

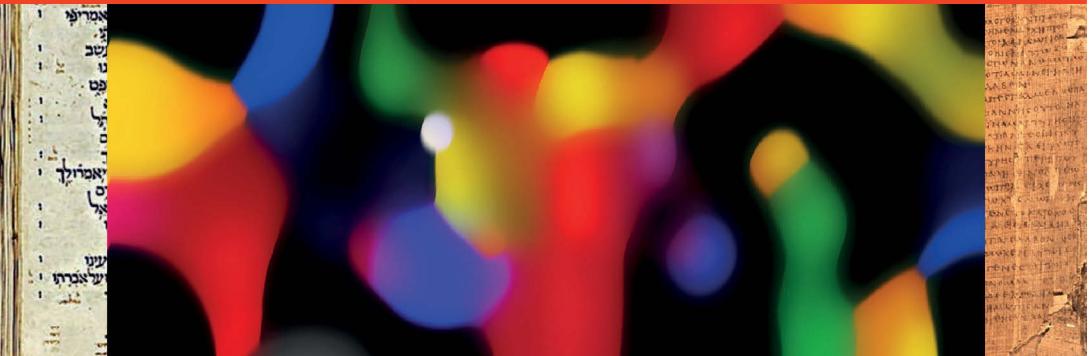
**15 BiAS - Bible in Africa Studies**

Exploring Religion in Africa 1

Ezra Chitando, Masiwa Ragies Gunda  
& Joachim Kügler (Eds.)

## MULTIPLYING IN THE SPIRIT

African Initiated Churches in Zimbabwe



University  
of Bamberg  
Press

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Volume 15

edited by  
Joachim Kügler, Lovemore Togarasei & Masiwa R. Gunda

In cooperation with  
Ezra Chitando and Nisbert Taringa

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# Multiplying in the Spirit

## African Initiated Churches in Zimbabwe



*Ezra Chitando, Masiwa Rages Gunda & Joachim Kuegler*

### Introduction

Given the rapid expansion of newer, more media conscious and assertive Pentecostal churches throughout most parts of Africa, one would be forgiven for thinking that the older, garmented African Initiated/ Independent/ Indigenous/ Instituted/ International Churches (AICs) have been removed off the religious map of the continent. The scholarly preoccupation with the robust and captivating Pentecostal phenomenon has created the impression that AICs have dwindled in size and significance. This volume seeks to challenge such an interpretation by bringing back AICs in Zimbabwe into academic focus. Whereas the popularity of Pentecostal churches has ensured that they attract scholarly attention (see for example, Chitando, Gunda and Kuegler 2013), the vibrancy of AICs demands that they should not be neglected.

This volume was motivated by the realisation that AICs continue to be a significant player on Zimbabwe's spiritual market. Members of predominantly Apostolic, but also Zionist, churches are highly visible in both rural and urban areas. Prophets from AICs are constantly in the news, alongside advertising their competence on various signposts in urban areas (Gundani 2001). In early June 2014, newspapers and the social media covered the case of one of the Johane Masowe weChishanu groups that attacked police officers who had come to support leaders of the African Christian Council of Zimbabwe (AACZ) who wanted to ban the particular group (see the chapter by Matikiti on the AACZ in this volume). This brought AICs into national prominence, although it reinforced the idea that AICs promoted a "suspect spirituality" (see the chapters by Chari, and Chitando and Mateveke in this volume).

## The Academic Study of AICs in Zimbabwe: An Overview

We will not be able to provide an exhaustive account of the history of the study of AICs in Zimbabwe within the confines of this introductory chapter. Thus, we do not purport to provide a comprehensive literature/thematic review in this overview. However, we hope to draw attention to some of the key themes that have characterised this endeavour. First, there has been considerable debate over the most appropriate term. Although the label, “African Independent Churches” enjoyed a lot of currency up to the 1990s, other competing terms have since gained ground. These include, African “Independent, Initiated, Indigenous, Instituted” Churches (Chitando 2005). The overall goal has been to emphasise the agency of Africans in the establishment of the AIC movement. In this volume, we have embraced all the different labels, with “Initiated and Independent” enjoying an upper hand.

As we have indicated, the term AICs has generated multiple interpretations role of anthropologists and missiologists in shaping the contours of the study needs to be acknowledged. This follows the pattern in South Africa. Second, the towering figure of Marthinus Daneel is integral to the history of the study of AICs in Zimbabwe. His insights, activism and closeness to AICs in Zimbabwe, particularly in rural Masvingo and in forming ecumenical AIC bodies and environmentally-conscious AIC movements have been celebrated (see Cuthbertson, Pretorius and Roberts 2003). Third, and related to the foregoing, the importance of healing to AICs has emerged as a popular and recurrent theme. Daneel placed emphasis on healing as a recruitment technique in AIC expansion (see for example, Daneel 1970). It is beyond the scope of this introductory section to review other researchers who have examined the importance of healing to AICs.

Fourth, the rapid multiplication and schism within the AIC movement has drawn the attention of some researchers. Writing from within the context of South Africa, David B. Barrett's (1968) classic, *Schism and Renewal in Africa*, drew attention to the tendency for AICs to split into various churches. The current volume captures this in the title, “multiplying in the Spirit.” The AIC movement in Zimbabwe has been characterised by continuous intensification and expansion, with smaller units emerging from mother bodies. The Johane Masowe movement, for example, has given rise to numerous other groups. These groups have proceeded to adopt colourful names. Consequently, different AIC groups

can meet at *masowe* (sacred spaces) that are a few metres from each other.

Fifth, and emerging from the foregoing, there is need to acknowledge the massive diversity within the AIC movement. The available studies (this one included) have not begun to do justice to the complexity and variegation characterising AICs. Some use the Bible, while others do not (Engelke 2007). Some AICs are millenarian in outlook (Bishau 2010), others are quite “here and now” in orientation. Some worship on Saturday, but others have adopted Thursday or Sunday as the day of worship. Some put on white garments, while others criticise this and put on khakis. Many AIC men shave their heads completely, but others have dreadlocks! Despite this diversity, AICs do sometimes come together in ecumenical gatherings, including interacting with the Catholic and Protestant churches, as well as Pentecostal churches (Pressler 1999).

Sixth, the dimension of gender has received considerable scholarly attention, with Zimbabwean women scholars investing in establishing the status of women in AICs. Lilian Dube (1999) has highlighted the importance of women healers to the AIC movement, while Mukonyora's *Wandering a Gendered Wilderness* (2007) examines gender dynamics within a specific AIC. Mabhunu (2010) has described the role of prophetesses, while Mapuranga (2013) has highlighted the ambivalence of the status of women in AICs. Elizabeth Vengeyi (2013) has described the survival strategies adopted by women in an AIC that is characterised by patriarchy.

Seventh, the role of AICs in Zimbabwean politics has come under increasing scrutiny. After 2000, AIC groups began to feature more prominently in national political gatherings, particularly at Independence festivities, or at the burial of heroes at the National Heroes Acre. One of the most striking expressions of the interface between AICs and politics in Zimbabwe was the figure of President Robert Mugabe putting on a garment and carrying an Apostolic staff (*tsvimbos*) during a campaign for the 2013 presidential elections (see references to this in the chapters by Manyonganise, and Vengeyi and Mwandayi in this volume). Other politicians such as Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and Joice Mujuru, the Vice President, have also interacted with AICs. Machoko (2013) has examined the interface between AICs and politics in

Zimbabwe, while Obvious Vengeyi (2011) and, Sibanda and Maposa (2013) have addressed the same theme.

Eighth, the issue of AICs and human rights has come to the fore, particularly in relation to AICs that discourage the uptake of (western) biomedicine and education. Maguranyanga (2011) has drawn attention to the internal differences within the AIC movement in relation to attitudes towards biomedicine. On the other hand, Machingura (2011) is highly critical of polygamy in AICs in the context of HIV and AIDS. The right of children to access quality education continues to be debated within academic circles in the face of some AICs that discourage western education (see, for example, the chapter by Machingura in this volume).

Ninth, there is an emerging interest in AICs and peace-building in Zimbabwe. The country has experienced violence at various points in its history. Some researchers have begun exploring the possible contribution of AICs to the emergence of cultures of peace in Zimbabwe (Dodo, Banda and Dodo 2014). Overall, it is critical to note that the study of AICs in Zimbabwe has grown in scope. This has been in keeping with the significance of the AIC movement.

## **Chapters in this Volume**

To a large extent, the chapters in this volume pick up and amplify many of the themes we have outlined in the foregoing section, as well as exploring new topics. In the historical section, in chapter one Munetsi Ruzivo examines succession debates in the Johane Marange African Apostolic Church. He shows how the struggle for control and ownership of Marange's grave must be grasped within the context of competition for power by various factions within the movement. In chapter two Vengesayi Chimininge outlines the historical development of the Zion Christian Church in Zimbabwe. Chimininge describes the expansion of the movement under the leadership of Bishop Nehemiah Mutendi. In chapter three Lovemore Ndlovu analyses the growth of the African Apostolic Church led by Paul Mwazha as a response to secularization. Kudzai Biri examines the centrality of sacred space to politics in the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA in chapter four. Although ZAOGA would ordinarily be categorized as a Pentecostal church, Biri argues that there is merit in classifying it as an AIC. Bernard Mlambo and Taurai R. Mukahlera undertake a comparative analysis of the

appropriation of pre-existing religious beliefs in Greek religion and AICs in chapter five. Robert Matikiti analyses the African Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe (AACZ) in chapter six. These chapters confirm the importance of adopting historical approaches to the study of AICs, in Zimbabwe and on the continent. In addition, they update the histories of AICs by highlighting contemporary developments, including succession debates and struggles within the older AICs.

The historical chapters are followed by a cluster of chapters focusing on perceptions and practices relating to AICs in Zimbabwe. In chapter seven Tendai Chari exposes the persistence of negative images of AICs in the media in Zimbabwe, while in chapter eight Ezra Chitando and Pauline Mateveke contend that the emergence of gospel music groups in AICs has contributed towards positive images of the movement. In chapter nine Masiwiwa R. Gunda explores the importance of the Bible to AICs. Molly Manyonganise focuses on the intricacies surrounding the political involvement of AICs in chapter ten, while Francis Machingura debates the responses to education and health in the Johane Marange African Apostolic Church. He is quite critical in his approach. In chapter eleven Elizabeth Vengeyi and Canisius Mwandalayi explores the rather neglected theme of sacred attire in Zimbabwean AICs.

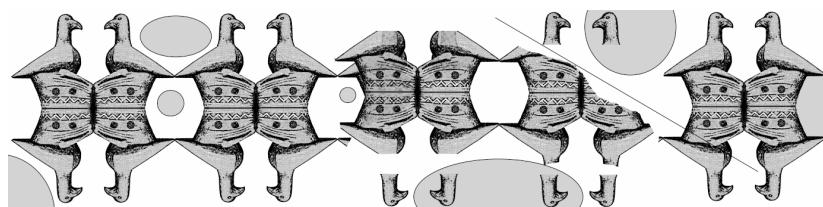
The last two chapters highlight the economic activities of AICs. In chapter thirteen Fortune Sibanda and Richard S. Maposa describe the various activities that members of AICs have engaged in, while in chapter fourteen Tapiwa P. Mapuranga employs a gendered perspective to examine the survival tactics deployed by AIC women during the crisis years in Zimbabwe.

This volume, ‘Multiplying in the Spirit: African Initiated Churches in Zimbabwe,’ therefore, updates developments within the AIC movement, alongside availing new material on a highly significant and complex religious phenomenon in Zimbabwe. As the first volume in the Exploring Religion in Africa (ERA), a BiAS sub-series, it seeks to highlight the ongoing centrality of religion to the African (Zimbabwean) imagination.

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*Munetsi Ruzivo*

## **Succession Debates in the Johane Marange African Apostolic Church**

An Analysis of Contemporary Developments in an Old Movement

### **Introduction**

Within the last decade Zimbabwean newspapers have been awash with graves or shrines of founders of religious movements as contested sacred spaces for the adherents of African Initiated Churches (AICs). This chapter provides a brief reconstruction of the encounter between Africans in their pre-colonial setting and colonisers in their early colonial order. The encounter between the two societies will provide the social, religious and political setting for the rise of the African Apostolic Church of Johane Marange. The chapter will then provide a narrative of the call of Johane Marange and the growth and expansion of his church. It will also examine the leadership succession and inheritance contests after the death of the founder. The chapter will conclude by suggesting ways and means that can be used to mitigate such contests in the fast changing world in which the followers of Johane Marange find themselves.

### **A Brief Background to the Rise of Johane Marange African Apostolic Church**

In 1890 Cecil John Rhodes' Pioneer Column which included missionaries occupied the present day Zimbabwe. Missionaries laboured for six years without achieving any significant progress in the new mission fields. The invasion and confiscation of land, violence of the

colonial settlers, their disrespectfulness to Africans, the locust invasion of 1895, the rise of epidemics of beasts such as lung sickness and rinderpest that wiped out the African domestic animals and humans, triggered the 1896 uprising by the indigenes against the colonial invaders. The uprising lasted for a year. The indigenes lost the war and effectively became colonial subjects. Missionary registers began to fill up with new converts. The end of the war marked the end of the old order, ushering in a new capitalistic order. Africans had to prepare themselves for this new order. The African cosmology and their gods seemed to be in retreat. Their communal land tenure system came under threat as large chunks of their lands were demarcated as company lands or sold as commercial farms, mission farms and mining areas for the colonial settlers.

Terence Ranger (1985:27-28) has described the struggles that indigenous Africans in the Makoni area experienced in their response to the encounter with colonialists with particular reference to the killing of African kings and the fleeing of people into the mountains, the authoritarian nature of the colonial rulers and the confiscation of vast lands that belonged to the chiefs. All these marked an end to the pre-colonial political and economic systems. Forced wage labour known as "Chibaro" in Shona commenced as the administrators of Rhodesia wanted the whites to provide the surplus. After the war the village system was reordered and chiefs were given small lands to inhabit with their people. The violent behaviour of the colonists; the beating of chiefs, confiscation of their cattle, goats and fowls, debilitated the African economic enterprise. The war itself caused a great famine and traumatic suffering. Fields of maize had been torched and granaries had been emptied and people's beasts taken as war reparations.

Successive land tenure Acts deprived Africans of their lands. The Land Apportionment Act of 1931 favoured separate purchase areas of farming for Europeans and Africans. Prime fertile land was reserved for the colonial settlers, whilst less fertile land was reserved for Africans. Forced labour was extended to the mines, the construction of roads and the railway lines. This Act paved way for racial segregation in then Rhodesia (Randolph 1985:2). The Maize Control Act greatly disadvantaged African farmers as they were greatly restricted in selling their produce to the local market (Ranger 1985:55). African agricultural products were bought for less than the products of the Europeans. The Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 was designed to control the

utilization of land occupied by natives in order to ensure its efficient use and the protection of natural resources. It required destocking in areas that were being overgrazed (Phimister 1993:225-226). All these discriminatory measures troubled the African mind.

The epidemic of influenza of 1918-1919, a contagious disease introduced by Europeans, decimated and demoralized people. Ranger provides an interesting account which I will summarise here. He says that when influenza broke out both western and indigenous resources were amassed to contain it but to no avail. Indigenous medicines and the biomedicines of the colonial settlers failed to contain it. This made both Africans and Europeans seek ways and methods of containing it. People ran away from their work places and homesteads but wherever they went they spread the disease. Trenches were dug to bury the dead. Dearth carts and mass burials became the order of the day. The dead all over left an indelible mark on African imagination. People tried to quarantine the infected from the unaffected. Diviners were consulted and so were the spirit mediums but the disease remained impervious to any herbal medicine or spiritual intervention. It remained like a wound that defies all kinds of medication. Witchcraft suspects were sought and exiled or killed. Sacrifices were made to the ancestors and to God in shrines of the different parts of the country but the malady refused to be driven out. The malady overrode all control systems. It was after these social upheavals and outbreak of disease of beasts and of humans that prophets arose as a counter measure to the cleansing and restoration of the primordial order for neither traditional religion nor Christianity had been of help (Ranger 1988a; Ranger: 1988b). It is in the context of these disturbances, disorders, social dislocation and the outbreak of maladies of beasts and of humans, endemic droughts and outbreaks of locusts that both Africans and European spiritualities could not contain that we should situate the rise of Johane Marange and his contemporary Johane Masowe.

### **The Rise of African Initiated Churches**

Most AICs are initiated by Charismatic leaders. The unity of the church in the initial stages of the founder's life revolves around him/her. The leader embodies the office of the prophet, the priest, the baptizer, the healer, king and the judge. As the movement grows bigger and bigger the charismatic leader will develop hierarchical structures and s/he will

appoint others to help him/her and in most cases close relatives are catapulted into the echelons of power in the church by the leader himself/herself. These churches tend to become family churches due to the nature of the first converts who are normally close family (Daneel 1988: 40). This has been the case in the origin and development of many AICs of the spirit type such as the African Apostolic Church of Johane Marange, Johane Masowe's Gospel of God Church, Mai Chaza's Guta raJehova, Habbakuk and Samuel Mutendi's Zion Christian Church (see the chapter by Chimininge in this volume) and other numerous Apostolic churches. Power in these Messianic or Spirit type churches resides in the founder: the African Messiah (Daneel 1988:110). The Church is hinged on the founder as he/she commands unquestioned authority amongst the thousands of followers who have believed his/her mission. Problems of secession and succession normally begin after the death of the founder.

### **The African Apostolic Church of Johane Marange and the Religious Background of the Founder**

Johane Marange was born Muchabaya Momberume in 1912 in Marange Tribal Trust Lands. His father was Muchabaya Momberume and his mother was the daughter of Chief Marange. According to Jules-Rosette (1987:24), Muchabaya Momberume belonged to the Sithole royal lineage (Jules-Rosette 1987:24). There is a possibility that Johane Marange and Johane Masowe belong to the same ethnic group.

Space does not allow one to delve into these connections. According to Joseph Marange, Muchabaya Momberume belonged to the Nguni ethnic group that settled in Gazaland in the eastern part of Zimbabwe during the migrations of the 19th century (Interview with Joseph Marange, Harare 08/10/2011). Muchabaya Momberume married the daughter of Chief Marange. According to the marriage practices of the time, foreigners who married in the area of Marange were not allowed to take the wives with them. This is the reason why Johane took the surname of his mother's side, Marange. The children born out of marriage belonged to the autochthones.

Johane experienced visions and near death illnesses from a tender age. On 17 July 1932, on the road from Mutare to his home near Mount Nyengwe, Johane had a visionary experience. He was suddenly struck by

a powerful light and he fell unconscious. He heard a voice that spoke to him:

You are John the Baptist, an Apostle. Now go and do my work! Go to every country and preach and convert people! Tell them not to commit adultery, not to steal and not to become angry. Baptise people and keep the Sabbath day (Hastings 1979:77).

The religious background of Johane Marange remains speculative at the moment. The African Apostolic Church of Johane Marange evolved from the local interactions with the Seventh Day Adventist Church which had expanded from South of Bulawayo to Wedza and Marange Reserves (Hallcreutz 1998:103). He was influenced by the Seventh Day Adventists who had expanded into the area (cf Shepperson and Price 2000). In addition, Hallcreutz (1988:104) refers to the growth of Sabbatarian movements within Southern Africa and expansion into present day Zimbabwe. The Apostolic Faith Mission, with its Holy Spirit possession and speaking in tongues, also greatly influenced Johane Marange and Johane Masowe. In his book, *African Gifts of the Spirit*, David Maxwell (2006:52) points out that the first AIC leaders had connections with Methodism, Catholicism, Adventism and Watchtower doctrines.

### **Growth, Expansion and Leadership Succession in the African Apostolic Church of Johane Marange**

Johane Marange founded the African Apostolic Church of Johane Marange in 1932. His church spread from Zimbabwe to South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Malawi, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Through migration, the church has spread to Europe among the African migrant workers. He developed a well knit organisation with a greater evangelistic outreach. His church quickly spread first among his kith and kin and then in all Southern African states, before becoming the international movement that it is today. The spread from Zimbabwe and Southern African countries was spectacular. With no ecclesiastical centre of unity, the Pendi or Pentecost celebration of the Eucharist, which is normally observed in July to mark the call of Johane, became an event that united all peripheral centres with their leader.

Johane Marange died of illness in 1963 (Hastings 1979:182; Jules-Rosette 1987:25). Johane did not appoint any one to succeed him. This was so because his sons and relatives would have killed each other for

leadership and inheritance of his estate. When the Prophet got ill there were rumours that Simon Mushati and Gwati, who was the general secretary of the church, had bewitched him so that they could take over the leadership of the Church (Daneel 1971:335). In the inheritance ceremony Abel was conferred with the name of Johane. He was also given Johane's staff, thereby making him the first High Priest of the Church. The other two staffs were given to Makebo and Judah and this placed them in the second and third positions of power in the hierarchy of the Church. Johane's brother Anrod played a pivotal role in the inheritance and leadership succession dispute as he became the prime mover.

Johane had 40 head of cattle which were to be taken care of by Anrod, Abel and Makebo. Since Abel and Makebo were already married and had paid their roora, the cattle would help to take care of the future bride price of the younger sons of Johane when they reached marriageable age. The succession was done according to the seniority of the sons of the founder. Johane's estate was shared amongst his sons. Anrod, Johane's brother, inherited 13 wives of Johane, except for three who chose to return to their villages. The two Land Rovers that were part of Johane's estate were given to Abel and Makebo to use in the pastoral work. This arrangement did not augur well with the senior Prophet Simon Mushati, the maternal cousin to Johane. Mushati usually travelled with Johane in the Pentecost rounds. He openly challenged the inheritance of the leadership in the Church. He also challenged the idea of making goods that had been purchased by the church objects of inheritance. According to Mushati the word of God could not be inherited by the children. Passing on leadership to the sons of Johane was making the church an object of inheritance. Mushati declared that he and his sons would form their own church which he later named the African Apostolic Church of St. Simon and John. It was proper, in Simon's view, that an elderly senior assistant to the founder should have succeeded Marange. It was clear that Simon had been the closest confidante of Marange and was supposed to succeed him (Hastings 1979:182).

### **Leadership Contests in the Post-colonial Period**

The question of inherited leadership according to agnatic blood line that Mushati posed would rise again in the same Church. Abel Momberume

died in 1992. After the death of Abel there was no peace in the Church. What emerged was a tough contest for power between Clemence Momberume and Noah Taguta. Abel was succeeded by Noah Taguta, the son of the elder brother of Johane Marange called Anrod Momberume. There have been numerous cases that have been filed with the courts by each of the factions over the properties of the late founder Johane Marange and his successor Abel Momberume. The surviving sons of Johane are divided, with some backing Clemence Momberume and others backing Noah Taguta.

After the death of Abel both leadership and his property were contested and so were the personal regalia of Johane Marange that were inherited by Noah Taguta. Noah Taguta was of the view that it was high time that church leadership should pass on to other families of the larger Johane Marange family but this was contested by Clemence Momberume and the other five sons of Johane Marange in the year 2000 (The Herald 28 April 2003: 13). The Clemence Momberume faction took Noah Taguta to court, accusing him of fraudulently acquiring Abel Momberume's vehicles in 2002. The court had cleared some of the charges in 2002. According to Detective Inspector Godfrey Rwafa of the Criminal Investigation Department, new evidence had surfaced that the vehicles in Noah Taguta's possession were fraudulently registered. Police were keen to interview Taguta, Chiedza Momberume, the widow of Abel Mumberume, and her son Stephen Muchabaya. Stephen Muchabaya and his mother Chiedza Momberume had allegedly used false information in order to obtain Abel Momberume's death certificate so that they could deprive other members of the family any benefits from the estate of the deceased. Abel Momberume had many wives but it was Chiedza Momberume and her children who were responsible for administering the estate before winding it down. Stephen Momberume used falsified information to sell the four vehicles to Noah Taguta. When the police visited their homes the three evaded arrest. They vacated their homes and instructed that the estate proceedings of the winding up of the estate be stopped. Taguta was reported to have fled from an event where Clemence Momberume was to be enthroned as the High Priest of the Church, the highest post in the African Apostolic Church of Johane Marange (The Herald May 10, 2003).

