a Becken, Hans. Review of *Quest for belonging: introduction to a study of African Independent Churches*. *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 72: 156.
- 1988b Pretorius, H L. Review of *Quest for belonging: introduction to a study of African Independent Churches*. *Missionalia* 16(2):102-103.
- 1989a Kudadjie, J N. Review of *Quest for belonging: Introduction to a study of African Independent Churches*. *Ecumenical Review* 41(2): 306-307.
- 1989b Rader, Dick. Review of *Quest for belonging: introduction to a study of African Independent Churches*. *Missiology* 17(2):224.
- 1989c Ross, Andrew. Review of *Quest for belonging: introduction to a study of African Independent Churches*. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 19(2):184-186.
- 1990a Blaser, Klauspeter. Review of *Fambidzano: ecumenical movement of Zimbabwean Independent Churches*. *Zeitschrift für Mission* 16(3):186-187.
- 1990b Hofmeyr, J W. Review of *Old and new in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol. 3. *Missionalia* 18(3):347-348.
- 1990c Nussbaum, Stan. Review of *Quest for belonging: introduction to a study of African Independent Churches*. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 14(1):41.
- 1990d Oosthuizen, Gerhardus C. Review of *Old and new in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol 3. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 71:76-77.
- 1990e Pretorius, Hennie L. Review of *Fambidzano: Ecumenical Movement of Zimbabwean Independent Churches*. *Missionalia* 18(2):294.

# INDEX

- AAEC *see* Association of African Earthkeeping Churches
- African
- Christianity 86
  - Christians 227, 230, 246
  - culture 185
  - grassroots societies 55
  - identity 121
  - indigenous belief 248
  - marriage customs 161
  - religion 76, 79, 82, 121
  - respect for the dead 250
  - theology 25, 175, 197, 200
  - traditional religion 4, 27, 43, 58, 183, 202, 245
  - worldview 249, 250, 251, 254, 263
- African Christian Institution 60
- African Church 140, 141
- African Earthkeeper's Union 13
- African Independency 8
- African Independent Church Association 8, 37
- African Independent Churches 1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 17, 20, 24, 33, 36, 37, 40, 57, 62, 65, 67, 71, 76, 79, 82, 104, 115-118, 150, 151, 161, 166
- African Christian Institution 60
  - African theology 25
  - Association of African Earthkeeping Churches 12, 27
  - Catholic ecclesiology 148-151
  - Church Universal 27
  - ecumenical ministries 8
  - ecumenical movements 1, 12, 38-42
  - ecumenism 37, 60, 65
  - Ethiopian-type churches 137-152
  - Fambidzano 1, 20, 41, 42
  - indigenous concepts 248
  - interpretation 173-209
  - inter-religious contact 4
  - leaders 162, 163
  - Masvingo 17, 70
  - Methodist-type churches 148
  - publications on 176

Bavinck, JH 4, 5, 83  
Bishop Moses 1, 12, 36, 38, 42, 51  
    African traditional religion 58  
    committed to serve 55-56  
    the earthkeeper 55-68  
    earthkeeping and ecumenism 60  
    grassroots people 66-68  
    Muchakata 65-66  
    name and connections 57-58  
    new conviction 58  
    new forms of Christian witness 62-63  
    tree-planting eucharist 63-64  
    and the trees 69-74  
    war of the trees 60-62  
Black Independent Church  
    missionary work 23  
black influence  
    African Independent Churches 182-184  
black scholars  
    African Independent Churches 180-186  
    Mosala, Itumeleng 185-186  
black theology 32, 33, 174, 175, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185-186, 200  
    Mosala, Itumeleng 185-186  
*Blourokke* 156, 158, 159  
Brander, Samuel James 139-140  
British and Foreign Bible Society 2  
  
Canaanites and Hebrews  
    Yahweh cult 128  
Calvinism 2, 161  
Campfire 64  
Catholic ecclesiology  
    African Independent Churches 148-151  
    African Orthodox Church 140-145  
    Ethiopian Catholic Church 139  
    Ethiopian-type churches 137-152  
    formation of Ethiopian churches 138  
    the way to Ethiopia 145-148  
Catholic Church 147, 250  
    missionaries 218  
    Zimbabwe 23, 24  
Catholicism 192, 221, 224