Between 2000 and 2003, the Zimbabwean courts issued a number of court orders that directed the two factions not to interfere with each other's events. In the year 2000 Justice Smith directed that Noah Taguta

who was imposing himself as leader of the St. John Marange Apostolic church not to stop other members of the Church from utilising the space that he sought to monopolise.

In 2002 a similar directive was issued to settle a similar case that involved the Ministry of Local Government, Labour and Social Welfare, Noah Taguta, and John Searchmore Mushawatu (The Herald 17 April 2002, The Herald July 10, 2003). Justice Smith issued an arbitration that allowed both factions to use the Damusi grounds in Musana at different times after Noah Taguta and his faction barred followers of John Searchmore Mushawatu from participating in the festivals at Damusi Ground. Part of the Consent Order read:

Both plaintiffs and defendants and those claiming through them shall neither bar nor disturb the other in the enjoyment of the grounds for purpose of prayer, provided that whoever wants to participate in prayers or religious ceremonies at the grounds must follow the practice, teaching and customs of the church (The Herald 17 April 2002: 4).

The wrangles for leadership, inheritance and control of church property continued to haunt the Johane Marange African Apostolic Church factions. One member of the church, Joseph Marange, said that what was happening in the Church had nothing to do with prayer but was simply greed for power (Interview Joseph Marange 08/10/2011).

On 18 July 2001 Clemence Momberume and Noah Taguta factions attended the funeral of Oliver Momberume at Taguta Village in Chief Marange's area. Public violence erupted after the two factions disagreed over which coffin was to be used in the burial of the body of Oliver Momberume. According to the High Court Judgement of 2004 case HH 076-2004 CA 15-24/04, the violence erupted from the late hours of the 18th to the early hours of the 19th of July 2001. Normally the Marange Apostolic factions celebrate their Pentecost in July and in most cases riots occur whenever the factions converge at the shrine in Mafararikwa village in Chief Marange's area. The police had to call for reinforcements to contain the situation. Several people were injured and a lot of valuable property was destroyed. The coffin bearing the body of Oliver Momberume was destroyed. The destruction of property, disturbance of the dead, injury to people and public violence were the charges that were preferred against those who were involved in the scuffles. They were sentenced to 36 months in prison. Ten months were suspended for five years on condition of good behaviour. A further ten months were also suspended on condition of restitution. Those who were convicted tried to

appeal but the court rejected it and upheld its judgement (<http://www.law.co.zw/downloads> accessed 11/10/2011).

Barely a year after the above incident, the two factions clashed again. On 30 May 2003 the two factions clashed over the use of their shrine in the same area at Mafarrikwa village in Marange. The shrine is their headquarters. Here, it should be made clear that Johane Marange's grave was not built at the shrine. It remains on its own and has been fenced (Interview Joseph Marange Harare 08/10/2011). The incident happened in the evening around 7 o'clock. Clemence Momberume's delegation arrived on 30 May 2003 with the intention to prepare for the Passover feast they had scheduled to have in June. Momberume came armed with the provisional High Court order that authorised both factions access to the shrine. Momberume intended to remain at the shrine until the 2nd of June of the same year. When they were about to get settled, a force of 50 people from Noah Taguta's faction stormed the premises of the shrine in order to deny them access. It is at this point that fighting broke out. A brand new Nissan twin cab was extensively damaged. Blankets and other personal belongings of those who had come for the Passover preparations were burnt to ashes. A large amount of cash was reportedly stolen. The two factions used their long staffs, and all sorts of objects they could lay their hands on, to pound each other throughout the night. The police had to intervene to stop the pandemonium between the followers of Baba Johane. Eight members from Momberume's faction were severely injured. The police tried to intervene but 3000 members of the Taguta faction tried to scare them by speaking in tongues. In the process two more members of the Momberume faction were injured, bringing the number to ten. Every time the two factions meet a mortal combat battle rages that normally ends with the police intervention (Herald 5 June 2003). The tendency to frighten police using *glossolalia* had been done earlier in 1934 by the Masowe Apostles under Emmanuel Mudyiva Dzangare (Engelke 2005:804).

In July 2003 after the Mafarikwa incident Noah Taguta was arrested for contravening the Public Order and Security Act and for causing the clashes I have highlighted above. Noah Taguta was granted twenty thousand Zimbabwe dollars bail after he had spent a week in custody (The Herald, 12 July 2003).

Commenting on the struggles for leadership and sacred spaces, Joseph Marange, a general secretary of the St. Simon and St. John African Apostolic Church said:

It was him Joseph who was sent by church elders, as he was maternal uncle to the sons of Johane to look for Clements who was then working for an insurance company in Mutare to take leadership of the Church. The leadership succession in the Church follows the Nguni leadership style. The leadership style is that once Abel took the leadership it would remain in his house. Abel's sons would claim the leadership, excluding all other claimants. This is where the problem arises. What about the surviving sons of Johane? This has led to numerous factions in the Church. Johane had 16 wives and all his male children would claim a stake in their father's estate. In this situation, there is no way rupture and fission can be avoided. Moreover, what was at stake after Johane's death was no longer churchly but African tradition because God's word cannot be inherited, an argument that Simon Mushati had put forward around 1964 at Chief Marange's court where leadership and inheritance issues were settled after the church elders failed to settle the inheritance and leadership problem by themselves. Johane's sons could inherit their father's material inheritance, not the word of God (Interview Joseph Marange, Harare 08/10/2011).

The surviving sons of Johane Marange were divided over the succession, with some backing Noah Taguta and others backing Clements Momberume, the younger brother of Abel Momberume (The Sunday Mail, 18-24 February 2007). Noah Taguta was elected as care taker High Priest and once the sons of Johane Marange had sorted themselves he would step down to give way to the direct descendant of Abel Momberume. However, Taguta had other motives unknown to the church and other family members. Clements Momberume and his faction insisted on his right to succeed his father according to the church tradition which closely follows the African traditional law of inheritance. Clements Momberume's uncle, Joseph Marange, advised the chief to refrain from trying the matter at his court, but to take it to the national courts (Joseph Marange Interview Harare 09/10/2011).

The complexity of the issue was on what was inheritable: was it the leader's personal belongings such as his personal garments, his staffs, small axe, bow and arrow, the Ark of the Covenant and other things or the church which the leader founded? The faction of Noah Taguta had taken over the custodianship of both the Church (ecclesia) and personal symbolical belongings of the founder. The problem here is whether the Church is to be seen as an asset that is transferable to the sons of the founder. A further problematic issue was: what distinction could be made between Johane Marange the founder of the Johane Marange African Apostolic Church and his estate? Is the Church that he founded not part of his estate?

Part of the problem lies with the state. The Zimbabwean state does not have direct laws on the registration of churches. There seems to be a two way process of registration of churches in Zimbabwe. One way is to register the church under the Voluntary Organisations Act that churches that are involved in humanitarian work can register with. The Act is not for the registration of churches as such, but for the registration of their ancillary agencies or the Church itself as the one involved in the work. The other way is to register Deeds of Trust with the Registrar of Deeds. Attorney Pauline Mapepa when consulted about church registration in Zimbabwe said:

At the moment, there is no board that governs the registration of Churches in Zimbabwe. Most of the Churches have a constitution governing the Church and its members, and they establish a membership and presence using the constitution. The banks accept the constitution of the Church for the purposes of opening a church bank account. To be on the safe side, though, I have been advising Churches to register Deeds of Trust with the Registrar of Deeds. The advantage with a Deed is that it is, actually, endorsed by the Registrar and that can be an advantage in cases of disputes. You can spell out the founding members and their trustees. Whatever that is bought for the Church as assets can be registered in the Trust. Whatever is built or bought can be donated to the Trust. This can be safer in the long run as all it needs is a change in trustees. And if any one of the trustees die or leave the Church they can be replaced by others. This means that no one person can dispose of the assets of the Church without the consent of the other trustees and the founder. The Deed is registered and, at the same time, the Church has a constitution governing the day-to-day operation of the Church ([www.relzim.org](http://www.relzim.org) accessed 09/10/2011).

The lack of a direct law that governs the registration of churches seems to have contributed to problems of inheritance and leadership succession in AICs in Zimbabwe. During the life time of Johane Marange, people would make contributions in form of cash and material goods to their church. Without lawful structures, the contributions are rendered to the church in the name of Johane Marange. To Johane Marange and his followers indeed these are church goods. In the absence of registering the Church as a charitable organization or registering Deeds of Trust with the Registrar of Deeds, the inheritance and succession issues become problematic in many AICs. There is no security of church property in this regard as people resort to the traditional law of inheritance where the eldest son in the family takes over the estate of the deceased father. Whilst the traditional law of

inheritance would work well in a traditional set up, the founded church is a new element that cannot be settled by traditional laws.

## New Dynamics in an Old Movement

Since the death of Johane Marange the struggle for power, succession and inheritance still continues unabated in the Johane Marange African Apostolic Church. There is need here to provide a critical analysis of the factors that lead to fission after the founder's death. AICs were founded by charismatic people who commanded unquestioned loyalty during their life time. The death of the leader is normally followed by several schisms. Daneel (1988:79) has thus observed, "the fact that inherited leadership is the Achilles heel of the Independent Churches is borne out by a major crisis that almost invariably follows the death of a founder-leader." The schisms are to be located in the African traditional practice of inheritance itself. In the African traditional practice of inheritance there is no distinction between the spiritual and material estates. The estate belongs to the direct agnatic line of the deceased. The lack of strong structures backed by canon law leads to the fission in AICs.

In the absence of church canons that address issues of leadership and other aspects of church life precisely, AICs rely on traditional law which at times is not consistent. Traditional law, which is not codified, is subject to manipulation by elders in order to safeguard their interests in the Church. Tradition can be misinterpreted or adjusted to suit certain interests. It is based on those who still remember how leadership succession and inheritance were done in the past. Where people no longer remember, they are likely to innovate to bypass the gap in memory.

The second cause of fission has to do with polygamous marriage in the Marange Church. Johane Marange had 13 wives. It is inconceivable that all his wives, daughters and sons would agree to leadership going to one house and not the others, given the tensions that often characterise polygamous marriages. Even if women are spectators in public, they are the real players behind the scenes as what is said in public is an expression of what would be going on in their homes.

The inheritance ceremony in traditional context involves a lot of players, each with different interests. It involves all relatives from the matrilineal and patrilineal sides: uncles, cousins (both male and female) and aunts. These are normally witnesses but may intervene to help in

case of a feud. The major players are from the father's side. These include extended and immediate family members: uncles, grandfathers, cousins (both male and female), nieces and direct sisters. Each of the groups might choose to align with one group against the other depending on what they would benefit if their candidate inherits the Church. The faction that loses might resort to secular law.

The faction that feels that it has been deprived of the leadership may approach the chief or might proceed to the secular courts, as in the case of the Johane Marange Church. The secular courts do not use the Bible or Church tradition to judge a case. They will use the supreme law of the land. The one who is found guilty will be punished accordingly. In the Christian setting the ambivalence of the Bible on whether Christians can sue each other in the courts creates problems. Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew urged that if a brother wrongs another brother the issue should be resolved between the two but if the one who has done wrong does not accept the wrong he has done, then one or two more brothers can be asked to be witnesses. However, if the brother remains indignant, then he should be left and be treated like a pagan (Matt 18:15). In another passage Jesus urges Peter to have unlimited forgiveness (Matt 18:21-22). Unconditional forgiveness is the epitome of the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus called upon his followers to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them (Matt 5:43-46). Love then is construed as the distinguishing mark of true Christians (Matt 5:46-48). Although Paul urged Christians to judge themselves and not to go to secular courts, the failure by Christians to resolve problems amongst themselves often results in people seeking justice in the secular courts (1Cor.6:1-9). The ambivalence for the Church comes about when the same word of God advocates an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth (Ex 21:24-26, Lv. 21:20, Dt. 19:21). In this situation AIC leaders find themselves at the crossroads. The secular courts will neither remove one's eye or tooth but will weigh the case according to their own secular laws. Is it wrong for Christians to approach the secular courts? When Paul and Silas were in danger in Macedonia, they took advantage of their Roman citizenship after having been mistreated by magistrates (Acts 15:37-40). When Jews from Asia saw Paul in the Temple area they caused commotion which led to Paul's arrest by the commander of the Roman soldiers in the city. The Commander ordered that Paul be flogged and interrogated but Paul once again used his Roman citizenship to defend himself. A Roman citizen could not be punished without a fair trial (Acts 22:23). When

Paul realised that the Jews had hatched a plan to kill him he appealed to Caesar and his appeal was granted (Acts 25:10-32). What we see here is that Paul used the Roman secular laws to defend himself. The word of God seems to provide contradictions. Turning to the Bible for solutions will bring different answers as the Bible itself is a product of thousands of years of hybridization.

The appeal to the Bible will have limited functionality in resolving leadership wrangles in the Church. Again, tradition will not solve the same problem in the Johane Marange Church because it has not remained the same due to the colonial assault. The Bible in Africa also has not remained the same. There are signs of discontinuities on both sides as Homi Bhabha (1985:155) has observed. African culture was hybridized under colonial rule and Africans have carried the residuals of both into their churchly lives. The residuals are simply pointers of the once vibrant African culture. In reality what becomes available are trans-cultural forms that occur at the contact zone produced by the meetings of two world views of the African and the coloniser (Ashcroft 2000: 108). Traditional culture and the Bible as presented and mediated by the missionaries creates ambivalence for AICs in solving leadership and inheritance issues in their churches. The colonial authorities using the Bible as a standard of civilisation tended to construct a binary view of the people they evangelised: they came up with contrastive paradigms such as civilised and barbaric, Christian and savage, orderly and disorderly. This greatly undermined African traditions and culture, leading to the rupture, shattering and splitting in the African cosmology (Sugirtharajah 2001:62). The hybridity generated would lead to ambivalence.

Given that Johane Marange was once a member of the Methodist Church, and that he was also influenced by Seventh Day Adventism, the strategy of colonial missionaries as bearers of the Bible - a civilising document - was first to make the natives mimic the English by adopting their cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values. The result is a blurred as mimicry is never a simple reproduction of those traits because it is not far from mockery since it can parody what it mimics (Ashcroft et al 2007:125). Those that mimicked the English missionaries never became English missionaries; they never understood the missionary book the way missionaries understood it, therefore leading to the ambivalence as regarding what was best to solve fission problems in the Johane Marange Church.

The postcolonial challenge is also felt when the law is brought into play. Zimbabwean law is a mixture of Roman, Dutch and English law. It has also taken residuals of traditional law. This creates many loopholes that contestants in the Johane Marange African Apostolic Church fission dynamics can exploit. There is also an economic motif in the leadership succession issues. He who leads the Church will benefit more than others. He who leads the Church will inherit the Church's assets as his personal estate which he can use to purchase loyalty or punish those who resent his authority. This is the case with Noah Taguta. The leader himself will have the privilege of travelling the world over conducting the Pendi. Clemence Momberume felt that he was left out yet he was the surviving oldest son of Johane Marange.

Another factor has to do with the traditional structure. There is a tendency to graft traditional cultural notions onto church life in AICs (Daneel 1988:158-159). The problem with this assertion is to regard AICs as vanguards of the traditional cultural order. The traditional cultural order is no longer as traditional as it was because of its encounter with the Other. The presence of the Methodist, Catholic, Anglican and Apostolic Faith missionaries led to culture confrontation in Manicaland.

## **Conclusion**

What then is the way forward for the followers of Johane Marange who find themselves in an ambivalent and hybridised situation in Zimbabwe and in Africa? The story of Marange's followers is the story of the culturally uprooted who, in the process of colonial encounter, emerged in the geo-cultural space with their own brand of Christian independency. Whilst the colonial master and his colonial discourse are gone, the new colonial master has emerged if we are to go by the notion of internal colonisation. The new master, differing in colour from the old master, still insists on colonial values of the old master and the followers of Johane Marange once again find themselves in an ambivalent position; they find themselves living on the borderlands of the present. The future of the Johane Marange followers lies in the acceptance that, like all other people in the postcolonial states, they are living in a fast changing world where there is nothing that remains stagnant. Leadership wrangles, power contestations, battles for sacred

sites, court litigations, refusal to co-operate with government in the immunisation of children, and refusal to send the sick to hospital and confrontation with non-governmental organisations over their polygamous marriages are clear indications of Johane Marange's followers' ambivalence. They are caught between preservation of the ideals of the founder and resistance to the colonial worldview and its values, as well as modernity with its ever-changing global culture. The secure position is the in-between, but it too is fluid. Safety will be guaranteed in these interstitial zones of contact where boundaries of both will dissolve a little but not totally. The provision of these zones of engagement will pave the way for inter/intra-cultural dialogue that will reduce tension in the Church and in the Church's confrontation with forces from without.

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## CHAPTER 2

*Vengesayi Chimininge*

# Zion Christian Church

## A Case Study

### Introduction

This chapter offers a history of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) of Samuel Mutendi, with special emphasis on the developments which took place after the death of Samuel Mutendi in 1976 to the present. The focal point of this chapter is to show that the history of this particular church is hinged on the activities of the founder (Samuel Mutendi) and the current (at the timing of writing) Bishop (Nehemiah Mutendi). This is so because the founder and the current Bishop played a very crucial role in the development and growth of the ZCC in Zimbabwe.

### Background

A number of studies dealing with African Independent/ Initiated/ Instituted/ Indigenous Churches (AICs) have been written by many researchers. While there have been highly informative and relevant studies of AICs in Zimbabwe in the 1970s and 1980s, of late the area has endured scholarly neglect. Currently, the majority of people talk about the phenomenal growth of the ZCC of Samuel Mutendi. They are astonished by the pace at which the ZCC is growing, as compared to other AICs in Zimbabwe. A lot of speculations have been put forward. One member of a Pentecostal Church said:

The founder of ZCC in Zimbabwe (Samuel Mutendi) and current Bishop (Nehemiah Mutendi) are using very powerful charms and magic to attract people to be members of their church. Samuel Mutendi was given powerful magic in South Africa which was associated with a black rod (tsvimbbo) by Engenas Legkanyane when he was a labour migrant working in the

Transvaal region. In Zimbabwe he performed a lot of miracles using that rod. When he died this rod was given to his son Nehemiah which he is using up to now. This is why his Church is growing so fast (Tawanda Chinanga, 2010).

Daneel (1971:4) noted that:

The negative publicity on the nature and organisation of AICs“ are contributions that appear to be products of fieldworkers who incidentally came across these religious groupings while engaged on other projects, or by missionaries who had taken an interest in the activities of one or other group with which they came into contact, in the course of ministering their own congregations. On the whole such studies, some of which contain brilliant accounts of the personalities and groups concerned, are highly informative and valuable, yet the limitations of many of these accounts, caused by lack of comprehensive approach and by lack of close identification of the observer over a long period of time with the groups studied, are only too obvious.

So, lack of a comprehensive approach caused the majority of people to have negative perception of the Zionists. The present study, therefore, adopted the phenomenological method as a chief paradigm in studying the ZCC so that people might have a better understanding of how and why the ZCC is growing so fast as compared to other AICs in Zimbabwe. Thus, the study sought to give an accurate description of the ZCC, with the aim of updating literature on the developments of AICs in Zimbabwe.

Daneel (1988:273) identified three major schismatic groups which emerged soon after the death of Mutendi in 1976. These groups are the ZCC under the leadership of Reuben Mutendi, Gierson Matenda and Nehemiah Mutendi (Daneel, 1988). So, by “the ZCC of Samuel Mutendi,” I am referring to the main body which is currently under the Episcopacy of Nehemiah Mutendi.

During the field work, I discovered that there are three historical epochs in the development of the ZCC in Zimbabwe. The first phase has to do with the birth of Samuel Mutendi in 1890 up to 1922 when he started his church. The second phase deals with the inception and development of his religious movement from 1923 up to his death in 1976. The third phase deals with what happened after the death of Mutendi up to the present.

Nevertheless, most of what happened in the first and second phase is recorded by Daneel, in his works published in 1970, 1971, 1977, and 1988 as well as in the *Rungano rweZion Christian Church* booklet.

## **The Family background of Samuel Mutendi**

According to Daneel (1970:15), Mutendi's life history and the historical development of ZCC was carefully recorded in the unpublished book called *Rungano RweZion Christian Church* meaning 'the history of the ZCC'. The booklet is presented in the biblical form of chapters and verses. It comprises 56 sections and 37 pages (Daneel, 1970:15).

*The Rungano rweZion Christian Church* Section Nine outlines the genealogy of Samuel Mutendi. According to this document, Samuel Mutendi was born by Makwua. Makwua was born by Mudengezerwa who was the son of Chirume Mushavi who lived at Great Zimbabwe. Chirume Mushavi was born by Dlembeu who was the first son of Chief Chirisamhuru of Matopos or Matonjeni. This history shows that Samuel was a member of the royal family.

## **Birth and Early Life of Samuel Mutendi**

Like Bishop Eliyasi Vilakati of the Jericho Zionist Church in Swaziland (Fogelqvist, 1986:59), Samuel Mutendi's birth was mysterious. Nehemiah Mutendi (2011) said that his father was born in 1880. He had a premature birth and he was the only child. In the Karanga tradition such babies were not allowed to be kept indoors. In fact, such babies were supposed to be killed by old women. But the baby Mutendi was left out to stay in a house where goats were kept, for those days goats used to stay with people in huts. His grandmothers had to struggle to breastfeed him. At first they had given up but when they saw one of his eyes open they continued to breast feed him since they discovered that he was a human being. Later on he grew up to be a healthy person (Nehemiah Mutendi, 2011).

The name Tongotendaziso is a combination of two Shona words 'tenda' meaning 'thank' and 'ziso' meaning 'eye'. Therefore, *tongotendaziso* literally means 'thank the eye' or 'believe the eye' (Mudengezerwa, 2005). The name was derived from the fact that he was saved by his blinking eyes. Later on people shortened his name to Tendeziso (*Rungano rweZion Christian Church* booklet section one). Mudengezerwa (2005) further explains that the current name Samuel Mutendi is a Christian name for Tendeziso Makwua (Chimininge, 2005:19).

## **Mutendi's call**

According to *Rungano rwe Zion Christian Church* booklet, Section Ten, "Mutendi received his first call in 1913 at Chegutu when he was on police patrol. He saw a vision of the angel Gabriel who said to him, "Behold I tell you that you will set up a church in your country." This vision terrified him, but encouraged him to devote himself in prayer. In the year 1919, Samuel Mutendi dreamt himself talking to God, being reminded about the 1913 vision. Again he was terrified and he continued to devote himself to prayer and fasting. At times as a policeman he would go with the prisoners to hear the word of God in the DRC (*Rungano rweZion Christian Church* booklet section ten). Meanwhile, the angel in the dream revealed himself to Mutendi several times and at last he dreamt while he was at a high place accompanied by many children of different races carrying bundles of grass on top of their heads. These children put their bundles of grass around Mutendi. He narrated his dream to one of his fellow police officers called Rarimoni Murevi who interpreted Mutendi's dream saying "your dream signifies that you will become a leader of a large church congregation comprising different nationalities, including the whites." (*Rungano rweZion Christian Church* section ten).

In 1921, Samuel Mutendi resigned from the BSAP in Chegutu and went back home. In Bikita he was employed at Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) School called Gumunyu as a teaching assistant. At this school he started preaching about fire baptism (*Rungano rweZion Christian Church* booklet, section ten). He also urged people to sing chorus, dance and pray for their own rather than following already written prayers in the DRC hymns. For this reason, Mutendi faced a lot of opposition from the DRC ministers. As a result, he decided to travel to South Africa (*Rungano rweZion Christian Church* booklet section ten).

In South Africa, Mutendi and his colleagues secured employment at Bombara Farm in the Transvaal region. One night after work, Mutendi and his colleagues debated on which church was ideal for them to join. The debate continued, but no agreement was reached. That night Mutendi dreamt and saw two angels which he had previously dreamt while he was a police officer at Hartley in 1913. One of the angels urged him to wake up and pray. While he was praying one of the angels spoke to him saying "the ideal church for you is the Zion". He woke up and

reported his dream to his colleagues and they were very happy (*Rungano rweZion Christian Church* booklet, section ten).

In 1922, Mutendi was baptised by Engenas Lekganyane in the Zion Apostolic Faith Mission and was named Samuel. Lekganyane was pleased with Samuel Mutendi's conduct and performance. He thus commissioned him to baptise people in the then Rhodesia. (*Rungano rweZion Christian Church* booklet, section ten)

### **The Establishment of the ZCC in Zimbabwe**

His first port of entry was Gumunu School. He wanted to preach to his former friends with whom he had been teaching. His former colleagues were very happy to hear Mutendi who had left them for South Africa preaching the word of God with eloquence. He started his sermon by narrating his journey to South Africa. This was followed by a powerful sermon from the gospel according to Luke 3:1 as had been revealed to him while in South Africa. Most people were filled with the Holy Spirit and with awe and reverence. Mutendi's friends and others gave their life to God and he laid his hands on them while others ran away saying 'he was possessed by evil spirits.' They said this because they had never seen a church operating under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Despite being despised for living in the spirit, Samuel Mutendi and his friends pressed on and continued to preach and they were strengthened in faith.

As from that day Mutendi and his followers were persecuted everyday from the Dutch Reformed Church, Roman Catholic Church members and African traditional leaders. They charged him with false accusations since they were so jealous about his church which was growing so fast. One day the DRC minister in Bikita District reported to the police that Mutendi was organising bands of terrorists against the government. This resulted in the imprisonment of Mutendi and his colleagues (*Rungano rweZion Christian Church* section 32).

### **Establishment of the Church in Gokwe**

The political conflict between the Rozvi and the local Duma chieftaincies is raised by Tirivangana (2011) as central in the movement of Mutendi to Defe in Gokwe. Further to this, the antagonistic relationship between Bishop Samuel Mutendi and the Dutch Reformed, Roman Catholic Church members and colonial administrators continued as his followers

increased. Mutendi therefore decided to extend his territory to the Midlands province. In the 1960s he then established another great centre of worship in Gokwe in the area of Chief Sahai (Daneel, 1987). He managed to establish a sacred shrine at Defe Dopota. As the man of God, Mutendi started to perform a lot of signs and wonders using his *Mapumhangozi* rod and a lot of people converted to the ZCC. Through his *Mapumhangozi*, Mutendi would perform acts such as rain-making and stopping rain, as well as casting out demons (Chimininge, 2005). By then Mutendi was old and his days were numbered.

### The Death of Samuel Mutendi

The accounts of Mutendi's death vary. As a result, many stories have been told about the death of the Reverend Samuel Mutendi by a lot of followers and the general public. But Daneel (1987) explains this extensively and for him, during Mutendi's country-wide round of paschal celebrations in April 1976 the frail old Bishop must have had a foreknowledge of his coming death. He told his followers that he would not be seeing them again and that he was being called to Heaven to receive the crown that was due to him. Thus Mutendi who was the most remarkable independent church leader in Zimbabwe, who built Mbungo Mission and Defe Dopota, and who for some fifty years led the ZCC in Zimbabwe, died on 20 July 1976 at a newly established Jerusalem at Defe in Gokwe South District.

Daneel (1987, 1989) further argues that because of Mutendi's prominence as a Christ-like figure in the lives of his adherents, many of them expected their leader's death to be followed by events similar to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This view is supported by the majority of ZCC office-bearers who insisted that "Bishop Samuel Mutendi had predicted while he was alive that three days after his death he would send a sign for all to see and reassure them of his presence" (Chimininge, 2005:29).

Further to this, the late evangelist Gierson Matenda, who for years after being healed of fits at Mbungo and who for many years had worked as driver as well as a senior prophet, stated that on the night after Mutendi's death he had a dream in which the Bishop told him that he would rise after three days (Daneel, 1987). Thus up to now, the popular Zionist belief holds that on the third day after Mutendi's death his sign came to pass. Daneel (1987:146) adds that most members of the ZCC

insisted that Mutendi went into a star, since it was clear for everybody to see.

*The Rhodesia Herald* of July 28, 1976 read: "Mystery flying object seen over Rhodesia" while *The Chronicle* on the same day read: "Experts to check UFO report". Both stories referred to the amazing spectacle, commonly known as Nyeredzi yaSamere or the star of Samuel episode, which took place on the night of July, 23, 1976 after the death of Mutendi.

Some people called it "a smoky white" phenomenon which looked like a round white object about one metre in diameter, moving northwards from the south (Dopota Star, 2000:13)

A meteorological expert in Bulawayo who was on duty that night described it as "a smoky sort of white shape, a long way out, which was circular and about three full moons in circumference". Some other reports were filed by pilots, one of them from Air Rhodesia, Captain Gary Allan. A Salisbury police spokesman confirmed that the police had also received an unidentified object report on Monday July 26 from a Mr Reison Chimedza in Gutu (Mgandani, Herald, 25. July 2010).

While those who witnessed the mystery of the flying object on July 23 1976 were struggling to unravel it, the Zionist fraternity was celebrating the amazing power and love of God who afforded his servant Reverend Mutendi such a wonderful and befitting end. As he had prophesied at Sote in Gutu hardly two weeks before his death, the Lord gave them the sign. The Zionists who saw the flying object on that night can testify to this day that the "smoky white phenomenon" was, in essence, a vivid portrait of Reverend Samuel Mutendi, easily identified by his cap and star badges on his cap and on his chest. His holy rod, *Mapumhangazi*, completed the picture (Dopota Star, 2000:13).

The rare sight was also seen in Defe Dopota where it stunned mourners who had converged for the burial of their dear departed leader. The dazzling flying phenomenon is believed to have hovered above Dopota Mission at Defe briefly before descending at the place where Mutendi was eventually laid to rest. The entire mission was instantly engulfed by a misty radiance which mesmerised every one present. The incident threw the mourners into a highly charged atmosphere as several church members present started speaking in tongues (Mgandani, Herald, 25 July 2010).

Mutendi was buried at Defe Dopota in Gokwe, but the legacy lives on. Since 1977, every July, thousands of Zionist pilgrims from across the

world converge at Defe Dopota to celebrate the life of Mutendi (Dopota, Star, 2000).

### **ZCC under the Leadership of Nehemiah Mutendi**

Under the leadership of Nehemiah Mutendi, the ZCC made great strides in its religious, social and economic development. Among other issues, the ZCC managed to reconcile itself with Gierson Matenda's faction, build schools, churches and conference centre, and establish some congregations in the Diaspora.

### **Reconciliation with Gierson Matenda**

One of the remarkable achievements made by Bishop Nehemiah Mutendi was the reconciliation made between his Churches with those of Gierson Matenda. It was towards the end of 1984, that Gierson entered into a peaceful negotiation with Nehemiah at Mbungo Estates near Masvingo (Daneel, 1988:306).

It must have been a difficult decision for Gierson, for he was fully aware of the exclusive nature of the ZCC leadership hierarchy, which placed all effective power and authority in the hands of one principal leader and did not allow for any other office above that of minister (*mufundisi*) (Hungwe, 2012). So, reconciliation with Mutendi's successor would therefore inevitably lead to the incorporation into Nehemiah's Church of all the congregations he had so painstakingly built; he would lose effective control over them and his status in the United ZCC would be reduced to that of *Mufundisi* (Daneel, 1988). Nevertheless, the mystical persuasion of the deceased Mutendi swayed Gierson. In view of the long history of recurring illness and the faith-healing support he had always received from the 'man of God', it is conceivable that Gierson feared that his persistence as an independent leader would incur the ultimate withdrawal of Mutendi's protective powers from his own life and subsequent exposure to misfortune (Daneel, 1988:305). As a result, Gierson became even more emotionally and spiritually dependent on Mutendi than before, to the extent that in later years he could not follow up his independent Church building with a final severance of ties with the main body of the ZCC (Daneel, 1988). More than anything else, Gerson's strong faith in Mutendi's ongoing control of his Church, and the threat such control posed to his own well-being and salvation in the

event of disobedience, caused him after eight to nine years of independent leadership to be reconciled with Nehemiah, Mutendi's official successor (Daneel, 1988:301).

In January 1985 agreement on unification was reached between Gierson and Nehemiah and a special weekend of reconciliation ceremonies was arranged at Garare (now Hebron Mission of ZCC) in Mwenezi District. Busloads of Bishop Nehemiah's followers ferried people from different parts of the country to Gierson's headquarters. The majority of key figures representing Gierson's numerous congregations in Mberengwa, Chivi, Chiredzi, Kwekwe and Zvishavane were present for the epic occasion (Putsai, 2010). All of Gierson's office-bearers were inducted into Nehemiah's Church. This was done by laying hands on them. Each of these had to make a public statement of loyalty and acceptance of Nehemiah's leadership (Putsai, 2010). It was obviously felt that in this way Gierson's representative decision would be made more binding on his entire Church. Nehemiah's officials soon instructed Gierson and his ministers to restrict themselves to brief statements of loyalty to Nehemiah. After that each minister was only given an opportunity to speak and identify his congregation and indicate acceptance of Nehemiah's leadership publicly (Putsai, 2010).

Gierson handed over to Nehemiah all the band instruments, staff (*tsvimbo*), plates and cups he had used for Holy Communion. These objects represented the authority of a Zionist bishop, and their use had been an act of rebellion against the 'man of God', their passing into Nehemiah's hands symbolically demonstrated Gierson's final capitulation and his complete acceptance of the 'real owners' leadership (Daneel, 1988:313). Addressing his ministers Gierson stated that: "From now your church centre is at Mbungo. I have handed over everything... Whatever happens and whether we like everything or not there can be no reversal decisions..." (Daneel, 1988:313). Gierson was now expecting from his Bishop Nehemiah strength, life, truth, care and support. Gierson's headquarters was declared to be the ZCC mission centre where a boarding school named Hebron was constructed from that day.

## Educational Achievements

The ZCC under Bishop Nehemiah has made tremendous progress in the area of education. Maposa, Sibanda and Makahamadze (2011:262) argue that since the foundation of this church, Samuel Mutendi sought

to eradicate illiteracy. The first school was established in 1932. It was meant to competently combat poverty and disease. However, Bishop Nehemiah, who is a trained teacher, upheld his father's vision of educating the people. This shows that he realised the importance of education for development in society. At present the ZCC has managed to build ten full-fledged schools in Zimbabwe (Mgandani, 2010). These schools are:

- Mutendi Primary School, Gokwe South District, established in 1973;
- Mutendi Primary School, Mbungo, Masvingo District, 1983;
- Mutendi High School, Mbungo, Masvingo District, 1984;
- Dopota Primary School, Gokwe South District, 1986;
- Hebron High School, Mwenezi District, 1986;
- Dzidzai Adult Literacy Programme, nationwide, 1992;
- Defe Secondary School, Gokwe South District, 1999;
- KwaMutevhure Secondary School, Zaka District, 2001;
- Mutambara Primary School, Bikita District, 2002;
- NaFombo uri Magonde Secondary School, Makonde District, 2002;
- Tanda Saskare High School, Gokwe North, 2005.

Of all these, Mutendi High and Hebron High Schools provide boarding facilities to the students. Maposa, Sibanda and Makahamadze (2011:262) discovered that more schools are being established by the ZCC in newly resettled farming areas. For the trio, some of these schools are administered by qualified members of the ZCC, the majority of them are Mutendi's relatives. It is interesting to note that ZCC schools are supported by the church through donations from the church members. Donations in form of money and groceries helped to retain the teaching staff during tough times. The ZCC also assists some needy students in paying their tuition for high schools, colleges and universities in and outside Zimbabwe.

In 2010 a College of music called Dream Africa was opened in Masvingo where both Western and Traditional music lectures are offered. Furthermore, Hungwe (2012) said that Nehemiah has pioneered 350 adult literacy centres across the country. He has been in charity work and food relief for orphans and vulnerable children. He also initiated a mission station at Chimoio, Mozambique, in recognition of

the liberation struggle. The ZCC is working towards construction of a university in Mashonaland West Province that specialise in teaching agriculture. Currently, the construction of a Commercial College in Belvedere, Harare is underway (Hungwe, 2012).

The other educational development that took place in the history of Zionism in Zimbabwe is that, in October 2011, Nehemiah was conferred with a Doctor of Literature honorary degree by the University of Zimbabwe. In his acceptance speech after being capped by the University of Zimbabwe Chancellor Robert Mugabe, the bishop said the honour came as a huge surprise and he was humbled. He said:

In my wildest dreams I never imagined that one day I would be bestowed an honorary degree by the UZ. I am greatly humbled by the recognition. Words fail me. For whatever little that I did that the UZ recognised me for, it was done for Zimbabweans. It was done for humanity and I do not intend to give up (Mugandani, 2012).

However, presenting the citation, Dr. Claude Mararike in Mugandani (2012), a member of the University Senate, said: "The UZ Senate had approved Bishop Mutendi's conferment of the award due to his immense contribution to the improvement of the education system in Zimbabwe in general and for the visually-impaired in particular" (Mararike, 2012). Maposa, Sibanda and Makahamadze (2011:262) concluded that through education, the ZCC transforms the social and economic lives of its members and ordinary people.

### **Construction of Church Buildings and Conference Centres**

Since time immemorial, members of the ZCC were praying under the sheds of trees. There were no church buildings at the administrative headquarters at Mbungo and Defe Dopota Shrines. However, all that has changed (The Insider, Thursday, 19 February 2004). In October 2005, the ZCC embarked on the construction of Conference Centre at the church's headquarters in Mbungo. The centre offers 5 000 square metres of conference space and it accommodates 15 000 people. It also has catering facilities, a guest house, library and communication centre. The construction of the Conference Centre was completed in March 2011 and it was officially opened by President Mugabe in April 2011 (The Insider, 18 April, 2011).

Preliminary estimates showed that the conference centre would cost US\$1 million, but the funds surpassed the estimate by further US\$1

million. Church members from within the country and beyond contributed immensely to the construction of the Conference Centre. Bishop Nehemiah insisted that church members must fund the project if they were to receive blessings (Maposa, Sibanda and Makahamadze, 2011:257). Even during tough years, Nehemiah and his son Sanction continuously urged his followers not to feel hampered by the bad times, but instead work harder to prove that nothing is impossible in the eyes of God. According to Nehemiah although the conference centre will be mainly used by thousands of church followers at their conferences at Mbungo, it will, however, be open to other users and will be an ideal venue for national and international conventions, symposiums for religious and social gatherings, and retreats. The ZCC also has more than 5 church buildings in Zimbabwe and it was constructing more of these in every town. (Mugandani, 2012). Nehemiah Mutendi wanted to build his church and expand its activities, especially to the West (The Insider, Thursday, 19 February 2004).

### **Zion Christian Church in the Diaspora**

According to the ZCC administrator Pasipamire (2005) Bishop Nehemiah decided to take the gospel to the West and other countries in Africa. His mission is to show the world how God has manifested himself in Africa. For Pasipamire (2005) this is a mission he has to fulfil because it was his father's death wish. According to Nehemiah (2005) "My father told me on his deathbed that I should go and spread the word of God to those countries which he had not been able to visit." (The Insider, Thursday, 19 February 2004). For this reason, the former schoolteacher has not rested since he took over the mantle. The church has been expanding from rural to urban areas, city to city and Africa to Europe (Pasipamire, 2004). Besides spreading the gospel to the West, Nehemiah intends to use their strong currencies to develop the church in Zimbabwe. According to Bishop Nehemiah (2004) "We have the gospel and the West has the money. So why not give them the gospel and get their money to develop our church and our country?"

According to Chabata (2004) in reaching the West with the Gospel, Nehemiah's approach is simple. He is targeting Zimbabweans that have settled in Britain and the United States first. For Nehemiah (2004),

Once we have converted them, they know what to do. The gospel travels through the culture of the individual. This is the reason why missionaries

did not make such an impact in Zimbabwe. They didn't want to go through our culture. They wanted to impose their culture on the people here through the gospel. That is why independent black churches sprang up (*The Insider*, Thursday 19 February, 2004)

Daneel (1988:119) supports this view and argued that "At the heart of this whole movement, directly or indirectly, will be found the sin of the white man against the black. It is because of the failure of the white man to make the church a home for a black man that the latter has been fail to have a Church of his own."

Bishop Nehemiah says after targeting Zimbabweans in Diaspora, the next target is other Africans because "our culture is more or less the same". He says black Zimbabweans and other Africans who have stayed abroad for years, know the culture of the societies in which they live. Once they have been converted, it will be easier for them penetrate their own communities and convert locals (*The Insider*, Thursday, 19 February 2004). For Nehemiah (2004)

I know there are already some people in the United States who are conducting healing sessions. But our sessions are different. We want to show the West that the battle Samuel fought in this country (Zimbabwe) against things like feasts, evil spirits, mental illness, barrenness and other inexplicable ailments can be fought in Europe and America, not on the pill, not from the medical front but from the spiritual front, simply by praying and using holy water and papers (*The Insider*, Thursday, 19 February 2004).

From Nehemiah's words we can see that one of the major attractions of the ZCC is the healing. The church specializes in exorcising evil spirits and treating incurable diseases such as feasts and mental illnesses. Under the ZCC, any ailments diagnosed by church prophets can be cured either by using holy water, salt, coffee, tea or an injection- not the hospital injection, but the church one that looks like an ordinary needle. Bishop Nehemiah (2004) says this is not a new phenomenon. In the 1960s, his father prayed for one Frenchwoman, Jacqueline, who was barren and she gave birth to a baby girl who she named Chipo (Gift) who is still alive (Nehemiah, 2004).

The ZCC News Letter of April (2012:4) indicated that the ZCC had more than 2 million followers in Zimbabwe, close to 300 000 followers in South Africa, over 400 000 in Mozambique, close to 100 000 in Zambia and Democratic Republic of Congo and about 50 000 in Botswana. Bishop Nehemiah is now taking the gospel to Britain and the United States. The number of followers in Britain is still small but there

are five tabernacles with over 100 followers each (Mugandani, 2012). In the United States, there are only 10 to 20 followers in Boston.

Nevertheless, with about one million followers in Zimbabwe, Bishop Mutendi thinks it is time to change the church. He has managed to transform the church from one that was mainly associated with poor, uneducated blacks to one that has managing directors of multi-national companies, medical doctors and nurses, senior civil servants, bankers, business tycoons and university graduates (The Insider, Thursday, 19 February 2004).

### **Challenges faced by Mutendi in Establishing Churches in Diaspora**

According to Nehemiah (2004) biggest handicap is that at the moment he has not been able to travel with his senior prophets, Abmereki Chikumbo and Nelson Manyanye because the British and United States governments refused to grant them visas. Visa requirements for Zimbabweans travelling to the United Kingdom and United States were very strict because of the exodus of skilled and semi-skilled Zimbabweans to look for jobs. According to Chabata (2004) in 2004 those applying for a visa to the UK, were required to pay a non-refundable visa fee of Z\$280 800 (about US\$80 at the current auction rate, but US\$350 at the official rate). They were to supply evidence that they have the funds to pay for the trip and living expenses. They were required to produce tenants' agreement or gas or water bills of where they will be staying during their visit, as well as proof of employment in Zimbabwe. They were also required to produce proof of assets owned in Zimbabwe such as title deeds, car registration book, marriage certificate, children's birth certificates and the immigration status of their sponsor in the UK. The cheapest airfare to London by then was Z\$2.7 million (about US\$776).

However, Bishop Nehemiah (2004) says the church had the money to sponsor the two senior church people, but officials insist that they present their own personal bank accounts to show they have money. But Nehemiah considers this a minor setback. It is nothing compared to what his father went through.

Nehemiah Mutendi (2005) believes the time for Zion to show itself has come. "What the British and Americans are doing is simply denying their people the gospel. We have something new to offer. People are tired of the monotonous type of worship from the so-called established

churches. But more importantly, we want to show the West how God has manifested himself in Africa and is talking to us in our own language, Shona."

Harare lawyer, Simplisius Chihambakwe, who is not a member of the church, but is on its board of trustees, says the ZCC is currently at its strongest point. But for now, the Bishop is focused on one thing: 'How to get his key lieutenants into the UK and US'. For Nehemiah "If I can only get them there for a month or so, I know this will be a major turning point." (The Insider, Thursday 19 February 2004).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter traced the history of the ZCC from its beginning up to the time when Samuel Mutendi died. Thus the genealogy, birth and early life of Mutendi before he joined the Zionist church were explained. We have been taken through his dreams while he was working as a police; how he left the police force; travelling to South Africa and the dreams he encountered on his way; his baptism, return from South Africa, his arrest and incarceration; the problems faced his church, recognition of the ZCC in Zimbabwe up to his death as well as the current developments within the ZCC. One might wonder how the ZCC has managed to grow so fast like this while other AICs are not. The answer lies in the church's theological teaching. Bishop Nehemiah Mutendi, also known among adherents as "the builder" has taken forward the teachings of his father Samuel, who steadily established the church and spread the gospel in the rural areas of the then Southern Rhodesia, by extending it to urbanites and the diasporans. This current wave in the ZCC's history has involved two successful thrusts. One is a renewal of the church by means of a steady increase in numbers of flock together with a stronger biblical approach. The second is the expansion of church related projects such as mission in the Diaspora, building of schools, colleges, university, churches and conference centres in the country. It is noteworthy that almost all contributions towards such projects have come from devotees, most of whom are ordinary and economically underprivileged citizens forming the bedrock of the church.

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*Lovemore Ndlovu*

## The African Apostolic Church led by Paul Mwazha as a Response to Secularization

### Introduction

In the last ten years, Zimbabwe has seen the emergence of various fissiparous movements within the ambit of African Initiated Churches (AICs). According to Barrett, Kurian and Johnson (2001:821), Christians comprised 67.5% of the population as at year 2000. Amongst the Christians, AICs were 42.3% of the Christian believers<sup>1</sup>. The period of economic and political turmoil in Zimbabwe (2000 to 2010) saw many Zimbabweans turning to AICs in search of safety, refuge and solace. Cox (1995:245) estimates that 50% of all Christians in Zimbabwe belong to AICs. The African Apostolic church (AAC) led by Paul Mwazha is one of the fastest growing AICs in Zimbabwe and is popular in the urban and rural areas. Its influence has changed the religious landscape in Zimbabwe as it portrays religion as a private and public affair. Besides, it is aggressive in deploying a unique theology and self understanding.