Shona 1, 8, 9, 36, 133  
   witness 62-63, 66  
 Christology 249  
 church  
   governance 88  
   maturity 87, 93, 94  
   planting 86, 93  
   and popular religion 232-235  
 Church of England 221, 224  
 Church of Ethiopia 147, 148  
 Church of the Province of South Africa (Anglican) 138, 139, 145, 146, 149  
 Church Universal 27  
 churches  
   African Church 140, 141  
   African Independent Pentecostal Church 145  
   African Indigenous Church 155, 163  
   African Methodist Episcopal Church 138, 139, 145, 149  
   African Orthodox Church 138, 140-145, 149, 150, 151  
   African United Church 138, 141  
   Anglican Church 139, 149, 211, 224  
   Catholic Church 147, 250  
   Christian Catholic Church (Zion) 163  
   Church of England 221, 224  
   Church of Ethiopia 147, 148  
   Church of the Province of South Africa (Anglican) 138, 139, 145, 146, 149  
   congregational-type 148  
   Coptic Orthodox Church 145, 150, 151  
   Dutch Reformed Church 167, 178, 239  
   Dutch Reformed Mission Church 159  
   Ethiopian Catholic Church of South Africa 149  
   Ethiopian Catholic Church (Zion) 138, 139-140, 143  
   Ethiopian Orthodox Church 146, 147  
   Ethiopian Orthodox Church in South Africa 146, 147, 148, 149  
   Greek Orthodox Church 142, 145  
   Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria 143, 145  
   Indian Pentecostal churches 191  
   indigenous 97, 163  
   local 97  
   Methodist-type 148, 149  
   National Church of Ethiopia of South Africa 149  
   Native Catholic Episcopal Church 138, 141  
   Order of Ethiopia 138, 145, 146, 147, 149

ecological conservation 11-12, 15, 61  
 ecumenism 82  
 excursus 21-22  
 Faith and Earthkeeping 13  
 Fambidzano 1, 8, 9, 10, 12, 19, 20, 23, 24, 26, 36, 40, 41, 42, 57  
 fiction 76, 78, 79, 80, 81, 84  
 fieldwork in Rhodesia 4  
 folk theologian 1, 2, 15  
 Free University of Amsterdam 4, 8, 16  
 grassroots ecumenism 15  
 Gutu rural homelands 5  
 Hendrik Kraemer Institute (Dutch Reformed Church) 8  
 inter-religious dialogue 15  
 Mafuranhunzi Gumbo 7, 26-29, 31-35, 78  
 Matonjeni oracle of Mwari 1, 7, 11, 61, 79, 210  
 mission church-AIC relations 38  
 Morgenster Mission 2, 3, 7, 31, 36, 57  
 Muchakata 12, 43-54, 65-66  
 Mudavanhu 36-42  
 Mutapa Eagles 9  
 new beginnings and challenges 13-15  
 personal appraisal 16-30  
 Pew Charitable Trusts 13  
 as a pilgrim 236  
 and Ranger, Terence 75-76, 80, 83, 84  
 as research supervisor 103-105, 248-249  
 Rhodesia 4, 5, 7  
 Roman Catholic University Nijmegen 8  
 romanticism 32-33  
 theological training centre 19, 20, 21  
 tree-planting 11, 12, 28, 29, 43-54, 245  
 University of Leiden African Studies Centre 4  
 University of South Africa 10, 13, 19, 26, 31  
 University of Stellenbosch 3  
 war of the trees 11, 12, 26, 43-54  
 winning people's sympathy 17-19  
 Zimbabwe 1, 2, 10, 20  
 Zirrcon 11-12, 13, 26, 27, 55  
 the dead  
     Yahweh cult 129-130  
 discontinuity 250, 251, 253

- environmental deterioration 11-12, 15, 48, 56, 60, 82
- environmental education centres 64
- EOCSA *see* Ethiopian Orthodox Church in South Africa
- equality 251, 265
  - versus hierarchy 259-263
- Ethiopian Catholic Church of South Africa 149
- Ethiopian Catholic Church (Zion) 137, 139-140, 143
- Ethiopian Movement 178
- Ethiopian Orthodox Church 146, 147
- Ethiopian Orthodox Church in South Africa 146, 147, 148
- Ethiopianism 178
- Ethiopian-type churches 20, 24, 37, 40, 87, 164, 176, 186
  - African Orthodox Church 140-145
  - Catholic ecclesiology 137-152
  - Ethiopian Catholic Church 139
  - formation of 138
  - the way to Ethiopia 145-148
- evangelical Calvinism 2
- evangelising pioneers
  - Louw, William 153-172
- evils
  - traditional religion 135-136
  