The AAC was founded by Paul Mwazha in 1959 after he became disenchanted with the Methodist Church of Rhodesia where he was an active member. His influence and theology confronted the missionary

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<sup>1</sup> In studying AICs there is always a problem of delineating AICs from Pentecostal churches such as the Celebration church in Zimbabwe. AICs are also Pentecostal in character yet they deploy a completely different theology or self understanding. It is also difficult to delineate Pentecostal churches from charismatic churches. The statistics that we have on AICs tend to combine all the above three categories – AICs, Pentecostal, and Charismatic. Consequently, this tends to affect statistics in terms of reliability.

understanding or interpretation of the Bible and resulted in the formation of the AAC. Paul Mwazha was born on 25 October 1918 at Holy Cross mission, near Mvuma, about 190 kilometres from Harare towards Masvingo. Despite having received Catholic influence at a tender age, Paul Mwazha became an ardent Methodist believer from 1931. Later on, he clashed with the Methodist ministers on issues of doctrine and religious practice particularly on issues concerning the work of the Holy Spirit. Mwazha advocated a Pentecostal gospel as opposed to the conservative Protestant gospel of the Methodist church (Mwazha, 1997:62). According to Mwazha (1997:39), “The Holy Spirit brought us into clear focus with the glory of Christ and moved our minds effortlessly toward the atonement of sins after which thoughts, words, and actions aligned with the dictates of God toward his worshippers”.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the AAC as a response to secularization. In Zimbabwe, as is found elsewhere in Africa, there is increase in religiosity evident in the African Initiated Churches and in Pentecostal or charismatic movements. An analysis of the contemporary market of faiths in Zimbabwe shows two types of Christian strands – the world affirming group and the world rejecting group. Pentecostal churches such as the Celebration church are world affirming, whereas African initiated churches such as the AAC are world rejecting. This chapter thus aims to analyse how the AAC deploys a world rejecting theology and self understanding. It is also pertinent to situate this discourse within the secularisation debate and critique the secularisation thesis drawing evidence from the Zimbabwe context.

## **Secularisation Theory**

One theory that has received massive intellectual battering is the secularization theory. Despite the fact that the concept of secularisation is a contested concept, scholars aver that it is a useful description of reality and possesses, according to Kaufmann, Goujon and Skirbekk (2012:71) of two dimensions, one public (i.e., institutional relations between religion and the state) and one private (i.e., personal piety, whether in the form of beliefs, practice, or affiliation). Martin (2005:141), a contemporary advocate of the secularisation theory, nuances that at one point he even contemplated suggesting that the word “secularisation” be expunged from the sociological dictionary. However,

Martin (2005:141) and Norris and Inglehart (2004:7) are now beginning to reflect on the secularization theory and its significance in understanding current religious developments. The aforementioned scholars agree that the secularisation theory is very pertinent in understanding both the narratives and metanarratives of religion. As Martin (2005:17) puts it:

The guiding paradigms of sociology, such as secularization, can be made analytically coherent and descriptively accurate. However, that means reducing 'grand theory' to tendencies which are to be observed in certain definable circumstances and not in others and, moreover, these circumstances need to be seen as varying greatly according to historical context.

The consequences or ramifications of secularization are evident even in contexts such as Zimbabwe. The focus of this chapter is to examine how religious organisations such as the AAC deal with secular influences or how they confront the secularisation process. This writer has decided to isolate AAC and analyse it as a response to secularization as the movement delineates itself as world rejecting. Yinger (1970:257-278) was among the early theorists to formulate a typology or classification of sects and he analysed sects in terms of how they deal with the secular world. Yinger's (1979:257-278) classification deals with the manner in which the sectarian groups relate to the secular world: some embrace the secular world and its values; others aggressively seek change in that world; and still others avoid it or completely withdraw from it. In studying the beliefs and practices of the AAC, this writer uses Yinger's (1970:257-278) classification as an analytical and conceptual tool.

Seminal social thinkers such as Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud all believed that religion would diminish in importance and cease to be significant with the advent of industrial society. According to Norris and Inglehart (2004:3),

the death of religion was the conventional wisdom in the social sciences during most of the twentieth century; indeed it has been regarded as the master model of sociological inquiry, where secularization was ranked with bureaucratization, rationalisation, and urbanisation as the key historical revolutions transforming medieval agrarian societies into modern industrial nations.

The secularization theory, to date, continues to receive massive intellectual battering or criticism as critics point to evidence of religious vitality and exponential rise in religiosity. Berger (1999:2) one of the

early proponents of the secularisation theory changed his initial observations and argues thus:

The world today, with some exceptions ... is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever. This means that a whole body of literature by historians and social scientists loosely labelled 'secularisation theory' is essentially mistaken.

Despite severe criticism of the secularisation theory, Martin (2005:124), in his book entitled: *On Secularization – Towards a Revised General Theory*, takes an interesting position as he maintains that the secularization theory is still relevant. He argues as follows:

... however battered by four decades of critical pressure, it (secularisation theory – L.N) still holds the field. And that it is because it is not straight forwardly untrue. In any case whatever sophisticated reservations are entertained by sociologists of religion, in the world at large secularization, in more or less simple guise, is implicitly assumed (Martin 2005:124).

Norris and Inglehart (2004:4) corroborate Martin's (2005:124) assertions by noting that the traditional secularisation theory needs updating and the concept of secularisation captures an important part of what is going on. Norris and Inglehart (2004:4-5) explain their thinking concerning the secularisation theory in this manner:

We believe that the importance of religiosity persists most strongly among vulnerable populations, especially those living in poorer nations, facing personal survival-threatening risks. We agree that feelings of vulnerability, societal and personal risks are key factors driving religiosity and we demonstrate that the process of secularisation – a systemic erosion of religious practices, values and beliefs – has occurred most clearly among the most prosperous social sectors living in affluent and secure post-industrial nations.

It is clear from the argument advanced by Norris and Inglehart (2004:5) that the publics living in industrial societies have been moving toward more secular orientations; and the world as a whole has more people with traditional religious norms than ever.

In light of the above remarks, it is pertinent for this writer to examine the consequences of secularisation and its ramifications for religious organisations in Zimbabwe such as the AAC. The AAC stance as a world rejecting church shows that it is aimed at fighting secular practices or secularist hegemony which is embedded in Zimbabwean society.

## What are AICs?

Scholars have used different terms to describe this movement, i.e. African instituted churches (Chitando, 2004:1), African independent churches (Daneel, 1971:1), African indigenous churches (Appiah-Kubi, 1981:1), African initiated churches (Anderson, 2003:1), etc. Appiah-Kubi (1981:1) prefers to use the term “African indigenous religions” because of AICs strong connection with indigenous or local culture. AICs, according to Appiah-Kubi (1981:1), address the needs of the African soul, subsequently providing believers with tools to fight the forces of evil as they express themselves in African society such as disease. Daneel (1987:30) argues that the terminology used in AICs largely depends on the premises of the researcher and his/her field. He explains in this regard:

*Political scientists speak of resistance movements and revolutionary cults; psychologists of deprivation cults, referring to a reaction against the removal of certain privileges; sociologists refer to religious associations, popular or separatists sects; anthropologists call them adaptive or acculturative movements, or even nativistic or revival groups and missiologists employ descriptive terms such as sectarian, syncretistic, eschatological, chiliastic, messianic, visionary or prophetic movements (Daneel 1987:30).*

Cox (1995:246) advocates that African independent churches constitute the African expression of the worldwide Pentecostal movement. He explains as follows:

These churches qualify as Pentecostal for two reasons; their style and their origins. First, they are, as scholars of religion would say, “phenomenological Pentecostal”. Their worship exhibits all the features of Pentecostal spirituality... Second, they were influenced by the high-impact spread of the American Pentecostal movement, both within the major denominations and outside them, in the first decades of this century (Cox (1995:246).

Hastings (1994:528), who differs from Cox (1995:246), argues that most AICs are protestant churches and their protestant roots allowed them to break away from the mission churches without fundamental doctrinal problems. Furthermore, they share the protestant stress on authority of the Bible and usually a literal interpretation is applied. The major differences between AICs and mission churches is that the latter have maintained an expression of African beliefs and values, hence there is blending of African traditions and Christian traditions. According to Engelke (2007:5), AICs were founded as a form of protest movement against western churches, and therefore function without referring to

those western missions or churches. AICs protested against western missionary interpretation of the Bible when applied to African traditional practices such as polygamy. Polygamy was seen as acceptable by most AICs and evidence in support of the latter was drawn from Old Testament scripture references or cultural practices.

AICs are of African origin and were founded by Africans and are largely adapted to the needs, life-view and life-style of “Black” people (Daneel, 1987:31). Most AICs wear distinctive costumes, mainly white robes. They often observe the Sabbath as well as Sunday. Their dietary laws are based on the Old Testament and include prohibition against taking of beer and tobacco. One of the AICs in Zimbabwe, the Johane Masowe *weChishanu* sect, rejects the Bible in favour of live and direct communication with God. Accepting the Bible, for the Johane Masowe *weChishanu* sect, is synonymous with accepting Western domination and missionary methods of interpretation (Engelke, 2007:95).

Preaching in AICs is characterised by storytelling rather than sermons, and worship incorporates dreams, healing, trances and a high degree of lay participation. AICs do not forsake the spiritual customs passed on by their ancestors and they believe that God was already present in Africa before the Europeans arrived and that African worship is better than that of the missionaries. Hence, producing a thoroughly “Africanised” version of Christianity (Cox, 1995:247). Cox (1995:247), therefore, concludes that most AICs provide a setting in which the African conviction that spirituality and healing belong together is dramatically enacted.

## Theories on the resurgence of AICs

One of the early theorists on AICs, Daneel (1974:7), a historian, highlights some of the theories that have been presented as an attempt to explain the exponential rise of religiosity among the AICs. Firstly, emphasis has been placed on the socio-political factors such as the injustices arising during the colonial era when Africans were segregated and alienated. This forced the Africans to use religion as a tool to fight the colonial administrators. Secondly, ethnic factors could also have resulted in the formation of AICs as Africans sought a church that would deploy African notions of identity, beliefs and world view.

Thirdly, scholars such as Isichei (1995:255) argue that AICs are protest movements because most of them developed when many

countries were under pressure from foreign domination or economic marginalisation. However, Ranger (2005:2) and Engelke (2007:5) see the development of AICs as emanating from failure by Christian missions in adapting the gospel to the religious context of Africa. Engelke (2007:5) notes that the Johane Masowe's rejection of the Bible was a protest against white Christianity and its interpretation of the Bible. It was viewed as too academic and hence it failed to address the specific needs of the Africans. Kirby (1994:60-61) corroborates Ranger's (2005:2) and Engelke's (2007:5) contestations and comments as follows:

Throughout its history, Christian missionary work in West Africa has displayed little cultural sensitivity toward African society. Catholic missionaries, like their protestant brothers, were appallingly ignorant of African institutions and did not care to investigate them. Indeed, they were too busy suppressing traditional rituals and beliefs, thereby preventing an objective, balanced view of African traditional religions. With few exceptions, missionaries saw African traditional religions as a 'morass of bizarre beliefs and practices' ... As a general principle we can say that before 1960 all mission-founded churches insisted that their converts abandon all contact with African traditional religions and cultures. These churches were poorly prepared theologically and culturally to accept any alternatives to their own way of praying, thinking and behaving.

Hastings (1967:61), more than forty years back, alluded to the fact that Christians had a negative approach to anything that was African. He explains in this regard:

The tendency continues to treat everything pre-Christian in Africa as either harmful or at best valueless and to consider the African, once converted from paganism, as a sort of *tabula rasa* on which a wholly new religious psychology has somehow to be imprinted (Hastings, 1967:61).

However, this tendency to condemn Africans continued due to ignorance on the part of the Christian missions and forced African Christians to respond as they sought to find an African type of Christianity that recognised their prior beliefs and practices. Consequently, African Christians wanted a Christianity that was going to present African religion in a favourable picture. The introduction of AICs in the religious space of Africa was meant to address this thirst for what African Christians considered to be "true religion". AICs, according to scholars such as Daneel (1987:1), became a place of refuge or a place of belonging. Daneel (1987:18) elaborates as follows:

For in the disruption of social structures caused by the accelerated processes of acculturation and industrialization thousands of alienated individuals have found in the Independent Churches "homes" of spiritual, mental and

even material security, true African *havens of belonging* ... in developing an *intimate corporate life*, the independents are compensating for the lack of *koinonia* in the historical churches.

Barrett (1968:156) highlights the root problem of the Christian missions as follows:

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

The formation of the AAC in 1959 was a result of the failure by the Methodist Church of Zimbabwe to offer a gospel that addressed the problems of the Africans within the African cosmology or world view. Hence, Mwazha became unhappy with the rigidity of the Methodist church ministers when it came to issues of the Holy Spirit and using the Holy Spirit to deal with the problems found in the African society (Mwazha, 1997:38). As Mwazha (1997:38) confirms:

The ever-present Holy Spirit and its significance to us brought the comfort that we were able to glorify Jesus. Our hearts were filled with song and it was not too difficult to express our sincere gratitude to Jesus. We were overwhelmed by the love of God confirmed by the exhilarating spirit from above. The arrival of the Holy Ghost brought us to a junction where we became less inclined to the conventional doctrine which seemed to gravitate from the justification by faith and sincerity in seeking for the favour of God, trusting more and more in undertaking definite good works as the guarantee to salvation.

Having noted the above views which attempt to explain the exponential rise of AICs in Africa, this writer argues that AICs such as the AAC could also be seen as direct responses to secularisation. Secularisation in this case, produced more traditional forms of religious expression such as the AAC. This explains the stance of the AAC on secular issues.

## **Theology and self understanding of AAC**

The AAC, founded by Paul Mwazha in 1959, following the spiritual naming of the church, takes the Bible as authoritative and legitimate and follows strict dietary laws. Members abstain from beer, tobacco, pork and bread among others. Polygamy is also outlawed by the church. Like other AICs, the wilderness (*Sowe*) gives the believers a sense of true

worship. Consequently, early in the morning the believers go to the wilderness to conduct their prayers among other worship activities. The AAC addresses most spiritual problems within the African world view. The importance and role of the ancestral spirits in a believers' spiritual life is acknowledged and affirmed.

The AAC has a unique and strict ethical code, i.e. outside church activities men and women put on clothes which cover fully the whole body. Women are forbidden to put on dresses that show cleavage. Association with non-church members is restricted as they are seen as evil. Attendance to social, public or secular gatherings such as weddings is forbidden because the church condemns secular life styles. Like other African initiated churches in Zimbabwe, the AAC puts more emphasis on faith healing, eradication of witchcraft and possession by the Holy Spirit.

The AAC represents a church that epitomises the values and aspirations of the Africans. Mwazha is even viewed by some believers in AAC as an African Christ. His presence is equated to the presence of God or the Holy Spirit. In a press statement on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2010, the AAC was inviting the public to attend the Holy Communion in Masvingo, Zimbabwe. According to this press statement, "all are invited to partake in this sacrament which Paul Mwazha was given from heaven for the benefit of believers here on our earth" (The Herald 2010:9). Paul Mwazha's heavenly spiritual errands are revealed and his status is presented as equivalent to that of Christ who dwells in the heavenly realm. When this writer attended an AAC church service in Gweru, the preacher pointed out in his sermon that Paul Mwazha is even superior to the patriarchs such as Abraham and Moses. To the believers of AAC, Mwazha is the new Moses.

## **Worship in AAC**

The AAC distinguishes itself from other apostles in many ways. Saturday is designated as their day of worship as believers put on their church regalia. Girls and women put on a white veil tied to the head whereas boys and men wear white tunics. Men wear their beards long and keep very short hair although some believers prefer to be clean shaven. All believers go barefoot at service and take off their shoes because the ground where worship takes place is seen as holy. During

worship, women and girls sit on the left and men and boys sit on the right.

The Sabbath service comprises mainly of reading of scripture and preaching. The preacher has a lector who reads from a selected passage of the Bible a verse at a time. Each verse is followed by exposition and commentary from the preacher. The preaching will from time to time be interrupted by women breaking into rhythmic singing of their favourite hymns. After the service, water is used for healing purposes and there could be laying on of hands.

### **Role of healing in the AAC**

Healing is a major factor in the rise of AICs in Zimbabwe. Daneel (1974:186) notes that healing is one of the most influential factors in attracting believers to AICs. The AAC puts a lot of emphasis on healing in their weekly adverts on a daily newspaper. It also gives testimonies of people who have been healed by its charismatic leader, Paul Mwazha. Healing, therefore, plays a major role in the expansion of the church. Cox (1995:254) notes that healing in AICs becomes much more of a central activity, with much of the liturgy and preaching revolving around it. Healing goes beyond bodily recuperation to providing remedies for unemployment, family disputes, marital discords, etc.

The aspect of healing becomes a major attraction as it addresses the core issues found in African society in the African way. Issues of witchcraft, dominant in African society, are effectively addressed. Life in African society is precarious due to the presence of the witches and other malicious spirits. The prophets in the AAC exorcise the evil spells and guarantee protection to the believers. The victims are subsequently offered holy water to administer when confronted by evil. Even though patients display clinical symptoms, the prophets identify the cause of the disease within the African world view.

The AAC is against western medical treatment and this was evident in the case of a woman who died in Hatcliffe, a suburb in Harare, Zimbabwe, where this researcher was carrying out field research. It was reported that the woman was bitten by a lizard in the house and her leg started swelling. When the AAC prophets were consulted they urged the woman and her relatives not to take the woman to the hospital as it was a spiritual problem. However, the relatives did not follow the advice of the AAC prophets and the woman subsequently died. The AAC prophets

then argued that the woman needed a spiritual solution not western medical healing.

Healing in the AAC is holistic in the sense that it provides remedy to the clinical symptoms and the spiritual problems that have led to the manifestation of the disease. Upon being healed, the patient in the AAC understands the world as chaotic and disruptive and that by appealing to a more powerful and benevolent spirit such as the Holy Spirit he/she can fight all evil. Cox (1995:258) argues that a new and powerful expression of human spirituality and morality is emerging in Africa. He elaborates as follows:

The indigenous churches draw on the past to prepare people for the future. They are not burgeoning just because they help people to reclaim ancient spiritual resources that seemed to be lost. They are growing because they help people apply those resources in a new and bewildering context (Cox, 1995:258).

### **AAC as an ascetic and fundamentalist movement protesting against the secular world**

Just like *Amanazaretha* (Church of Nazareth) in South Africa, the AAC is based on an ascetic Old Testament cult. The Church of Nazareth is an example of the Zion City concept within the prophetic-charismatic African independent churches (AICs) of Southern Africa. The church originated among the Zulu and its focus is on healing and empowerment and reconciliation and incorporation of ancestors. The name "Nazareth" is taken from Numbers 6, the vow of the Nazarites (Papini 2012:1). Asceticism is described as "rejection of bodily pleasures through sustained self-denial and self-mortification with the objective of strengthening spiritual life" (The Free Dictionary 2012:1). The AAC follows a strict ethical code which is consistent with asceticism. Men are not allowed to shave beards, and abstain from all secular attractions, etc. Preachers even abstain from sex before church services. Believers in AAC also abstain from all secular activities such as watching television programmes, radio programmes and attending secular weddings. For this reason, the church is based on an Old Testament ascetic cult.

Cox (1995:249) explains that though African independent churches started before the Pentecostal experience at Azusa street, the real burst of growth for the African independent churches came later. The impact of the global wave of Pentecostalism in African independent churches is

clear when we analyse the reasons why Paul Mwazha rejected the Methodist church particularly his argument that the church did not accept the work and acts of the Holy Spirit. Mwazha's Pentecostal orientation was clear in his early healing encounters as he saw believers responding to the Holy Spirit and being healed.

Having supported Cox's (1995:249) thesis, this writer further argues that African independent churches were also influenced by the fundamentalist movement which originated among American Protestants. The stance taken by the AAC against secular activities explains its link with the fundamentalist movement. The AAC's theology as a world rejecting church shows that the AAC could also be understood as a fundamentalist movement. In analysing the fundamentalist narrative, it is important to note that the term "fundamentalism" has been subjected to criticism. Armstrong (2004:x) alludes to the fact that the term "fundamentalism" seems to suggest that fundamentalism is monolithic in all manifestations yet this is not the case. Furthermore, the term gives the impression that fundamentalists are "inherently conservative and wedded to the past, whereas their ideas are essentially modern and highly innovative" (Armstrong 2004:x).

A closer analysis of the history of fundamentalism reveals that the American Protestants were the first to use the term "fundamentalists". Some of them even called themselves fundamentalists in order to distinguish themselves from the more liberal protestants, who, in their opinions appeared to distort the Christian faith (Armstrong 2004:x). The aim of the fundamentalists, according to Armstrong (2004:x), was to "go back to the basics and re-emphasize the "fundamentals" of the Christian tradition, which they identified with a literal interpretation of scripture and the acceptance of certain doctrines".

The term "fundamentalism", has, however, been applied to reform movements in other faiths in a way that may not be deemed satisfactory. It is important to note that fundamentalists have been fighting against secularist hegemony as a way of wresting religion out of its marginal position and back to centre stage. Hence, fundamentalism has been viewed as a global response to modern culture (Armstrong 2004:x).

This chapter argues that the origin of AICs could be influenced by the aforementioned global wave of fundamentalism as they fought against secularist hegemony. The theology of the AAC could therefore be seen as a marriage between Pentecostalism and fundamentalism. The views of the AAC regarding secular issues qualify it as a fundamentalist

movement. The AAC just like other fundamentalist movements sees scripture and interpretation of scripture as infallible.

## **Conclusion**

AICs continue to dominate the religious market place in Zimbabwe prompting researchers interested in this phenomenon to analyse the factors that lead to the exponential rise of this branch of Christianity. This chapter was focused on the AAC as a response to secularization. It is argued that the AAC was influenced not only by the global wave of Pentecostalism but by the fundamentalist movement which started among American Protestants. The AAC's theology is a marriage of tenets of Pentecostalism and tenets of fundamentalism. The AAC is also analysed and understood as a response to the secularist hegemony. It is further argued that the secularization process in Zimbabwe produced more traditional forms of religious expression as evident in the AAC, a church that seeks to insulate itself from secular influences. This analysis further revealed that the AAC advocates a world denying theology, which can be traced to an Old Testament ascetic cult. This study, focused on the AAC, contributes in the understanding of the theology and beliefs of AICs in Zimbabwe.

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*Kudzai Biri*

## **Sacred Sites in an African Indigenous Church in Zimbabwe**

A Critique of ZAOGA FIF

### **Introduction**

Sacred spaces are not new phenomena in religious studies and religious movements. I adopt Hilda Kuper's definition of site. She says that;

Site refers to a particular piece of social space, a place socially and ideologically demarcated and separated from other places. As such it becomes a symbol within the total and complex system of communication in the total social universe (Kuper 201:258).

Therefore, by sacred sites, I refer to the spaces and places that Zimbabwe Assemblies Of God Africa (ZAOGA) has socially and ideologically set aside for pilgrimage that are theologically significant to the movement and have become symbols of communication system<sup>1</sup>. This study is a critical examination of sacred sites for ZAOGA FIF, known in most outside countries as Forward in Faith (FIF) (cf Guti 1984, Maxwell 2006). The immediate question is: what are the criteria that ZAOGA has employed to select and distinguish these sacred sites and set them apart for pilgrimage? It is important to note that the selected sites are areas that are important in the theological history of ZAOGA FIF and linked to the experiences of Ezekiel Guti who is the founder of ZAOGA (that is, according to the theological history of the

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<sup>1</sup> I am aware of the contestation that surrounds the terms space, place and sites (cf Zuniga and Low, eds., 2011), but this study does not intend to delve in to the debate.

church, although other sources reflect a host of co-founders that were either purged, left the movement or silenced).

In *The Sacred Book of ZAOGA* the sacred areas are documented as sites of Ezekiel Guti's divine encounters with the sacred. Therefore, ZAOGA's sacred sites are sites where there are claims of manifestations of the divine to Guti and these manifestations include, angelic songs in the bush, countless stars, the second coming of Jesus, voices among many other manifestations (see *History of ZAOGA* 1984). The pilgrimage centers have played a major role in bolstering the uncontested authority and status of Guti in ZAOGA.<sup>1</sup> While, some centers have been well known for quite a long time as pilgrimage centers to ZAOGA FIF members, there has been a revival and expansion of this religious geography to Mutema Ngaone Chichichi village, the rural birthplace of Guti. The study critiques this re-awakening and expansion of the sacred spaces to the rural areas that were simply mentioned during church celebrations in the past. I argue that this expansion and re-awakening of these sacred sites is a calculated political move to shape the theology of the movement, to authenticate and bolster the controversial origins of the movement in order for Guti to have a firm grip and hold over the ever expanding movement. In the main, this emerges from the challenge of age (on Guti's part) that has set in motion overt and camouflaged quest and contestation for leadership take over. I also need to point out that there is need for specificity with reference to sacred sites. Here I adopt Mircea Eliade's formulation of the sacred. I refer strictly to major areas of pilgrimage in ZAOGA that are significantly tied to Guti himself.