- faith and earthkeeping 13
- Fambidzano 1, 8, 9, 10, 12, 19, 20, 23, 24, 26, 36, 40, 41, 42, 56, 57
  - Conference of Churches of Black People 19
  - Co-operative of Black Churches 40
  - theological training centre 19, 20, 21
  - theological training programme 21-22
- female and male equality 259-263
- folk theologians
  - Daneel, ML'Inus' 1, 2, 15
- French Protestants 219
  
- General Missionary Conference 178, 181
- German Reformed Church 5
- God and humanity 5
- government commissions
  - Native Affairs Commission 187
  - Native Churches Commission 178, 179, 187
- grassroots
  - communities 173-209

high places

Yahweh cult 131

holiness of Israel

Yahweh cult 132

Holy Spirit 239, 240, 243, 265

house churches 88, 89

IC *see* Independent Churches

IIMO *see* Interuniversity Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research

inculturation 210, 234

Independent Churches 38, 40, 41, 163, 189, 259

Independents of Africa 31, 33, 37, 136

Indians 236, 238

communities 191

Indian Pentecostal churches 191

indigenous

belief 248

Christian churches 256

churches 97, 163

concepts 248

individualism 251

and kinship 256-259

intercultural partnership 100

interpretation

African Independent Churches 173-209

grassroots Christian communities 173-209

inter-religious

contact 4, 66

cooperation 43

dialogue 15

inter-religious contact 66

African Independent Churches 4

Interuniversity Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research 23, 24

Islam 237, 243

Kairos Document 22, 174, 175

Kelham Fathers 224

kinship 251

and individualism 256-259

Latter Rain Mission 156, 158, 159

law

MBK see Community of the Servants of Christ  
 Mbona cult 271-273  
     shrine 271-273, 283  
 Mdaza (Holy Cord) Zionists 1  
 Methodist Church 178, 227  
 Methodist-type churches 148, 149  
 missiologists 4, 5, 23, 24  
 mission  
     Christianity 76, 185, 203  
     church-AIC relations 38  
     churches 38, 118, 136, 180, 201, 248  
 missionaries 1, 3, 7, 25, 32, 121, 186, 217  
     AIC studies 179  
     Anglican 139, 211, 219, 221  
     Catholic 218  
     Daneel, ML 'Inus' 1-15, 22, 23, 25-26, 29, 38, 58  
     Dutch Reformed 167  
     French 215, 216, 219  
     Lea, Allen 187-188  
     Louw, William 153-172  
     Lutheran 156  
     modern-day 175  
     Pentecostal 158  
     Sundkler, BGM 178  
     three-self development 89  
 Missionary Brotherhood of St Augustine of Hippo 221, 226, 227, 233  
 Missionary Council 186  
 Missions 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 221  
     Morgenster Mission 2, 3, 7, 31, 36, 57  
     Paris Evangelical Missionary Society 215  
     Society of the Sacred Mission 211, 224-227  
     St Agnes Mission (Gokwe) 122-126  
     St Augustine's Mission (Modderpoort) 210, 220-224  
     three-self formula 86-102  
 Morgenster Mission 2, 3, 7, 31, 36, 57  
 Mosala, Itumeleng 185-186, 203  
 Muchakata 12, 43-54, 65-66  
 Mudavanhu 36-42  
 Mugabe, Robert 78, 79, 80  
 Muslims 236-238, 243, 246  
 mutual assistance of churches 24  
 Mwari 1, 7, 11, 61, 79, 82, 83, 255

- cults 269, 275
- ngoma* 268, 281, 282, 283
- popular religion 183, 230, 234
  - and the church 232-235
- post-Enlightenment European theology 197, 250, 251
- prophecy and divination
  - Zion Christian Churches 109-111
- prophetesses
  - Mantsopa 210-235
- prophetic healing
  - Holy Spirit 108, 109, 110
  - Zion Christian Churches 107-109, 116
- Protestantism 192
- Protestants 23, 24, 219
  - three-self formula 86
- purification of the land
  - Yahweh cult 129
  
- racial discrimination 156, 167, 189, 225, 238
- rainmakers
  - Mantsopa 218, 219
- Ranger, Terence 75-76, 80, 83, 84
- re-baptism 38, 40
- reconstruction theology 175
- Reformed Church 191
  - Zimbabwe 38, 40
- Reformed Mission Church 24
- religio-environmental movements 55, 66
- religion
  - and culture 13, 121
  - and environment 11
  - and politics 75, 121, 258
  - and war 76
- research methods on AICs 186-204
  - Anderson, A 192-193
  - evaluation 198-204
  - government commissions 187
  - Lea, Allen 187-188
  - Naude, P 193-194, 196-198
  - Oosthuizen, GC 191-192
  - Philpott, G 193-196
  - Sundkler, BGM 188-189

- Yahweh cult 128
- Society of the Sacred Mission 211, 224-227, 232, 233, 234
- Soshanguve
  - Zion Christian Churches 107
- Sotho 212-217, 232
  - prophetess Mantsopa 210-235
- South Africa
  - black theologians 180, 181
  - male and female equality 259-263
  - theology 173-174, 175
  - Zion Christian Churches 103-119
- Southern Africa
  - Christianity 33
  - ecumenical attempts 37
  - Zion Christian Churches 103-119
- Southern African Christianity 33
  - theology 33
- Southern African Independency 33
- Southern Shona Independent Churches 19, 26
- spirits 125, 250, 255, 265
- spirit-type churches 104, 107, 136, 259
- spiritual power 211
  - African Independent Churches 88
- spiritualities in conflict
  - Mantsopa 210-211
- SSA *see* Missionary Brotherhood of St Augustine of Hippo
- SSM *see* Society of the Sacred Mission
- St Agnes Mission (Gokwe) 122-126
- St Augustine's Mission (Modderpoort) 210, 220-224
- studies on AICs 176-186
  - AIC members 180-182
  - black influence 182-184
  - black scholars 180-182
  - Mosala, Itumeleng -186
  - white scholars 176-180
- Sundkler, BGM 178, 179, 180, 181, 188-189
- sustainable development 71
- symbolic healing methods
  - water 111-112
  - Zion Christian Churches 111-115
- symbolic meanings
  - tribal life 257

traditional African marriage customs 161  
traditional religion 1, 7, 11, 13, 14, 27, 28, 29, 43, 47, 48, 50, 51, 53, 55, 58,  
66, 67, 69, 71, 107, 117, 122, 123, 125-126, 182, 183, 202, 245, 255  
    evils 135-136  
    liberation struggle 60  
transitional figures  
    Mantsopa 217-220  
tree-planting 11, 12, 28, 29, 43-54, 62  
    eucharists 63-65, 67  
  
urban black theology 32  
  
Venn, Henry  
  
three-self formula 86-102  
  
war doctors  
    Mantsopa 215-217  
War of Liberation 75-85  
war of the trees 11, 12, 26, 43-54, 60-62, 236  
    Chief Chikwanda 43-48  
    Chief Chivi 48-52  
    Chief Murinye 52-54  
the way to Ethiopia 145-148  
Western  
    theology 21  
    worldview 249, 250, 251, 257  
white scholars  
    African Independent Churches 176-180, 186-198  
    Anderson, A 192-193  
    Lea, Allen 187-188  
    Naude, P 184, 193-194, 196-198  
    Oosthuizen, GC 191-192  
    Philpott, G 184, 194-196  
    Sundkler, BGM 180, 188-189  
witchcraft 121, 122, 125, 126  
World Council of Churches 23  
World Wide Fund 64  
  
Yahweh cult 126-131  
    ancient shrines 128  
    centralisation of cult and country 130

legacy and challenge 115-118  
membership 105  
prophecy and divination 109-111  
prophetic healing 107-109, 116  
South Africa 103-119  
Southern Africa 103-119  
symbolic healing methods 111-115  
Zimbabwe 103-119  
Zion City Apostolic Church 156, 159, 160, 161, 163, 164  
Zionists 1, 12, 20, 21, 28, 40, 67, 69, 79, 80, 81, 88, 104, 137, 164, 228,  
229, 231, 255  
house churches 89  
Louw, William 153-172  
Zirron *see* Zimbabwean Institute for Religious Research and Ecological  
Conservation  
Zulus 188, 189, 212, 213