I am highly selective and for the purposes of deeper engagement, I have selected three places. These three places have been chosen because of their significance in influencing the theology of the church. These are the rural Mutema Ngaone bushes in Chichichi in Chipinge (popularly known as Ngaone in ZAOGA), the birth place of Guti, Bindura mountains and cave, the mythical birthplace of ZAOGA, and Cottage

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<sup>1</sup> The author is a member of ZAOGA. She has participated and visited some of the pilgrimage centres, including Bindura and Cottage 593 when she was part of the 'girls on the move for Jesus' and also as part of Gracious Woman. Therefore, what she writes, argues and comments on are a result of years of research through participant observation.

593 in Highfield, formerly Guti's residential house. In the light of the above, the following section provides a critical analysis of these three sacred sites by paying particular attention to their theological and 'political' significance in ZAOGA.

### **ZAOGA's Sacred Spaces: Rural Narratives and Encounters with the Divine**

ZAOGA has a number of sacred areas that are also areas of pilgrimage. In many rural areas such as Nyanga, members go to the mountainous areas and caves to pray. Vumba mountains are also mentioned in the theological history of the church as a place where Guti prayed and had several divine visitations. However, as pointed above, this study is highly selective for the purposes of deeper engagement.

#### **Mutema Ngaone-Chichichi village**

Located in Chipinge, Mutema Ngaone-Chichichi village is the rural birth place of Ezekiel Guti. In the *History of ZAOGA Forward in Faith* (1999), this is the place where Guti had his first visions and encounters as he prayed in the bushes alone. Guti writes that;

"I met God before I met a preacher...I went in to the bush by myself and began to talk under a tree saying, "Creator if you are there save my soul." This I did for several days disappearing in to the jungle weeping under the tree or lying down looking up to heaven for several weeks. But one afternoon, something wonderful happened. I heard a beautiful singing in heaven and it was like the whole heaven was singing every sweet thick music. And I was wondering and listening, I heard a voice saying;"Fear not sin not" (Guti 1999:21-21).

Guti adds that an angel appeared to him and that God showed him many stars and said to him; "These stars you have seen are a sign of many people. You will lead many people who will go to heaven" (Guti 1999:23). By emphasizing Guti's experiences in the rural areas and not the urban dynamics in Salisbury (Harare), co-founders are discredited because, as spelt out in songs, "Zvakatanga nababa Guti paNgaone, takange tisipo!" (It all began with Guti in Ngaone when all of us were not there!).

Accounting for the origins of the movement is beyond the scope of this study. However, the origin of the movement is important because critics of the movement have argued, and some have documented, that

ZAOGA was founded by a prayer band that broke away from the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) church (see Maxwell 1995:313). This contradicts the claims that are in the theological history of the church. The Ngaone divine encounters have been incorporated into the church through music and regalia (see below), slogans, conference themes and sermons. Chichichi village has been interpreted by Takavarasha. The word means the trotting of heavy animals. Thus, it is theologically argued that it signifies Guti's "trotting here and there to bring people to Jesus" (Takavarasha 1997:5). Guti's mother Dorcas, well known as Mbuya Dorcas, is credited for giving birth to an "African apostle" (see Takavarasha 1997:4). ZAOGA hospital is named after Guti's mother: Mbuya Dorcas Hospital. This gives the impression that ZAOGA is a family property.

Ngaone narratives are important because the narratives serve to demonstrate that ZAOGA is truly an African Independent Church that has no links or influence with Western controlled churches. This appears to be true because ZAOGA narratives do not mention the core founders or the significant role that the group of "young artisans" played in the formation of the church. Maxwell records a host of core-founders (1995:351) that include Abel Sande, George Chikowa, Joseph Choto, Clement Kaseke, Lazarus Mamvura, Aaron Muchengeti, Priscilla Ngoma, Caleb Ngorima (late). Thus, the theological history is not chronological and other important figures are either simply glossed over or appear as appendices. As pointed out by Maxwell (1995:314), the reason is that they want to appear authentically African, to de-emphasize Western links and a strategy for self legitimization by means of a spiritualized or mythical story of origin.

In order to enhance universal credentials, the details of divine narratives are universalistic in nature. Pilgrimage to the sacred sites by ZAOGA FIF members pull down the walls of ethnic, racial, cultural and national barriers that have the potential of causing dissent in the international movement. Pilgrimage to sacred sites, especially in rural areas, demonstrates the degree of independence of the movement. At the same time, the pilgrimage of members from beyond the borders, especially the white men, has helped to mystify the figure of Guti. For example, Gayle Erwin, from the United States established links with Guti and came to Zimbabwe in 1978 (Erwin's sermon). Erwin is the author of '*African Apostle*' in which he portrays Guti as an African apostle. John G Lake, the white Apostolic Faith Mission missionary from

the United States has been known to possess the title. Yet, Erwin applies the label on Guti. This enables Guti to establish a firm grip over established churches outside Zimbabwe, especially in the West. Zimbabwe becomes the centre of events and this negates the popular opinion of Christian churches that have white leadership in the West. Erwin's most important contribution is his documentation of Guti's experiences in Bindura mountains and cave, the 1957 prayer for Africa and the miracles that took place in Bindura.

### **Bindura Mountains and Cave: The Birthplace of ZAOGA?**

Guti writes that;

In 1960 God said, "Rise from Highfield; quickly go away," I wept not knowing where to go, but he said, "Rise go to Bindura, a very primitive area, no one will trouble you...I began preaching on 12 May 1960 which is the day this ministry was born, under a gum tree, in Bindura.

The miracles that Guti recorded include healing the lame and the blind (Guti 1999:31). Thus, Bindura is the mythical birthplace of ZAOGA (Maxwell 2006:4). The famous prayer that Guti made for the whole continent of Africa while in the cave is recorded in the book (1999: 12-15). In this prayer Guti interceded for the salvation of Africa in 1957. Thus to date Bindura has remained a place for intercession. The prayer has been memorized by Sunday school infants (Child Evangelism ministry). Many leaders retreat to the mountainous area during the Annual Deeper Life Conferences (Leaders' Conferences), either as individuals or in groups. The experiences of Guti have earned him the title "African Apostle" (see Erwin 1989) because he is portrayed as an intercessor for Africa. Sundkler (1976:315) has suggested that mountains and high places are important probably because they elicit a sense of nearness to God. Daneel (1988:159) points out that AICs graft traditional notions in to the church but, as pointed by Maxwell also, they redefine meaning and significance of their rituals.

Mountains are places for pilgrimage for Pentecostals but among the Shona people, they are associated with *mhondoro* spirits and are burial sites for the past chiefs (Maxwell 1999:198). Rural areas and mountains are important and many Zimbabweans flock to the rural areas during holidays and crisis moments in order to carry out traditional rituals (Biri 2012:40). ZAOGA demonises ancestral spirits and when members visit the sites in rural areas for prayer, they look forward to an encounter with

God in the manner Guti has had his experiences with God in the mountain, cave and bushes. Thus, AICs re-define the significance of mountains and rural areas. They change the perception that people have of these spaces. There are taboos and avoidances. For example, in Bindura mountains, there is a chair for Guti to sit in the cave (probably because of age) and no one is allowed to sit on the chair. People claim that they see an angel standing by Guti's side when he is praying. This angel is claimed to be the angel that visited Guti in Ngaone, Vumba mountain in Mutare and also at the foot of Bindura under a gum tree when Guti began preaching. Bindura is unique because it embodies several spaces that are claimed to be holy. For example, a big Cathedral is built at the foot of the mountain and many believers come to the centre. Outside the Cathedral is an old building that is ZAOGA's first church, purchased from the Salvation Army (see Maxwell 2002). Hence the cathedral, the old building, the mountain and the cave are areas where hierophanies have taken place, for Guti and some of the believers who have undertaken pilgrimage. The church incorporates such divine claims (sometimes propagated by rumours) (see McDonough 2011:265) and propagates them to the wider public to bolster Guti's authority. Thus the deployment of these experiences at anniversaries invoke memories in which Guti's past is re-read in order to deal with the challenges of leadership and church building and integration. This has a striking resemblance to the dilemmas of nation building and integration that continue to be experienced in a multi-ethnic, multi cultural, multilingual, religiously pluralistic, administratively divided political systems (Gupta 2011:326) such as in Zimbabwe.

The challenge of space in the urban areas has not hindered ZAOGA to expand her religious geography. ZAOGA has found ways of creating sacred spaces in the urban centers (see Draper and Mtata 2012:103) and cottage 593 has served that purpose.

### **Cottage 593 in Highfield, Harare**

Cottage 593 is unique on the basis of its location. The cottage is situated in a high density suburb of Harare. This was initially the home of Guti but later the cottage was set aside for pilgrimage. Guti claims to have had divine visitation while he was with another young man (the late Bishop Ngorima) in which he saw the second coming of Jesus. Guti wrote that; "This is the God of heaven whom I preach to you, who

showed himself to me at 593 so that I may walk in Him and preach his kingdom to you (Guti 1999:29).

Cottage 593 has become a pilgrimage center and there are many claims by adherents. These claims range from answered prayers and healings. As pointed out by Draper and Mtata (2012:103), even the churches that do not have sacred spaces, find ways of creating sacred places because of their African religious background; accessing higher concentration requires specially marked out places. Many believe that as Guti saw visions at Cottage 593, these experiences will also happen to them.

The significance of Guti's experiences in these sacred sites is also manifest in the titles that have been given to Guti. These titles show the respect, authority and command of Guti in ZAOGA FIF. These titles include "Archbishop, Apostle and Servant and Prophet." These titles point to his absolute authority over ZAOGA; "Archbishop and Apostle" to stamp his authority in all ZAOGA FIF churches and "Prophet" underscores the significance of all the decrees of Guti that are taken seriously without protest or questioning. The basis of all this "deification" lies in Guti's experiences in the sacred sites. I, therefore, need to give a critical overview of the overall significance of these sacred sites.

### **Significance of the pilgrimage sites**

ZAOGA FIF's sacred sites are billboards that show the divine history of the movement and the founder become a deified figure-a 'living saint'. This justifies Achunike's claim that many Pentecostal leaders have become "living saints" (Achunike 2001), which increases the chances of abuse of authority because they cannot be questioned. These experiences have enhanced Guti's status such that all ZAOGA properties are named after Guti and his mother Dorcas, for example, Mbuya Dorcas hospital in Waterfalls. In order to emphasise the point that these centers are carefully chosen to suit the church's political agenda, one questions why some of the experiences in Dallas are simply glossed over, yet they have shaped the theology of Talents (though Talents were initiated by Priscilla Ngoma), (see Maxwell 2005).

The sacred sites and the claims that accompany pilgrimage to these areas have attracted large clientele. Many people from different confessional backgrounds (including those who do not belong to the

church) have visited Bindura mountain and Cottage 593 in Highfield.<sup>1</sup> Large numbers also show the existential realities that trouble believers and their quest for deliverance from their various predicaments (salvation).

ZAOGA FIF's sacred sites help to integrate the international trans-cultural and inter-racial movement as the church's properties, such as vehicles, have inscriptions that read, "Bound by the Spirit of God". The expansion of ZAOGA within and beyond the borders of Zimbabwe has its own challenges. There have been several breakaways by some prominent leaders such as overseers who also started and established churches.<sup>2</sup> The centralization of authority and the deification of Guti have served the purpose of uniting ZAOGA FIF churches and have also helped to cultivate and maintain unprecedented allegiance to Guti. All leaders are encouraged to visit these places, especially Bindura, which is closer to the city of Harare and the headquarters of the church.

Mbiti points out that the sacred spaces are outward and material expression of religious ideas and beliefs and help people in practicing and handing down their religion (Mbiti 1969:70). Thus, the sacred sites express the ideological beliefs of leadership and pilgrimage to the centers is a vehicle of passing on the theological history of the church. In his annual letters to ZAOGA FIF churches Guti writes that;

*Vanhu vanenge vashandiswa naMwari sedoor rekupinda kwembeu ye Forward in faith munyika iyoyo vajekerve kuti Mwari akaronga kare nemuranda wake Ezekiel Guti kuti mbeu ipinde munyika iyoyo* (Guti 2010) (People who plant churches in outside countries should know and have the revelation that God had already planned that and revealed to his servant Ezekiel Guti about the establishment of Forward In Faith churches).

The significance of the sacred sites is also captured in songs that are meant to convey the theological history of the church and to glorify Guti. The following section, therefore, gives attention to songs and printed regalia and the effects that they have on leadership dynamics.

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<sup>1</sup> The researcher has visited Cottage 593 and Bindura mountains on several occasions as a member of the church.

<sup>2</sup> Overseer Elias Makanda was one of the powerful and key figures who broke away from ZAOGA and demanded a share of properties (though he did not win the court case)

### **Songs and printed regalia: Silencing the voices of critics and co-founders**

Songs have also been composed that glorify Guti and elevate Mutema Ngaone, Bindura and Guti's experiences. The question is; what have songs and regalia to do with the sacred site and what impact has this had on the theology of the church? It appears simple, but knowledge of power struggles during the formative days of ZAOGA and an examination of power struggles shows that we need not take the reference to ZAOGA sacred sites lightly. The references to "sin not and fear not" from Ngaone serve to exclude co-founders and marginalise them from claims of founding the movement. "Sin not fear not" has become a motto in ZAOGA sermons. This gives Guti uncontested authority, status and significance in ZAOGA. These songs are sung at different occasions such as anniversaries, conferences and church services. The most important occasion was the 50<sup>th</sup> Grand Jubilee anniversary in October 2010 in Harare. Celebrating 50 years of ministry and international connections to 104 nations (Rupapa 2010), almost all regalia had Guti and his wife Eunor's portraits. The origin and history of the movement was recounted through songs that made references to Ngaone and Bindura. "Fear not sin not" has shaped ZAOGA's moral and ethical values.

Some printed regalia such as doeks and T-shirts also have inscriptions of the sacred sites, for example, *Zvakatanga paNgaone*, (it began in Ngaone). Guti is presented as a spiritual father who is exemplary in terms of moral integrity because from Ngaone, he was led by the Holy Spirit. He was able to conquer temptations such as the love for money and women. The experiences of one man (Guti) have been a source of developing theology in the church through constant reference. As written in the history of the church; ZAOGA was founded by Guti alone, without the help of any other person (see *Sacred History*), Guti comes out as the sole and decorated founder of the movement. Thus, if ever co-founders are mentioned in the history, they appear as appendices or are totally out of record, presenting Guti as the master of the movement, the "nodal power point" (Kalu 2008) in ZAOGA FIF. For example, the young man recorded in the history at Cottage 593 is Caleb Ngorima who is one of the core-founders of the movement that started as a prayer band (see Maxwell 2006), but his figure is of less significance in the narratives. I argue that visiting the sacred sites, composing songs

that capture Guti's experiences in the sites and the inscriptions on regalia that has references to these important sites is in itself an attempt to "re-write" already existing theological history and narratives of ZAOGA FIF.

But who is responsible for this re-awakening and revival of these religious sites? Guti has a host of sympathetic followers who pay uncompromising allegiance.<sup>1</sup> For example, Gayle D Erwin, Guti's hagiographer, is the author of *African Apostle*. He documents Guti's experiences in Bindura and has recorded Guti's 1957 prayer for Africa. Yet, in a sermon (21-4-2013) he claims to have come to Zimbabwe for the first time in 1978. One would struggle to reconcile experiences of Guti in the 50s that he documents and Erwin's appearance on the scene in 1978. The theological history becomes suspect, basically because of two reasons. First, historically, there are too many gaps that need to be filled. The question is why stressing Mutema Ngaoone, Vumba (not examined in this study), Bindura and Cottage 593, yet the greater part of urban dynamics leading to the formation of ZAOGA took place in Salisbury (Harare)? Second, one would question whether Erwin, an 'outsider' from America (Oklahoma) is the right candidate to capture the theological history of an indigenous movement in Africa because the immediate question is what is/are the source(s) of Erwin's information? The wide gaps in the history of the movement, the status of Erwin and his documentation of sacred sites and Guti's experiences present a challenge to the reader. It gives the impression of a well calculated, biased theological history that authenticates Guti's leadership and monopoly over the movement.

Having examined the significance of songs and printed regalia that elevate Guti in ZAOGA FIF, it is also important to note that the experiences in these sacred sites have also influenced the naming system in ZAOGA. Maxwell mentions that Guti embodies multiple of titles that include archbishop, apostle and Servant of God (Maxwell 2002) such that Guti overshadows every facet of life in ZAOGA FIF. ZAOGA members make reference to the God of Ezekiel/*Mwari wababa Guti* (God of Father Guti). This is also manifest in ZAOGA's naming system. For example, the church's university in Bindura is Zimbabwe Ezekiel

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<sup>1</sup> This is based on the researchers' findings as she helped some ZAOGA students in theses supervision. Some leaders attribute everything to Guti and distort information.

Guti University (ZEGU). It appears the decision to establish the University in Bindura is a calculated political move to link the university with the sacred history of the church and the sacred site in the area. There are reports of ZEGU personnel who always want to send visitors to the sacred site (anonymous interviews). One also finds Ezekiel Guti Primary School, Ezekiel Guti Farm, Mbuya Dorcas Hospital (named after Guti's mother) in Waterfalls, Harare among others. The theological history of the church, derived from experiences of Guti at the sacred sites, justifies the naming system. At the same time, it authenticates the Gutis over the movement. For example, Eunor Guti has recently been promoted to Archbishop, the title that Guti has held alone for many years. This chapter construes such a move to crown the 'founder's wife "Archbishop," as a calculated political move against the backdrop of a looming leadership crisis.

Apart from some co-founders that might claim legitimacy to top leadership post(s), there exist another challenge of whether or not members will accept the leadership of Eunor, given that the second marriage of Guti to Eunor came after the movement was founded and has been a cause of concern in some ZAOGA circles that led some critical co-founders to be purged from the movement (interview). However, Guti appears to be a political genius who has managed to silence opponents through emphasis on pilgrimage to sacred sites that are directly connected to his life experiences. Moreover, apart from the re-written narratives of his divine encounters, the appointment of Eunor (who is Guti by marriage) appear to be a strategic move to position her in preparation for taking over the top post in the movement. In relation to the appointment of Eunor Guti to the top leadership posts, it is worthy probing the significance of these sites to ZAOGA FIF women because women also constitute the bulk of both ZAOGA membership and leadership.

### **Sacred Sites and Gender**

It is important to note that women play an important role in the welfare of the church. Therefore, there is need to ask the question; how important are these sacred spaces for women? Are they spaces for women's emancipation and liberation? Gender issues have attracted public attention and debate. While I cannot delve into a deeper engagement with implications of these sacred spaces to gender, I point

out that these have become areas of spiritual nourishment, as claimed by most believers. Women flock to these sites and some have several stories and testimonies. For example, some claim to have been barren for many years and conceived after they had visited and prayed at the sacred sites<sup>1</sup>. Some got jobs, reconciled with their husbands (mending of broken marriages), delivered from acts of witchcraft.

Some young ladies also narrate or testify that they got their marriage partners after intense prayers in these areas. Women continue to ‘groan in faith’ in ZAOGA and sacred sites have become areas to retreat and regain strength. Draper and Mtata (2012:103) have pointed out that people experience salvation in the ‘here and now’ in the context of the salvific dimensions of the traditional African ritual systems. This appears valid in the light of the challenges that many women have. They seek the ‘here and now’ solutions. Apart from carrying out pilgrimage in order to deal with their problems, women as ZAOGA district women or Gracious Woman (ZAOGA’s women’s ministry) visit the sacred sites to pray for Guti and the nation of Zimbabwe. The significance of the intercessory prayers to Guti and Zimbabwe are twofold. It demonstrates Pentecostal political discourses of nation building as they believe they have a role to play in the welfare of the nation (2 Chronicles 7:14). As pointed out by Chitando;

I argue that the reading of the passage during the crisis had some positive dimensions. However, the appropriation of the passage also had the effect of shifting the blame from politicians tasked with guiding the country to citizens. It also tended to suggest that the country's failure had a spiritual origin, thereby glossing over failed policies and other factors (2012:274).

When ZAOGA Gracious women meet and visit pilgrimage centers to intercede for the nation, they believe Christians are not in right standing with God and not interceding for the nation. The women also believe that when they go to Bindura they are emulating Guti who has a concern for the nation and the whole of Africa, as evidenced by his 1957 intercessory prayer for Africa in the cave. By interceding for the nation in the cave, they believe God confers blessings and solutions to the individuals' problems that would have embarked on pilgrimage to the sacred site. The ZAOGA expression that captures this thinking is; “carry

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<sup>1</sup> The researcher has visited these places and listened to testimonies during anniversaries. Many women claim that miracles have taken place when they visited these sacred sites.

out God's agenda and he will also deal with your problems"! Pilgrimage to intercede for Guti also serves to affirm his status, role and significance in ZAOGA FIF.

The uniqueness of the sacred spaces is also spelt out through taboos and avoidances that govern the code of conduct. Bindura mountain is guarded by a care taker in order to avoid pollution of the area. Also members pay two United States dollars in order to go to the mountain top. It is argued that the money is for the upkeep of the place and to cater for some visitors who might be in want of basic necessities who visit the cathedral. Modernity has caught up with some AICs and ZAOGA is not an exception. Building a big cathedral and modernizing (renovating) the old building under a gum tree at the foot of the mountain shows how AICs are competing and 'managing' sacred spaces in order to make a wider appeal to their diverse clientele (because some might detest the rural setting of the surroundings of these sacred sites, therefore, they try to modernize them).

## **Conclusion**

I have argued that ZAOGA is an indigenous African independent church by virtue of being a Zimbabwean-founded and based international movement independent of Western missionaries' control. ZAOGA FIF Christians have many sacred spaces, but there are particularized sacred sites. These particularized sacred sites are of prime significance. These are Mutema Ngaaone, Bindura and Cottage 593 because they have a theological significance to the international movement. They authenticate the leadership of Guti and at the same time shape the theology of ZAOGA. Recent years have seen the re-awakening and revival of these sacred sites which appear to be an attempt to forge unity to an ever expanding movement that is threatened by breakaways and looming leadership crisis because of an aged 'founder' who also appears to be losing grip over the movement. ZAOGA leadership and loyalists to Guti have demonstrated immense insight and innovation in handling the 'leadership politics' in the church and in formulating the theology of the church. Sacred sites impact ZAOGA's theology and emphasis on pilgrimage to these centers shows how an indigenous independent Christian movement has refused to write off the past of its 'founder'. Thus, sacred sites have become functional in the theology of the church, legitimize the leadership of

Guti and continue to hold greater promise of continuing the legacy in ZAOGA.

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## Documents

Tsamba YemuApostora Ezekiel Guti Kumasangano ese EZAOGA Forward in  
Faith Pakunamata Nekuzvinyima kwemaZuva Gumi Kupinda Mugore ra  
2010

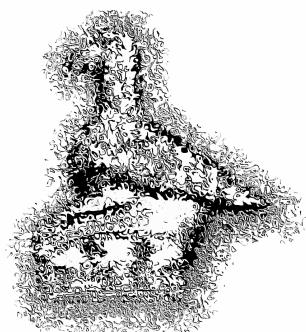
Tsamba YemuApostora Ezekiel Guti Kumasangano ese EZAOGA Forward in  
Faith Pakunamata Nekuzvinyima kwemaZuva Gumi Kupinda Mugore ra  
2011

## Sermons

Erwin, Gayle, D., 21-04-2013, ZAOGA Grange International Church, Harare.

## Notes

1. Anonymous interviews have been carried out by the researcher as she gathered material for her Dphil.
2. Some of the findings are based on the researcher's experiences as a member of the church who also undertook pilgrimage to the sacred sites.





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## **Tradition and Adaptation in African Initiated Churches**

Analogies with pre-Christian Greek religion

### **Introduction**

This chapter examines African Initiated Churches' (hereafter AICs) unique conceptualisation of Deity and the place of humanity in the universe. It demonstrates the resoluteness and innovative originality of AICs in the context of a congested and contested religious space, where Western Christianity has, with some degree of success, obliterated African cultural and religious beliefs to substitute them with foreign ones. We contrast traditions of AICs (especially the Apostolic churches) with those of the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist and Anglican, arguing that AICs have demonstrated that the complete abandonment of their African cultural identity makes it impossible for them to feel a sense of the divine. This unique conceptualisation of religion can clearly be seen in contrast with older, more established churches whose religious beliefs and practices are based on cultures that are non-African. Thus, this chapter is concerned with the essence of AICs' conceptualisation of the divine, ritual and the spiritual cosmology, in light of these concerns.

Locating an Apostolic cosmology is not a simple matter, for example, and a pattern of beliefs as consistent reinterpretations of the local traditional religions (Jules-Rosette 1975:187). In some cases, the vision of the Apostles change things and in other cases, universal symbolic forms are used within the context of highly specific ritual performances (*Ibid*). To avoid this pitfall, we appropriate the example of the ancient Greek, pre-Christian religion, which we hope will provide the reader

with a model for approximating, appreciating and understanding the cultural resilience and adaptation of AICs. Greek comparanda offer analogous belief systems of how the Greeks adopted and adapted borrowed beliefs and also how they maintained their own cultural identity, in spite of the foreign elements prevalent within their religious practices. Parallel religious symbols and rituals constitute proof of universal human evolution (Blakely 2006:5). So, the Greek model serves as a ‘complete’ experiment with which we can make sense of our explanation of the complex processes of AICs’ adaptation, adoption and cultural resilience, in a teleological sense.

### **AICs and Ancient Greek Religion: Basis for a Comparative Approach**

Sandra Blakely’s comparative study of African and Ancient Greek metallurgy, and the rituals surrounding the smithy, revealed numerous parallels “which have inspired anthropologists and classicists of an earlier era to suggest that the Greek and African symbolic systems were essentially comparable” (Blakely 2006:4). Early Iron Age Greece – the putative origin of the myths of the Daktyloí and their cousins – was inherently comparable to traditional Africa, viewed as the long-elaborated childhood of the human race (*Ibid*). Religious beliefs are concepts without boundaries. The tradition of using nature; (flora and fauna) stones, trees, rivers and mountains, goats, sheep, hens, cattle, etc as sacred objects and spaces for purposes of religious meetings and the function of these as expressing the divine predates the advent of writing. We will argue that the AICs’ adherence to traditional culture’s nature-based approach to worship can be hermeneutically appreciated through a mechanical comparative and interpretive approach which involves studying parallels with a pre-Christian, Greek model.

AICs represent the African classical example of religious institutions, which protect some fundamental elements of original African religious thought and spirituality, within modern trends of worship. Ancient Greek religion offers us a parallel or some precedence of a religion established to suit the indigenous Greek culture, in order that the native Greek culture was not completely erased. The adopted culture was also not completely assimilated, but rather became a fusion of the new version of religion which was used to buttress the already existing form of religion. The Greeks were ready to follow their own ideas to the

utmost. They developed a highly abstract, largely monotheistic theology and read it into the traditional practices of their ancestral religion, and many of their conclusions, passing little changed into Christianity, have coloured the whole of European thought on such matters ever since (Rose 1970:157). Two and a half millennia was the life span of non-Christian worship in Greece. In so long a period, it was inevitable that many changes should take place, including the introduction of foreign deities and rites. The Cretan and pre-Greek worship puzzled the Greeks of classical times too much to influence them profoundly (Rose 1970:50). However, despite these influences, the Greeks maintained their own unique and original sense of the divine. The Greek example is, therefore, a classical precedent to a uniquely African situation where religion, as a phenomenon, maintained local culture. The following passages describe how the Greeks managed to maintain their unique and original sense of the divine.

The relationship between AICs and their parent churches has a classical precedent, one that existed in pre-Christian, ancient times, between the Greek religion and the religion of ancient Egypt. Egyptian religion, boasting a storied, pedigreed past, is usually estimated to have begun around 4000 BC, and was first encountered by the Greeks when the latter were in their Minoan incarnation, around 1900 BC. The Minoans were a prolific seafaring nation which, from their ideally placed home on the island of Crete, traded with civilizations from Palestine, in the East, to the Italians, in the West. Minoan pottery has been found in places such as England and Wales, in the north, and Egypt, in the south, indicating the cultural barter that was a byproduct of the trade they did, and which was a key component of the Ionian Greeks in later ages. This cultural barter, being reciprocal in nature, manifested itself in Greek religion, to the extent that even after the fall of the two earliest Greek civilizations, these remnants of a bygone age managed to work their way into their culture and lifestyle, without erasing their Greekness or *mos maiorum* (a Roman word for customs, beliefs and practices) typified, in Minoan worship by their tradition of *taυροκαθαψια* (bull leaping), as well as their maintenance of the Great Goddess as their chief deity. This unnamed goddess could be the Minoan interpretation of the Phrygian Cybele, later on incorporated and personified as Rhea, consort of Kronos, and mother of Zeus, in later Greek religious practice. The Great Goddess (also *Magna Mater*) was the supreme being of the Minoans, their religious outlook being one inclined to nature worship and the

veneration of the existing spirits of natural entities, such as trees and mountains. Their belief in the importance of the female in their society overrode their admiration of various Egyptian traits, as exemplified by the selectiveness of their choosing of what to assimilate, and what to leave. The style of painting, employed within their frescoes, is one such borrowed trait, whereby females are portrayed through the use of lighter colours, exclusively, and the males, through darker pigmentation. The Egyptian pantheon, of powerful male gods, sometimes at odds with their female counterparts, for example Set's vendetta against Osiris and Isis, held little appeal to their religious sensibilities. To this end, the goddesses Cybele, Rhea, and Demeter, goddess of Corn (members of the later Greek pantheon) all have chthonic attributes, unique to them, alone which were, sometimes, attached to Gaia, but all with an emphasis on fertility, and the ability to procreate, autochthonously. The Daktyloi alluded to earlier, are believed to have come into existence, in this manner, during the labor of Rhea, on Mount Ida, as she gave birth to Zeus and were venerated as teachers of metallurgy to mankind. The nature of their birth is an example of the qualities so praised in Minoan culture. In later Greek religious practice, however, the responsibilities of functions were extended to become personified in other deities.

### AICs and the Traditional African Worldview

This diffusion of divine responsibilities is something that is also visible in AICs, in particular relation to the role of ancestors as intercessors, a belief that is common throughout the traditional African worldview, as well as the Asian. Christianity (especially Pentecostal Christianity) insists on the outright rejection of ancestors. In the AICs' cosmology, ancestors are part of the hierarchy to the creator, whom they refer as *Mwari*, a typical Shona name for Creator. Ancestors are regarded as occupying the lower levels of the divine plane; acting as messengers and spokespeople for the families they leave behind, in death.

A typical example is that of the Nazarine Church, South Africa at Ekuphakameni. When their leader and prophet, Shembe died, he was buried like a king in a mausoleum and took his place as Jehovah's agent, just like in the past the royal ancestors became the intermediaries between the Zulu and the supreme god *uNkulunkulu* (Ray 1976:204). This is a clear example of a theology that adapted Christianity to traditional Zulu forms.

The intercessory role was, according to Judeo-Christian tradition, ascribed to the prophets, a select few, chosen by YHWH to communicate the divine will to the people. In time, this duty became attached to Jesus, as highlighted by the declaration that, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through me.' (John 14 vs. 6) Over the millennia since its establishment, the Christian movement has, by and large, remained true to that tenet. Perhaps the only notable exception, and not by much, is the Roman Catholic Church, with its intricate system of patron saints, a practice with a hint of relation to the Classical traditions of patron deities. The insistence by the missionaries that one's ancestors could not ferry messages from their families to *Mwari*, is one which was largely ignored, as African tradition holds the departed spirits of family members in the highest regard. This impasse, between the traditional Christian perspective and the ancient African practice, has led to wrongful conclusions that Africans worship ancestors, and the intolerance is one of the reasons for the difference of church practices between the traditional Christian churches and the AICs.

An example of how AICs and missionary churches are uneasy bedfellows can be demonstrated by an incident quoted by Daneel. A girl, who was raised in Zionist faith for 12 years, was later taken up in a Protestant Mission community in the Victoria district. During a prayer meeting, she was possessed by three types of spirits, a Zionist spirit, a Sangoma spirit and a Matonjeni spirit (Daneel 1970). The Zionist spirit, which screamed 'Hosanna, Hosanna, Amen, Halleluiah!' and the other two types of spirits were all exorcised (*Ibid*). The missionary who exorcised the Matonjeni demon argued that it disliked the smell of Europeans (*Ibid*, 64). This demonstrates that missionaries did not endorse the spiritual cosmology of the Zionist churches. It also demonstrates that Zionists do not embrace the package of spiritualism wholesale, as propagated by missionaries. Daneel's demon story shows us how the spiritual component of the Zionist churches has remained truly African, as opposed for example to situations where Pentecostal adherents do not accommodate *Sangoma*/ divination spirits. Instead they speak in unknown tongues of angels and of men (1 Corinthians 14) the evidence of their accommodation of the Holy Spirit alone. Although some leaders such as Bishop Samuel Mutendi claimed to have been a major opponent of the Matonjeni cult, the spiritual content of Zionism has exhibits of a profound African spiritual cosmology. Healers and

prophets in Zionist churches sometimes diagnose sickness among fellow adherents as having been caused by angry ancestors or a *ngozi*/vengeful spirit of a dead person, a similar diagnosis with that of a *n'anga* (Daneel 1970). Their conception of the world of the spirits has ancestral spirits and also other spirits of the dead, interacting with the living. This is quite consistent with the Shona conception of the spiritual world, which for them consists of ancestral spirits and territorial spirits (Taringa 2010:87). At Matonjeni cult, a classical example of the custodian of the Shona deity, the Christian God is fitted into the traditional thought pattern, and Christian worship is tolerated as a different approach to essentially the same divinity (Daneel 1970:61). Mwari weMatonjeni, being a conservative God, at first strongly reacted to European customs, especially those introduced in Mission schools (Ibid). According to Daneel:

In the course of time, when it became clear that education did not necessarily eliminate traditional culture and that church membership in practice seldom implied a complete break with the ancestral world, Mwari adopted a new, if somewhat ambiguous, attitude (Ibid).

The Matonjeni priesthood saw the need to adjust part of the cult to suit the new circumstances. The priesthood wanted *Mwari* to retain his traditional identity. We are aware of the fact that Zionist bishops, especially Samuel Mutendi, were opposed to the Matonjeni cult. We are also fully aware of the fact that the semi-Messianic leadership role which Zionist bishops play between God and their congregants leaves no room for the kind of mediation provided by the ancestors, and Zionist leaders are also aware of the real threat which the traditional system of mediation poses to the loyalty of some Zionist members to their bishop (Daneel 1970:65). Our point is that the traditional outlook of AICs is nowhere near the Roman Catholic, Methodist and even Anglican churches' accommodation to Shona ancestral rites. Although founders of AICs introduced their own new vision and teachings, especially concerning the role and position of ancestors in the life of their believers, these believers do not always adopt their bishops' stance, a factor which helps AICs to maintain an African cultural identity in matters of spiritualism. Indeed spiritual independence is still a distinguishing mark of AICs.

In contrast to the prophetic movements such as Mutendi and Mawewe's ZCC St Engnas, the Ethiopian-type churches actually acknowledge rather than reject the mediating function of the ancestors

and allow their followers to consult traditional diviners (*Ibid*, 70). Daneel cites Reverend Sengwayo's *Chibarirwe* church in Chipinge, which is disposed towards traditional custom. The word *chibarirwe* is derived from *kubarwa*, (to give birth), and literally means 'heritage of our fathers, that which had not been derived from others, our very own' (*Ibid*). These Ethiopian-type churches adhere to and preserve within the church beliefs and practices, which are inextricably interwoven with pre-Christian religious notions (*Ibid*). Such practices include, brewing beer for the ancestors, who are believed to be in direct contact with *Mwari weMatonjeni* (Daneel 1970:71). AICs, especially the Ethiopian-type churches, demonstrate the ability to adapt when faced with a scenario of conflict.

### **The Greek model: An elaboration**

Let us go back to our Greek model for further analogies. Greek religion, in its embryonic materialization, had certain tenets that remained unchanged throughout the Dark Age, and past the Roman occupation, from 146 BC, which signaled the end of the Greek poleis, as autonomous entities. The Greek pantheon is renowned for the variant diversity of the deities within it, from Aphrodite, goddess of Love and Beauty, to Ares, god of War, from Athena, goddess of Wisdom, to Poseidon *Γαῖοχος* (Earth-Shaker), and there is evidence that this conceptualization of the divine, as manifesting in a number of deities within a single pantheon, is a borrowed trait, from the religions of the Ancient Near East. This practice was well known within the Egyptian pantheon, their pantheon possessing a complicated hierarchy that included the Pharaoh, as well. Herodotus makes the claim, 'Indeed, wellnigh all the names of the gods came to Hellas from Egypt.' (Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book II. 50).

The borrowing of names was something that the Greeks carried out in order to develop their religion, as their various poleis advanced from the Dark Age. From the Archaic Age onwards, they adopted a system of worship, where they chose a god/goddess from their pantheon to stand as their patron deity. Where Athena became the goddess of Athens, immortalized by the construction of the Parthenon, the most ancient worship site of Hera, Queen of the gods, was Argos. Heracles, symbol of strength and endurance through adversity was the patron god of laconic Sparta. This practice, an integral aspect of worship in Greek religion, is

one that saw the generality of the deities from the early periods of Greece maintain their importance, albeit with some changes, to their cults, thereby permitting scholars to study them more fulsomely. This practice, Herodotus affirms, is another concept borrowed from the Egyptians. He says, “For no gods are worshipped in common by the whole of Egypt save only Isis and Osiris... these are worshipped by all alike” (Herodotus, *ibid*, Book II. 42). This spiritual unity, in the diversity of their religion is reflected in the Greek custom, where statues of Zeus and Hera, the king and queen (Hera is the deity of matrimony, hence the universality of her domain across the many poleis) of the gods, are part of the ritual of the ceremony of worship, throughout all of Greece. Thus, “Festivals commemorating the marriage of Zeus and Hera took place almost everywhere in Greece. The statue of the goddess was dressed in the costume of a bride and carried in procession to a shrine where a marital bed had been made ready” (Kershaw, 1990). This attitude towards the chief male and female deities of their pantheon is a derivative remnant of the Greek debt to Egyptian religion, as Zeus hardly deserved to be honored as the typical husband.

In the case of the AICs, while accepting a spiritual connection with traditional Christian churches, the worshippers are also cognizant of their pre-Christian, African roots, which cause worshippers of the traditional/historical Christian churches to question the validity of their existence as African “Christians”. Jules-Rosette (1975:23), on a visit to the then Zaire was bemused to notice; “white-robed men and women circulating a field surrounded by elephant grass and small thatch enclosures.” The significance of the thatch enclosures lies in their resemblance of the traditional huts of rural Africa, a part of their cultural heritage, and a conduit of sorts to their ancestors. The Apostolic and Zionist elements in Zimbabwe show a decided preference to worship in bushy areas, away from the buildings of the colonialists. The claim is there is a deeper spiritual connection in the untainted wild, that is absent in church buildings. The choice of location is linked to the traditional places where *Mwari* was worshipped by their ancestors. This *Mwari* was regarded by the Shona as the final authority behind their ancestors. He was not viewed as a remote deity, but was believed to control the fertility of the entire Shona territory, to give rain in times of drought and advice in times of national crisis (Daneel 1970: 17). In nature, it is believed, is to be found the clearest manifestation of the divine, with lakes, forests and caves being areas of particular importance.

The initiation of traditional healers (*n'angas*) occurs in these wild settings. AICs, while keeping to the belief of the best places to worship, abandon some of these rites and customs not in keeping with their syncretic approach to Christianity. However, in keeping with some time-honoured customs, some of their dressing reflects the ancient African mode of dress (*nhembe*) for communication with the divine. As Jules-Rosette (1975:23) noticed, having been introduced to two Apostles, "One of them, smiling benignly yet with a penetrating stare, was dressed in a white shirt and a green skirtlike wrap that I later learned is called a *mutambo* and is worn under the man's white garment" In donning this attire, which looks like *nhembe* (a short traditional African piece, which covered the front and the buttocks) the AICs retain their spiritual connection to Christianity, while remaining true and steeped in their intrinsic identity as Africans. This is quite contrary to Pentecostals who have made western type of dressing almost like a rule.

One element of the Egyptian religion that remained within its Greek counterpart, reflected eternally, was the existence of seemingly contradictory, but universally accepted divine tenets. Moscati's example of the mythical place of the sky, and the seemingly variant, but concomitant religious beliefs provides an opportunity to see the diversity of the Egyptian religious model in a philosophical way. He says, "for example, we should want to know in our picture whether the sky was supported on posts or was held up by a god; the Egyptian would answer: 'Yes, it is supported by posts or held up by a god – or it rests on walls, or it is a cow, or it is a goddess whose arms and feet touch the earth.' Any one of these pictures would be satisfactory to him, according to his approach (Moscati 1962:116). This apparently confused and illogical acceptance of contradictory views was applicable to the Egyptians in light of the size of their country, and the difference of opinion, and culture, in their cities. This viewpoint is intrinsic in the Greek culture, as well, with Artemis, the virgin goddess, being invoked as a goddess of childbirth. Rose notes how, "...the mother, when her pains came on her would invoke Artemis or Eileithyia, the divine specialists in midwifery, to help her..." (Rose 1970:30). Zeus, the consort of Hera, is an infamous philander, whose constant infidelities cause his wife untold pain, while he is celebrated as the father of the immortal Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Dionysus, Persephone and Heracles. Moscati, in reference to this conflicting perspective on the divine notes how the Egyptian, "...does not see any contradiction in leaving them all to co-exist, he even sets his

ingenuity to work to combine them, instead of proceeding by elimination' (Moscati 1962:117).

The varied nature of the AICs should neither be misapprehended nor underestimated, with regards to the level of acceptance of the traditional Christian churches' methodologies, themselves fractured, between Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist approaches to Christianity. Some AICs tended to have adopted more of Western conceptions of Christianity, discouraging African attire, and ancestral veneration, as remnants of an uncivilized era, as well as being symbols of pagan worship. Others, like the Apostolic sects, took for their own, the name "Apostolic" and the habit of wearing white, as an emulation of purity and holiness, while simultaneously rejecting the Christian norm of congregating inside church buildings, and the playing of instruments such as the piano and the guitar, preferring instead to use the drum, rattles, and handclapping, during worship. This is a traditional practice consistent with the Shona, who always have a relationship with spirits of the dead, animals, cleared land or the bush (Taringa, 2010:85). The importance of nature was underscored by Mbiti (1969) who argued that the African worldview is categorized into five categories which are God, spirits, man, animals and non biological life.

Members of Zionist and Apostolic movements are taught a set of instructions and rules relative to traditional customs. This is especially true of the *Jangamisheni* sect. They worship their deity while holding spears and axes, as if they will be symbolically piercing and chopping evil spirits. In the bushes where they congregate, they mark space with pieces of red, green and white clothes. They also mark trees and stones under and beside which they say their prayers. Their mood changes once they approach spaces marked with those symbols.

Sacred symbols function to synthesize a people's ethos the tone, character and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood – and their world view – the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order (Geertz 1965:205).

Their healing practices also involve the use of animals for scapegoat rituals, where the evil spirits are instructed to leave the patient and stay on a goat or a chicken, which will in turn be thrown in the forest. In fact, they perpetuate traditional practices of ancestor worship. While we do not doubt that external conditions have altered other aspects of their social lives, there is this sense among these groups of upholding traditional ways of viewing the cosmos (Jules-Rosette 1975: 188).

Furthermore, the conception of animals by the Greeks was unique to their pantheon, in comparison with the Egyptian. Both believed in the sacredness of animals, as exemplified by the associations with various animals, divinely marked, as bearing their favor. The African Sacred Ibis was sacred to Thoth, the god of knowledge and wisdom, and was reverenced as an animalistic representation of the god. Herodotus, also, raises the respect which was paid this bird, although somewhat prosaically, in a mythical context. He claims their importance is due to their worth in repelling invasions of winged serpents. The Greeks, similarly, attached certain importance to certain animals. To Aphrodite, the dove and dolphin were sacred, as was the eagle, that most regal of birds, to Zeus. In honor of the slain Argos Πανοπτης, the peacock, with its many eyes-in-tail motif, was sacred to Hera. The Egyptian belief in the sacredness of animals led to their domesticating crocodiles, sacred to Sobek, as well as lionesses, sacred to Sekhmet, the goddess of war and destruction. In the Greek context, the sacrosanct nature of some of the animals beloved of the divine was observed, the case in point the respect Heracles paid to his Third Labor, the capture of the Ceryneian Hind, sacred to Artemis. However, the idea of domestication of wild animals is not one of the mortal expressions of reverence for the divine in Greek religious practice. This pre-Christian, Greek parallel provides a precedent with regards to the adoption of a tradition from the “parent” religion, yet modified to suit the native cultural ideology, particularly with reference to the practice of playing music during worship in Christianity. The Western-based churches play the guitar, as well as the organ, in religious ceremonies. AICs, in view of their African heritage, concur with the idea of music being played, while venerating the divine, in accompaniment of dance and song. However, the instruments employed in this practice are uniquely African, on account of traditional preferences, as well as abilities to play the Caucasian instruments with similar skills as the African. The similarities in this thematic approach to worship owe something to the comparable theological approach of cultures, the Wester, and the African, as highlighted by another corresponding Classical example.

The two religions, Egyptian and Greek, developed in a similar set of circumstances, each geographic region having its own, chosen deity as a mainstay, while accepting the deities of other towns and cities but not with the same fervor. Hence, the Olympian deities were worshipped, and had temples, at Athens, but the crowning architectural achievement

of the city was the Parthenon, dedicated to the goddess Athena, with its centerpiece, the Athena Parthenos, sculpted by Phidias. Similarly, Ephesus had a widely hailed temple to Diana, whom the Greeks took to be Artemis. This Artemis was considered by the Ionians there, to be a goddess of fertility, yet another contrasting facet of Greek religion, symptomatic of its Egyptian origin. From the Greek model, it becomes easier to appreciate the varied contours of some AICs cosmologies and how they chose to appropriate certain aspects of a foreign deity.

This helps us to put into perspective the logic of the Nazareth Church founded by the Zulu prophet-messiah, Isaiah Shembe's conception of God. It was derived more from the Old Testament than from Zulu religion. Zulu names for God are less frequently used in the church's hymnbook than the Old Testament name Jehovah, associated with the Sinai revelation in thunder and lightning and the giving of the law (Ray 1976:202). According to Shembe, Jehovah was the new symbol of African faith, and Shembe was his manifestation among the Zulu, as Christ was among the Jews (*Ibid*). Shembe was also seen as the Christ of the Zulus. The name of Jesus is rarely mentioned in the Church's hymns and prayers (Sundkler 1961:283). The way of Jesus, according to this unique and innovative theology, was replaced by the way of Shembe; it is the way of the old Law-symbolised by the Sabbath-not the way of the worshipers of Jesus who break the Law (Ray 1976:203). They put emphasis in worshiping the Sunday God, not Jehova, who acted anew in Africa (*Ibid*). It is interesting to note that the Zulu did not have a cult of the supreme god *uNkulunkulu*, for he was too far away. As a result, they sought a more direct relation to divinity and this they found in Jehovah as represented by Shembe. This innovation must have been the one done by most Zionist churches in Zimbabwe. A good example was that of Samuel Mutendi's decision to challenge and abandon the Mwari cult at Matonjeni, choosing instead to worship Mwari waSamere Mutendi (Jehovah, the God of Samuel Mutendi) who is sometimes referred to as *Wokumusorosoro* (the most high God).

## Conclusion

The introduction, spread and growth of Christianity went hand in glove with the process of acculturation of Christianity to the colonialist order in Africa. African traditional religion was eroded. Christian missions instilled in Africans who converted to Western-type churches distaste for

traditional African values. In other words, African Christians adopted a new identity based upon the colonial Christian order. However, we have noted that AICs served as shock absorbers to the massive wave of colonialism. Different groups of AICs developed various attitudes and approaches to Christianity, without having to conform to boundaries of missionary orthodoxy. While they embraced the idea of the Christian God, they maintained a distinct African religio-cultural identity. These AICs are repertoires of African cosmological and spiritual worldview. Our reference to ancient Greek religion helped us to appreciate how the Greeks developed a coping and adaptive mechanism, which enabled us to see how African Initiated Churches created a thorough synthesis of Christian and African ritual form, which did not altogether demolish the African cosmology and spiritual worldview.

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*Robert Matikiti*

## **The Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe (ACCZ) and Social Transformation**

### **Introduction**

Christianity is one of the major religions practiced in Zimbabwe. The arrival of Christianity dates back to the 14th century through the activities of missionaries. Christianity is embraced by the majority of the population. The churches in Zimbabwe work through various representative bodies and church related agencies. Some of the major ecumenical bodies in Zimbabwe are the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), Union for the Development of the Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe-Africa (UDACIZA), Council of Apostolic Faiths (CAF), and the Heads of Christian Denominations in Zimbabwe (HOCD), Churches in Manicaland (CiM) and Christian Alliance (CA) and most recently, the Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe (ACCZ). The churches' nation building initiatives were pursued from many different platforms. These church bodies made a remarkable impact in evangelizing the nation, building schools and hospitals and consolidating the Christian faith in Zimbabwe.

This chapter surveys African Indigenous Churches with special attention to the ACCZ. African Indigenous churches are those churches which are aimed almost exclusively at African converts, use local traditions more extensively and have a healing focus on African issues such as barrenness and bewitchment. Some have Pentecostal components but others do not (e.g. the Independent African Church). A variety of overlapping terms exist for Christian churches started

independently in Africa by Africans and not directly by missionaries from another continent: African Initiated Churches, African Independent Churches, African Indigenous Churches and African Instituted Churches. The abbreviation AIC covers them all.

Percentages based mainly on the 2010-11 demographic survey indicate that AICs constitute 33% of the religious landscape totaling 85% of the 12 million population (<http://relzim.org/>. Accessed 29. June 2012). Estimates particularly vary about how much of the population is syncretistic (mixing Christian beliefs with indigenous beliefs). There are few Zimbabweans who have not encountered Christianity in some form, but many Christians also associate themselves with traditional practices on occasion. Some Christians have multiple membership, that is, they belong to a number of religions at the same time.

## **Ecumenism and Social Transformation**

This section provides definitional issues. Defining the terms ecumenism and human transformation is important because the study of ecumenism and human transformation lacks a generally accepted vocabulary and clearly defined basic concept. Many of the disagreements that arise in argument about ecumenism and human transformation are, in fact, semantic.

Ecumenism mainly refers to initiatives aimed at greater religious unity or cooperation; it emphasizes the importance of unity amongst churches despite belonging to various denominations. It refers to the Christian desire to recover the pristine Christian unity through inter-faith and inter-religious co-existence. In other words, ecumenism is a movement in the church towards the recovery of the unity of all believers in Christ, transcending differences of creed, ritual and polity as can be traced from the New Testament times. The word is derived from the Greek word *okouμένη* (oikoumene), which means “the inhabited world. Ecumenism “is a movement towards the recovery of the unity of all believers in Christ, transcending differences of creed, ritual and policy, as well as interdenominational cooperation” (Getui 1997:91).

In this chapter, the word ecumenism will be used in its narrower sense meaning greater cooperation among different religious denominations of a single one of these faiths. In this case, it denotes the promotion of mutual respect, toleration and cooperation among various Christian denominations.

According to Pobee (1997:5), human transformation concerns all the influences brought by the community to bear upon the human beings growing up with it and “must involve what is material, what is sensual, what is personal, what is corporate, what is spiritual and in all these, seeking to realize the sovereignty of God.” Social transformation “refers to social changes in the human society, thus, in its organization, quality of life, nature or appearance brought about by certain influences.” (Pobee, Ibid.). Bosch (1979:20) avows that the Church can either legitimate the status quo or call for its reconstruction and transformation. For world-affirming Christians in mission the issue of human transformation is inextricably linked with the work of Jesus Christ. This is the foundation of the church’s evolution of the church’s social thought/spirit. This brought about the Social Gospel, a Christian movement initiated in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to bring about social reforms against social problems. It had to react against the hostility of utilitarianism *laissez faire* doctrines. The movement aimed at reforming the individuals and the society at large by the application of the Christian principles in all social relationships. In Revelations 21:1,5 Christians in mission are summoned to redeem, reconcile and restore “all things” and all peoples into unity of love and purpose with God’s will as revealed in Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ is “nothing but about the total and complete transformation of mankind-in all aspects of life and all facets of humanity’s activities” (Banana 1985:12). Thus, the Gospel of Christ is a total package- it caters for the socio-economic, political, cultural and religious spheres of humanity. Christianity could therefore be discussed as a social phenomenon.

Having provided definitions in the section above, the chapter now moves to outline the formation of the precursor of ACCZ namely the Union for the Development of the Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe – Africa (UDACIZA).

### **The Union for the Development of the Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe – Africa (UDACIZA)**

The precursor to ACCZ was UDACIZA. UDACIZA was formed in 1993 after the leaders of these churches were encouraged to do so by HOCD. It was a body representing the African Apostolic and Zionist Churches in Zimbabwe. The formation of UDACIZA was aimed at establishing a route of communication between the Apostolic churches, Zionists, and

the mainline churches as well as the State. It was aimed at helping to improve the social lives of its members in terms of health and education which some of these churches are known to neglecting.

The first President of UDACIZA was the late Bishop Xavier Chitanda of Johane Masowe WeChishanu. His vice was the late Fibion Makunze and the General Secretary was Reverend Edison Tsvakai of Makamba Zionist Church. Notwithstanding all the good efforts to unify these churches, they are often targeted for support by politicians who find them easy to convince. As a result, they are seen to have very good attendances at political party rallies, especially of the ruling Zanu PF party.

The ecumenical spirituality of UDACIZA hardly needs to be emphasized. UDACIZA was formed primarily for the purpose of servicing member churches and transforming the lives of the believers through interpretation of scriptures and the gospel of Jesus. The Union became an extremely important tool for forging their life together as a community of faith, a vital and effective instrument for the formation and education of the people. The Union enabled AICs to speak with one voice in issues of concern to the government and other stakeholders. They endeavoured to address the hopes and fears of their members. UDACIZA laid the foundation for the emergence of the ACCZ by stressing the importance of unity.

The AICs' penchant nature for leadership positions and to break up affected UDACIZA. However, the divisions led to renewal and formations of other ecumenical bodies as will be shown below. The call for cooperation was irresistible.

### **The Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe (ACCZ)**

The ACCZ was launched at Stodart Grounds in Mbare, Harare, on 12 September 2010. The Council brought together most Apostolic and Zionist groups in the country. According to Nsingi (Sunday News Saturday, 26 May 2012), in an article "ACCZ Praised Govt for Continued Support," the ACCZ is a body which brings together more than 350 Apostolic and Zion churches in Zimbabwe. The Vice President, Joice Mujuru, launched the ACCZ in September 2010 in an effort to acknowledge and standardise the for-long unregulated indigenous churches. The formation of the ACCZ was expected to facilitate regulation of indigenous Apostolic churches dotted around the country.

These AICs were formed during the colonial period, a time black people were not allowed to lead churches. Since the colonial era, indigenous churches have never been recognised and supported as churches. According to Ndanga, they were seen in bad light:

At one time we were grouped under traditional healers and our prophets were required to register through the Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers' Association (Zinatha) but we have vehemently refused to be put under the same umbrella with them. We are not n'angas but churches. For a very long time we have been labelled self-styled and that tag has stuck resulting in just about anyone starting a church any time with no regulation or standard ( Sunday Mail Reporter, Sunday, 31 July 2011).

By 30 July 2011 over 200 indigenous Apostolic churches had been registered by the ACCZ since its launch in 2010, with eight split Apostolic churches being reconciled and reunited.

ACCZ is an ecumenical body for all Apostolic and Zion churches in Zimbabwe. ACCZ boasts of over 7 million membership representing churches with indigenous origins. Some of the member churches are the Mugodhi Apostolic Church, Apostolic African Church, Makamba Zionist Church, Johane Masowe WeChishanu Church and Apostolic Pentecost in Africa Church in Zimbabwe led by Mr Anishto Kudhengeya with their headquarters in Ziki village, Bikita in Masvingo. ACCZ is loosely organized in the mould of other congregational groupings found in other religious bodies inside and outside the country, like the EFZ and the ZCC. The first president of the ACCZ was Reverend Johannes Ndanga, while the Chief Registrar was Mr Taurai Mbewe.

The section below explores the position of ACCZ on the governance of the Zanu-PF government on socio-economic and political matters. The church can easily be seen by any citizens or political parties, and even by political authorities to be non-partisan, neutral and human-centred in outlook if it promotes peace.

### **The ACCZ: Pro-Zanu PF?**

AICs for a long time have identified themselves with 'Pan Africanism,' enabling them to fully participate against what they deem imperialistic agendas. They do so in pursuit of Pan African Movement's goals of participation in the governing process and self determination for African peoples (Smith and Notling 1985:416). In this regard, the ACCZ has not been effective in its contribution towards social transformation in

Zimbabwe. Instead, this ecumenical body has always been found supporting the status quo. The body appeared to always be manipulated by Zanu PF whenever the party needed numerical support for any agenda of its interest. Levee Kadenge of the Christian Alliance cynically characterized ACCZ as “Apostolic Christian Council of Zanu-PF-ACCZ-PF” (Interview with Levee Kadenge, United Theological College, Harare, 22. June 2012). In his view, ACCZ is the religious face of Zanu PF.

The church as an entity could be an effective agent to raise the dignity of human beings individually and corporately by interaction with the status quo. As Banana (1996:334) puts it: “For an effective and efficient functioning, the church needs to be aware of the vast array of social, economic and political issues affecting humankind.” Political naivety, ignorance, misplaced priorities, vague policies and deliberate exclusivism have become the church culture unnegotiated, unexamined, unchartered and unresolved. Archbishop Hatendi (1988:283) pointed out that:

The church is involved in social responsibility by definition. It must therefore be present at the decision making table where policies and realizations of the government are expounded-hence politics. Can a church live without a say in the policies of a nation? It seems the church's members have been moved to the peripheries of the society to live a life of compromised citizenship.

Zanu PF has endeared itself to Apostolic groups, with Vice-President Joice Mujuru, ministers Didymus Mutasa, Webster Shamu and Ignatius Chombo taking their campaign to the groups' gatherings to give sermons in praise of President Robert Mugabe. Other notable religious leaders roped into Zanu PF's campaign trail included Emmanuel Makandiwa (UFI), Nolbert Kunonga (Anglican), Paul Mwazha (Apostolic African Church) and Obadiah Msindo (Destiny for Africa Network). The strategy was aimed at capturing popular personalities' followers and to win them over, ahead of the planned national elections. Zanu PF hailed Apostolic churches for supporting the revolutionary Zanu PF party which they said brought the freedom of worship which the groups did not enjoy during the colonial era.

The ACCZ also openly declared its solidarity with Mugabe and Zanu PF, describing those from other political parties as “political opportunists”. Johannes Ndanga, President of ACCZ, said:

We want to express our solidarity with President Robert Mugabe and we want to say that we denounce political opportunists (Wonai Masvingise, "Mujuru Promises Apostolic Sects Land" in Newsday, 2012-05-26).

The ACCZ called on Zanu PF to provide vehicles and allowances to church leaders spearheading its campaign ahead of impending elections later in 2012. Addressing a Zion Christian Church national women's conference in Masvingo, Ndanga claimed "real bishops" had more Zanu PF followers as compared to traditional leaders, hence the need to award them cars and cash allowances:

Bring me Chief Charumbira (Fortune) here. We want to see who commands more supporters than the other. Real bishops from indigenous churches can draw more Zanu PF supporters than chiefs. It is against this premise that we (bishops) should be given vehicles just like the chiefs. The advantage of Zanu PF is that it is already established and a Zimbabwean party. Political parties like MDC are from Britain. Some of their members are even 'whiter' than the whites. So what Zanu PF simply needs to do is give us land and empower us as a church and it will rule forever (Stephen Chadenga, "Pro-Zanu PF Bishop Demands Cars" in Newsday, 2011-03-28).

However, Deputy Education Minister and Zanu PF politburo member, Lazarus Dokora, who also attended the meeting on behalf of Vice-President, Joice Mujuru, urged church leaders to work together with traditional chiefs to drum up support for the former ruling party:

Traditional leaders play an important role on their side and you also have your important role as church leaders in making the party and the country achieve its goals (Stephen Chadenga, "Pro-Zanu PF Bishop Demands Cars" in Newsday, 2011-03-28)

The man of the cloth, Bishop Ndanga, who has on several occasions declared his allegiance to Zanu PF concluded that "In fact, we will all vote for the party (Zanu PF)". Mr T. Jaramba, the branch Chairman of ACCZ in Harare, rejected assertions that ACCZ has allegiance to Zanu PF:

ACCZ is a religious ecumenical body and not an affiliate of Zanu PF. There are members with different allegiances in the organization. The President's (Ndanga) views should not be ascribed to all members. We have different views as regards politics (Interview with T. Jaramba, Belvedere, Harare, 26. June 2012).

However, he refused to be drawn in discussions of political guests mainly from Zanu PF who frequent their gatherings. According to one ACCZ official who declined to be named, Zanu PF has heavily infiltrated ACCZ.

## Empowering Indigenous People

AICs scattered around the country have joined Government programmes in order to empower their membership economically. They have joined in the empowerment bandwagon and ensured that their membership benefit from Government programmes. Indigenous apostolic churches have been in the forefront of self-empowerment. Most indigenous churches have shown their commitment to support revolutionary principles aimed at empowering indigenous people.

The Zimbabwean economy was once one of the best in Africa and rated the fastest growing economy but in the early to mid 1990s the economy began to decline. In 1999 the finance minister presented the Millennium Budget which was followed by the Millennium Economic Recovery Programme of 2000. Both programs were frantic efforts by government to correct what have gone wrong with the economy over the past years, but all efforts proved to be failures.

Bishop Johannes Ndanga urged Zimbabweans to safeguard the gains of the liberation struggle by contributing significantly to the development of the nation:

We have a disturbing situation where people run away from their country to work in menial jobs abroad. I must say this has to stop and people should just concentrate on developing our beautiful nation (Moyo Roy, “Vapostori to Continue Supporting Mugabe”, in Bulawayo24 News, 06 November 2012).

The land question in Zimbabwe has always carried political connotations. The Lancaster Agreement of 1979 which ushered 1980 Independence could not offer the freedom to acquire land. The Land had to be acquired on a ‘willing seller willing buyer’ concept. The 2000 Referendum had a clause that needed the land issue settled through compulsory ‘Land Acquisition’, but before all this, it first of all needed approval of the whole Referendum by the Zimbabwean voters. Through the lobbying for the ‘No Vote’ by the National Constitutional Assembly, the referendum received a ‘no vote’ from the Zimbabwean voters. So the Zimbabwe government had no legal means to acquire the land compulsorily. As a result of this ‘No Vote’ the Zimbabwe government through ZANU PF unleashed violence on the Zimbabweans. This violence still exists in the midst of Zimbabweans.

Zanu PF promised ACCZ land for agricultural activities in a move designed to cement the relationship the churches have with Zanu PF. Mujuru made the pledge during a Zionist and Apostolic churches

national day of prayer on 25 May 2012 at Zimbabwe Grounds in Highfield. Mujuru, who is matron of the Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe(ACCZ) and was clad in the churches' white regalia, was asked by Tadeu Mugodhi, leader of the Mugodhi Apostolic Church, to avail land for church members: "We want the government to assist us by giving us farming land," (Wonai Masvingise, "Mujuru Promises Apostolic Sects Land" in Newsday | 2012-05-26). Mujuru replied by saying she was happy they had made the request and they should be given the land:

I was happy to hear Bishop (Mugodhi) talking about land. That land should be given to them. Right now I have another big group that I am assisting with the acquisition of farming inputs. President Robert Mugabe has launched a lot of programmes that help better the lives of people but there is a lot of short-changing of people. There is a lot of thieving and people do not even see where these things go, but empowerment projects and programmes, these we will support so you will also benefit from them(Wonai Masvingise, "Mujuru Promises Apostolic Sects Land" in Newsday | 2012-05-26).

The land was a major campaign issue for Zanu PF in the twenty first century.

On women, the ACCZ has noted the discrimination against women and has advocated for the empowerment of women. Thus the organization posited that the empowerment of women is a major challenge to church and civil society at this time in history. An empowered woman is able to assert her basic dignity. In so far as women are disempowered, men too are disempowered. Men who continue to dominate women become prisoners of their own arrogance. They denounced the traditional marriage and inheritance, opting for Christian marriage and civil marriage that does not go against gospel values. Such conduct by the ecumenical body is a clear indication of their effort towards social transformation. The shift has also encouraged and urged indigenous Apostolic followers to become active in empowerment programmes and not become objects of ridicule because of poverty.

### **AC CZ, Public Endorsement and Recognition, and Traditional Values**

Missionary churches in Zimbabwe were faced with a somewhat new challenge to respond appropriately and strategically to a contested

religious space where AICs were increasingly attaining new levels of unapologetic, formal-official, public endorsement and recognition. From a historical perspective, missionary churches, for many years, effectively enjoyed the official status of “the churches of preference” by virtue of their legitimating of and association with the dominant colonial political regime. This is very much unlike scenarios in previous years where missionary churches such as Anglican Church and Methodist Church enjoyed preferential formal-official endorsement and recognition in the public space while AICs practised by adherents in their day-to-day religious lives were effectively relegated to “unofficial” status. T. Mbewe, the Registrar of ACCZ, rejected the official status accorded to ACCZ: “there is freedom of worship in Zimbabwe; all religious organizations are equal before the law. ACCZ is a vibrant Apostolic and Zionist body: being active does not mean preferential treatment by government.” (Interview with T. Mbewe, Eastlea, Harare, 28. June 2012).

Local churches under the ambit of the ACCZ maintain a balance between Christian and traditional values as opposed to embracing values brought by foreign churches. The ACCZ depicts syncretistic religion in contemporary Zimbabwe. That is to say that traditional and Western religion now coincide in Africa and in a sense, Christianity has been “indigenized.” The idea of syncretistic religion is a way of recognizing the indigenous people’s reclaiming control over their religious and cultural identities. The theory of syncretistic religion assumes the reconciliation of the spiritual ancestral world and Christian beliefs. Spirits play a role in some peoples’ lives and certain spiritual events, such as the death of someone, do follow a more traditional ritual involving spirit mediums.

M.F.C. Bourdillon, in his book *Where are the Ancestors? Changing Culture in Zimbabwe*, explains the colonial psychology associated with missionaries’ religion:

Christianity has been associated with wealth and elitism. The missionaries who brought Christianity to Zimbabwe were associated with the conquering colonists, even if they did not always agree with colonial government (Bourdillon, 1993:86).

It is extremely important to note that the introduction of Christian churches during the colonial period brought with it a particular mentality that has persevered through the independence struggle. This mentality encompasses a belief in the inferiority or the inadequacy of traditional religion.

The AACZ recognizes traditional values as evidenced by the appointment of some traditional leaders as patrons of Apostolic groups in their respective areas. There is limited or little conflict between Apostolic churches and traditional institutions since the churches are founded on traditional values, their style of worship resonates with indigenous traditions. For example, Chief Nherera of Mhondoro Mubaira was appointed as patron of the ACCZ churches under his area of jurisdiction. Chief Nherera was mandated to oversee the churches in his area. Chief Nherera is the fourth zonal leader appointed as the patron of ACCZ (<http://www.gisp.gov.zw>).

Another area of social life where the church can be said to have had unparalleled influence is that of preserving the value of key socio-moral fabrics such as the sanctity of marriage and life as well as the “heterosexual nature” of marriage. Vice-President Mujuru called on local churches under the ambit of the ACCZ to maintain traditional values and desist from adopting foreign ideologies that embrace homosexuality:

Scriptural references on homosexuality (Genesis 19), on Sodom and Gomorrah, show that they were destroyed, also in Leviticus 20 verse 12 and 1 Corinthians 6 verse 9. Churches today should be seen to teach and preach the traditional way because we had our own way of praying when the ‘white’ man came (<http://www.gisp.gov.zw>).

She condemned churches that embraced homosexuality and applauded the ACCZ for promoting local tradition. In her opinion, it was sad to note that some local churches had gone out of their way to respect external values brought by foreign churches at the expense of the Zimbabwean culture.

## **Health Delivery System**

After year 2000 the health sector became compromised, with some people stranded to death at the hospitals. The cholera epidemic took a swipe across the country in 2008, killing many Zimbabweans due to lack of control drugs and sanitation in the urban centres. The Church puts health at the core of its beliefs. Various bodies have been formed to respond to particular situations faced by the Church in Health. Through UDACIZA, ACCZ developed tools that would guide it in HIV and AIDS interventions (U.D.A.C.I.Z.A. HIV and AIDS Policy August 2005). This helped ACCZ to change those aspects of behaviour and practices that expose them to increased risk of infection and that would also enable

them to link up and benefit from what others outside the church were doing in their fight against HIV and AIDS, including the government, NGOs and other stakeholders.

AC CZ reviewed and amended practices, laws, policies and guidelines that have traditionally been accepted within the Apostolic Churches which fuel the spread of HIV and AIDS such as polygamy, wife inheritance, marrying young girls and refusing to go to hospitals. The body reviewed their practices, internal laws, policies and guidelines to ensure that they are in conformity with the reality of HIV and AIDS and that they take into account the socio-economic environment prevailing in the country. In line with this policy, ACCZ ran awareness programmes targeted at Church members to popularize new practices, laws, policies and guidelines that reduce the risk of HIV and AIDS transmission among members.

The church prioritized programmes targeted at the youth to ensure that they grew into adulthood HIV and AIDS-free. There was a high HIV infection rate among the youth, making them particularly vulnerable to the disease. Reasons for the higher prevalence included the desire to experiment and, in the case of young women, their physiological make-up. The ecumenical body created youth forums where young people could meet, discuss and educate each other through peer education on HIV and AIDS. The ACCZ also developed youth-friendly Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials that reflect the church's perspective on HIV and AIDS. In addition, the ACCZ involved parents in HIV and AIDS education in schools and advocated life skills education becomes an examinable subject to ensure that all children have knowledge and information on HIV and AIDS.

There is no doubt that within the Apostolic and Zionist Churches the girl child had tended to be disadvantaged, in many cases by being denied education and getting married off to older men who had other wives, increasing the risk of contracting HIV and AIDS. The ACCZ took an important role to protect the social and economic rights of the girl child and these included the right to an education and to a partner of her own choice.

The ACCZ also took cognizance of the fact that women were powerless in relationships and, therefore, women's empowerment should be mainstreamed within the church. The organization ran programmes that dealt with HIV and AIDS from a gender perspective. While the church supported the principle behind wife inheritance,

which is taking care of the deceased's family, it discouraged taking the woman as a wife as this increases the risk to HIV and AIDS.

According to *The Sunday Mail* of June 3-9, 2012, officials from the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare briefed the ACCZ delegates on maternal health, child vaccination and mortality, and HIV and AIDS, issues that had often led to tensions and clashes between Government and the Apostolic churches. This has forced an interrogation of the old way of worshipping without paying attention to matters of sanitation. The ACCZ advised their members against baptizing unsuspecting converts in unhygienic water polluted with sewer and other toxins, putting followers at risk of contracting water borne diseases. The Registrar General, the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) and the ACCZ registered concern at the rate at which new churches were sprouting up and this warranted the unprecedented blitz and registration drive on various sects. On its part EMA, the environment watchdog, was concerned with the mushrooming of new churches without adequate sanitary facilities, running water and other health matters, thereby worshippers and children are particularly at risk. ([www.classfields.co.June, 02,2012](http://www.classfields.co.June, 02,2012)).

Lobbying by health authorities, President Robert Mugabe and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai resulted in various Apostolic Faith sects and Zionist churches lifting a ban on their members from having their children immunized against Zimbabwe's six main killer diseases, officials confirmed. (see picture in Appendix 1 below shows President Robert Mugabe, second from left, in Apostolic regalia and the leadership of ACCZ).

The ACCZ adopted a constitution making it mandatory for members to vaccinate and immunize their children. There had been clashes between some members of the Apostolic and Zionist churches and the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare over the issue of immunization. It had been alleged that some members had been refusing to immunize their children on religious grounds. Health officials said hundreds of children had died in previous years after their parents refused to have them immunized, citing strict religious beliefs. Measles had been the biggest killer. Some members of the Apostolic churches shunned most forms of western medicine in the belief that it diminished their supernatural powers.

The ACCZ continued to work with the government and local authorities in identifying areas to hold their services or erect structures

for purposes of worship. They also safeguarded the environment by desisting from practices that caused environment degradation. The erection of toilets at designated areas of worship would also be done so as to prevent outbreaks of diseases such as cholera.

## Achievements

The ACCZ is an indigenous organization that has managed to register, manage, reconcile and reunite many Apostolic churches which have been split for years. The organization has also encouraged and urged indigenous apostolic followers to become active in empowerment programmes and not become objects of poverty. The ACCZ supported its members in empowerment projects for self reliance and sustenance. It agreed that human advancement had to be the goal of action on behalf of the poor.

AICs have their own place in the ecumenical movement and a contribution to make to it. In the words of J. S. Pobee and G. Ositelu II:

AICs by their style represent the spontaneous expansion of the church. The whole church, leadership and all, assume that it is the church's task to multiply, in short to do mission. And they do so through simplicity of confession and simple Christian witness. (Pobee and Ositelu II, 1998:50).

There is a significant growth of membership in AICs. A considerable adherence to religion can be noted, AICs are competing with historic churches for membership. In the study of religion AICS can no longer be regarded as inconsequential area in missiology. Christianity can no longer be limited to historic churches.

However, men continue to monopolize religion yet in actual fact, it is the women who dominate the religious practices in ACCZ. Women in African Independent Churches suffer from both social and psychological problems such as denial of leadership positions in church, segregation from men who always want to occupy front seats.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, there is now a new paradigm shift rejecting denominational isolationism. Zimbabwe is a playground for inter-denominational social transformation activities. The ACCZ became an important player on the contested religious landscape in Zimbabwe. This ecumenical body was active in the religious, socio-political, and

economic spheres in Zimbabwe. In the area of church history, the developments towards church unity and mutual understanding in transforming society are best manifested by churches in Zimbabwe. The whole mission of Christianity on earth is nothing but the total transformation of humanity in all aspects of their lives. However, the challenge of achieving unity in diversity is not easy. In their ecumenical drive, the churches have experienced not only dynamic growth, but also limitations.

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*Tendai Chari*

## **“Suspect Spirituality”? Media Representation of African Independent Churches in Zimbabwe.**

### **Introduction**

Zimbabwe is a secular nation which has enjoyed diverse religious faiths since the country attained independence from Britain in 1980. Freedom of worship is guaranteed under section 19 of the Constitution which states that: ‘Except with his own consent or by way of parental discipline, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience, that is to say freedom to change his religion or belief through worship, teaching practice and observance’ (Government of Zimbabwe 14). This freedom has ensured the existence of religious pluralism in the post-colony whose clearest manifestation has been the mushrooming of a plethora of diverse religious groups and denominations co-existing alongside one another.

However, the fullness and richness of this diversity is not reflected in both the country’s print and electronic media. The absence of a coherent policy on religious matters within the media, including the sole broadcaster, the state-owned Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), has resulted in Christianity eclipsing all the other religions in the media while ‘token invitation’ is extended to the rest (TP 2004).

This chapter examines media representation of African Initiated/Independent Churches in Zimbabwe, in order to gauge the potential of the mass media to promote or undermine religious co-existence in the country. The chapter addresses the following questions: How do the media in Zimbabwe represent African Initiated/Independent Churches? In what way does such representation

undermine religious harmony, tolerance and cultural diversity in society? How does such representation mould public opinion? In addressing these questions, the chapter hopes to chart theoretical pathways on possible ways in which the mass media can either promote or undermine religious diversity in a multi-cultural society. Reference will be made to print and the broadcast media.

## Overview of the Media Context in Zimbabwe

The media in Zimbabwe consists of government-owned print media and several privately-owned newspapers, a state-owned broadcaster, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC)<sup>1</sup>. The state-owned Zimbabwe Newspapers (Zimpapers Pvt Ltd 1980) dominates the newspaper market and publishes two daily newspapers, *The Herald* published in the capital city, Harare, and *The Chronicle* in the second largest city, Bulawayo. The company also owns a number of weekly newspapers and magazines including *Kwayedza* and *Umthunywa* which are published in the main vernacular languages, Shona and Ndebele respectively<sup>2</sup>. Zimpapers's flagship, *The Herald* is distributed nationally, while *The Chronicle* is largely distributed in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions (Chari, 2006). Government also runs eleven provincial newspapers which fall under the Community Newspapers Publishing Company, a company owned by the state-owned New Ziana<sup>3</sup>.

The privately-owned press, which was adversely affected by the economic and political crises which started at the turn of the century, has recently been recuperating, particularly after the consummation of the Government of National Unity in 2009. *The Daily News* and its sister publication, *The Daily News on Sunday*, which had been closed in 2003 after failing to comply with aspects of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA, 2002) are back in the fold. A new kid on the block, *News Day*, owned by Alpha Media Publishing House, owned by South African-based Zimbabwean business mogul, Trevor Ncube, owner (owner of Mail & Guardian, South Africa), is one of the

<sup>1</sup> ZBC has five radio channels and two television channels.

<sup>2</sup> Kwayedza (Shona) and Umthunywa (Ndebele) are vernacular terms which mean dawn.

<sup>3</sup> Formerly ZIANA, the company was restructured following the appointment of Jonathan Moyo as Minister of Information and Publicity.

several publications licensed by the reconstituted Zimbabwe Media Council (ZMC) in 2010. Notable private newspapers in the country are weekly publications namely, *The Zimbabwe Independent*, *The Standard* (also owned by Alpha Media), *The Financial Gazette*, *The Patriot*, *The Mail*, and a few provincial weekly newspapers and magazines.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to printed newspapers, there are several online publications and websites which are published by Zimbabwean journalists in the Diaspora (that cover Zimbabwe issues widely). Notable are, NewZimbabwe.com, ZimSituation.com, The Zimbabwe Mail, Zim Eye.com, ZimDiaspora, Zimbabwe Guardian.com (TalkZimbabwe.com), to mention only a few. New developments in the broadcasting sector include the licensing, in 2011 of two private radio stations by the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ), thus breaking the government's monopoly in the broadcasting sector (Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa, 2011). However, the television sector remains the sole preserve of the government, which has two television channels. Television coverage has, however, shrunk over the years with some outlying areas such as Beit-Bridge, Victoria Falls and Plumtree hardly receiving any signals.

### **Media and the Representation of Reality: A Framing Perspective**

The media play a crucial role in the construction of reality. Our perception of people and issues is, to a great extent, influenced by the myriad of media images that we interact with on a daily basis. As noted by Tuchman (1978), reality is a social construct which is dependent on the ideology of those who produce it. From an agenda-setting perspective, the media carefully select issues to focus on so as to influence public opinion (Dearing and Rogers, 1996). Thus “the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about” (Cohen (1963 cited by Dearing and Rogers, Ibid:1).

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<sup>1</sup> There are also a number of publications which are published outside the country and are circulated in major towns and cities in and around the country. These include The Zimbabwean (UK) The Sunday Times, The Mail and Guardian, The Star (SA) and a host of other publications.

The framing theory asserts that the media influence the way in which people interpret certain messages. Entman asserts that: "To frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman 1993:52). McQuail (1994:52) notes that "our perception of groups to which we do not belong or cannot observe is partly shaped by the mass media." Thus the media circulate knowledge and shape opinions about people and issues.

This chapter argues that the media play a pivotal role in influencing people what to think about different religious faiths and those who subscribe to them. With regard to media representation of religious issues, Hoover (2003:1) notes that:

In the media age, religion can no longer control its own symbols. In times past, clerical authority could more or less dictate where, when, and how religious ideas, symbols, and claims would surface. Today, the pope can't control the way Madonna or Sinead O'Conor use or abuse religious symbols. Muslim clerics can't stop popular culture from portraying Islam in ways they don't approve of. No one can control what the news media will cover and how they will cover it. What once was a bright line drawn around religion, shielding it from secular scrutiny, has long since been dissolved by universal, instantaneous, and increasingly visual experience.

This means that religions can no longer control their "stories", their idiom and their view of themselves as they are increasingly falling under the subjective interpretations of the media. The multiplicities of metaphors that signify the mediating role of the media serve to dramatise the extent to which mediated reality is dependent on the whimsical interpretations of the media. Therefore the mass media play an important role in shaping people's opinions about other people's religious faiths, beliefs and practices. Framing connotes that the media provide the scope within which public debates are debated thereby narrowing the alternatives available for understanding them (Tuchman 1978:156). Further, the media influence opinion about other people's religions by carefully selecting issues and events that fit into their frames and leaving out those that do not.

## African Independent Churches in the media: Religious Orphans?

The Zimbabwean media's coverage of religious issues does not fully reflect the full spectrum of the country's religious faiths or denominations. Mainline Christian churches dominate in both the electronic and print media, while African Independent Churches operate in the margins.

Religious programmes and music from mainstream and Pentecostal churches dominate programming on national television. Television opens programming with a sermon from mainstream churches seven days a week. The number of broadcasts by mainline churches on Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation Television (ZBC-TV) continues to increase by the day without a corresponding increase in content from African Independent Churches, which command a considerable following in the country. For example, it is believed that the three apostolic sects in the country, namely, the African Apostolic Church in Zimbabwe, the African Apostolic Church Johane (Marange), and Johanne Masowe (Chishanu) have a combined following of over five million followers (NewZimbabwe.com, 2011). The under-representation of these religious groups creates the impression that African Independent Churches are in the periphery. The "symbolic annihilation" on national media might result in some religious denominations, such as African Independent Churches feeling like "religious orphans". A former minister of the Ministry of Information and Publicity, which is the parent ministry of the state broadcaster, acknowledges the absence of a broadcasting policy on religious programming and states thus:

...we in the ministry firmly believe that God's house is broad and with many denominations. We believe religion is wider than Christianity. We believe life is nourished by the word but fed by other pursuits and interests, including secular ones. The national screen must reflect this diversity. It creates room for everyone, including yourselves (Mangwana 2007:2).

The absence of a guiding framework on religious issues in the media means that media practitioners are left to their own devices to make key decisions on religious programming. In the absence of a policy, the media will be dominated by certain denominations while ignoring others. For example, wealthy Pentecostal denominations associated with the "prosperity gospel" can afford to buy airtime on television, or start newspapers (see the Daily News, 22 March, 2012). An informant reported that in 2012 some churches led by charismatic preachers which

were mushrooming in the country were charging USD 10 entrance fees. Some bought broadcast airtime in advance and when others approached the state broadcaster with the intention of doing the same they would be told that airtime allocated for religious programmes had been exhausted.

The “crowding out” of some religious denominations by mainstream and Pentecostal churches does not augur well for a society yearning for religious diversity. The marginalization of African Independent Churches and African Traditional Religions creates an unhealthy situation and bodes ill for the promotion of a diverse, multi-cultural and multi-faith society; the essence of democracy.

### **“Suspect Spirituality”: Media Framing of African Independent Churches**

A common trend in the Zimbabwean media is the sensational treatment of stories involving African Independent Churches, their followers or leadership. Millband (cited by Tuchman, 1989:156) notes that the mass media contribute to the ‘fostering of a climate of conformity by containing dissent’ and by accentuating ‘news, which falls outside the consensus or...by treating dissenting views as irrelevant eccentricities which serious people, may discuss as a consequence’. While it is a truism that religious personalities receive unfair treatment from the media, African Independent Churches appear to be on the far end of the spectrum. They are often objects of media sarcasm and uncharitable comments. Stories about their leaders are highly sensationalized. Sensationalism, also known, as “sunshine journalism” or “yellow journalism” is media coverage that seeks to excite the vulgar tastes of the audience by preying upon people’s curiosity. It thrives on gossip, rumours, hearsay, hype and misleading information. Reporting that uses sensationalism is extremely controversial and loud, the idea being to grab the attention of the audience. In extreme cases, sensational media has no regard for facts. Major concerns of sensationalism are that it;

- removes focus on more important issues; and
- may promote misunderstanding within the audience or among the parties involved
- may exacerbate the existing problems by making them appear as if they are out of control, as if to say, “the world is on fire”.

In some situations sensationalism encourages socially undesirable behavior. In the Zimbabwean media, followers of African Independent Churches, particularly the apostolic sect and its leadership have been lampooned, in order to increase ratings. Examples of newspaper headlines which suggest this are:

- Snake in bag triggers chaos at vapositori shrine in Harare (H-Metro, 21 may, 2012).
- Vapositori to worship in Council Beerhalls (The Chronicle, 7 April, 2012).
- Measles claims 223 children as mapositori sect resist vaccination (ZimEye, 6 May 2010).
- Vapositori clash with women lawyers (The Zimbabwean, 11 November, 2011).
- Government set to clash with vapositori over measles vaccination (The Zimbabwean, 11 May, 2010).
- High risk behavior: The forgotten vapositori of Southern Africa (Healthdev.net, 11 June 2009).
- Vapositori in climbdown over immunization, (The Standard, 23 May 2010).
- Guruve-home of the bizarre....Now woman ‘turns’ into man (The Sunday Mail, 04.06.06)
- Church members clash over grave shrine (The Herald, 01.07.06)
- Self-styled prophet jailed (The Sunday Mail, 02.07.06)

A common denominator of the above headlines is that they all revolve around a personality and that they have a bizarre element to them. They all have an attention grabbing appeal either because of the religious personality involved or the weird nature of the event. Selection of subjects and headlines is motivated by the desire to tickle the audience rather than to inform them. The impression created through these headlines is that *vapositori* religious group is irrational, controversial or unreasonable. Stories about the *vapositori* followers refusing to immunize their children create the impression that *Vapositori* are “primitive” and irrational people who resist modernity. They are also represented as controversial and suspicious people. For example, in a story published by H-Metro (21 May, 2012), the newspaper reported that a businessman had shocked a Johanne Masowe congregation when he brought a snake hidden in a bag to the sect’s shrine. A prophet of the church is reported to have prophesied about the snake, upon which the

snake was killed and the business man mobbed by members of the public who wanted to beat him up. The newspaper reported that there was “chaos” as members of the public thronged the shrine to “have a glimpse of the snake”. The newspaper, however, reported that opinion was divided as some members of the public “believed the prophets were suspicious”.

By arriving at this conclusion, the newspaper sought to cast aspersions on the ability of *vapositori* prophets to prophesy. The use of the word “shrine” to refer to the place where the *Vapositori* worship conjures up a primitive religion based on idol or ancestry worshipping, thereby relegating the group to the “Economy spiritual class”.

The accentuation of the bizarre does not only promote the commercial interests of the media, but also reinforces the notion that African Independent Churches are “suspect” denominations whose practices are mired in controversy and mystery. Brooks et al. (1988:5) observe that “the bizarre makes news...” While focusing on news that tickle the audience appears perfectly in order, there is an extent to which it may befuddle important issues especially if it becomes an obsession. Important issues may elude the audience because their attention is distracted by the mundane and trivial. Too much attention on personalities and events may mean important tenets of a people’s religion are glossed over or belittled. This is especially so if the negative deeds of the personality in question are taken as representative of the whole group. Obsession with the negative aspects of African Independent Churches such as the *Vapositori* sect and others engenders “cognitive dissonance” among followers and potential followers of these religious denominations.

As already noted, while controversy in the media is not a preserve of African Independent Churches (the Anglican church in Zimbabwe has been in the news for a long time, and former President of the country Reverend Canaan Banana, and Pastor Haisa, to mention only a few people from the mainline churches), cases involving personalities associated with Independent Churches have been blown out of proportion. For example, the arrest and trial of Prophet Boniface Muponda, Prophet Lawrence Katsiru, Madzibaba Nzira, and others have attracted phenomenal media attention. News coverage about their cases have encroached the entertainment realm. A case in point is the

coverage of the trial of Godfrey Nzira, a leader of the Johane Masowe Apostolic Faith group, who had been convicted of nine counts of rape.<sup>1</sup>

The Daily News of 18 March 2003 published a story headlined “Nzira supporters run amok”. The paper reported that about 2000 female “supporters of Nzira went haywire” beating up court officials, policemen on duty and smashed doors ‘after their leader had been convicted’. The magistrate who presided over the rape case is reported to have ‘escaped death by a whisker’. One magistrate is reported to have lost her ‘shoe’ in the melee. Sanity was only brought about after members of the Zimbabwe Prison Service (ZPS) officers fired warning shots in the air. The story has all the ingredients of a docudrama. It creates the impression that members of this particular religious group are inherently violent, fanatical, and irrational. It is worth noting that the story itself does not say much about the rape case or Nzira. As a result, readers are forced to view him through the behavior of his supporters.

Such biased representation is similar to that subjected to another religious group called the Mukaera or Mudzimu Unoera sect based in Guruve, Mashonaland West province, which most media portrayed as a mythical sect<sup>2</sup>. Micheal Hartnack in The Herald Online (Port Elizabeth) refers to the Mudzimu Unoera (Mukakera) religious group as ‘a classic example of how dangerous cults emerge in communities under cataclysmic stress’ (The Herald Online 06.02.06).

Parade magazine, a popular monthly and privately-owned magazine, which specializes on human interest stories, reported that the Mukaera village where the religious group is based ‘is not just a village for anyone’. The magazine reported that ‘Devout followers of the Mukaera have vowed to follow the church’s teachings to the letter’ as if to suggest that there is a religious group out there whose members do not intend to follow teachings of their faith to the letter. (Parade, April 1999:51). The Mudzimu Unoera church members are described by the magazine as

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<sup>1</sup> Johane Masowe is an African Independent Church that has been subject to negative musical ,and press reportage. In the 1980s Zex Manatsa, a prominent popular musician caused uproar in the country after lampooning the religious group through his song ‘Tea Hobvu’ (White Tea). The song was interpreted as portraying male members of the religious group as gluttonous and selfish patriarchies who do not care much about their families.

<sup>2</sup> The group has received widespread and negative publicity in newspapers, magazines, radio and television. Also, see below.

living a life stranger than fiction. The magazine dwells more on the group's don'ts rather than its dos. For instance we are told that:

'They don't keep any domestic animals. They do not grow crops ('not even one bed of tomatoes'). Their children do not go to school. They do not go to clinics. They do not eat pork, mice, nor do they smoke or drink' (Parade, ibid:51).

The fact that this group's members are described more in terms of what they do not do rather than what they do is a deliberate rhetorical strategy of undervaluing their faith and religious practice. They are made to appear as out of the ordinary or stranger than fiction. Readers would not be able to understand this religion because the press tends to mystify rather than furnish information about the religion. Readers are, therefore, unlikely to be educated about this religious faith. If anything they are left wondering and even suspicious of people who subscribe to it.

Television coverage of the religious group is equally controversial. For instance, a ZTV current affairs programme, Behind The Camera broadcast on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2007 portrayed the Mudzimu Unoera religious group in a very prejudicial manner. Throughout the programme, the religious group and its "Tritnoy" language were repeatedly referred to as 'very strange'.<sup>1</sup> Part of the programme script read:

This week we speak a different and strange language known as Tritnoy. We urge you to exercise religious tolerance for the next 20 or so minutes...Mashonaland Central is a province well known for its good soils, rains and agricultural produce. People say if you get a farm in that province you are likely to become a successful farmer as long as you work very hard of course. Of late the province has been in the news for reasons which have nothing to do with its good soils. Tucked away in Guruve is a village called Chatiza. In this village is a church (denomination) or rather cult known as Mudzimu Unoera. The cult claims the Lord Jesus Christ kept his promise and came back in the form of a girl they call Baby Jesus who speaks a strange language called Tritnoy. She sang the national anthem for the Behind the camera team in the language...Strange isn't it. Well not everyone thinks it is a strange language. There are people who speak that language in Guruve who are convinced it is what the mighty Lord gave them. Formed in 1932 under the leadership of Emmanuel Mudyiwa the cult initially used a different and equally strange language. Father to Baby Jesus, Mr Eniwes Nyanhete whose religious or is it cult name is Father or Baba Josefa from

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<sup>1</sup> Tritnony is the language spoken by members of the Mudzimu Unoera group and was portrayed as funny on the ZTV programme.

the Biblical Joseph whose wife gave birth to Jesus Christ, says the founder of his church was his father.

Although the presenter advises the audience to “exercise religious tolerance for the next 20 minutes or so”, the irony of it is that he shows gross intolerance towards the religious group in question. Whether this is deliberate or not is another matter. Through such presentation and portrayal the audience is likely to feel less curious to seek enlightenment about the religious group in question let alone to sympathise or seek affiliation to it because of the negative framing.

Makamure (1999:17) notes that “papers have to be forgiven because they have to make their news titillating and marketable”. This shows that the profit making imperative of most media is the main reason behind the sensationalism.

As noted earlier, the Apostolic church, (*Vapositor*), has been a butt of popular jokes, sarcasm and a soft target of negative representation. For instance, a Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) radio once reported that a member of the apostolic group, Majero and his entire family fled their homestead and went into hiding (during a countrywide immunisation programme) when Ministry of Health and Child Welfare officials visited Karoi, in Mashonaland West province in 1999 (cited in Parade Magazine, January 1999).

However, he was quoted by the media refuting this report, dismissing it as a fabrication by the media (Parade, January 1999:10). When Parade Magazine later sought an interview with him he put up a condition that his name should not be mentioned “because reporters misinform” (Ibid:11). In spite of this assurance the magazine went on to reveal his name in a sleazy news article that appeared in its January 1999 edition. In the article, Majero is described as “a Karoi enterprising farmer with a heavy load on his shoulders”, a ‘super daddy’ enjoying ‘his macho status’. The use of sarcasm to belittle religious personalities linked to African Independent Churches does not only engender contemptuous feelings towards these personalities but also the beliefs they subscribe to. Such media representation does not bode well for religious tolerance in a country where the freedom to worship is constitutionally guaranteed.

## African Independent Churches and ethnocentric media

Apart from the general rubbishing of some religious faiths and groups, the media in Zimbabwe has been responsible for cultivating ethnocentric views against African Independent Churches. Milligan (undated:4) defines ethnocentrism as the tendency of people to “view their particular culture as being better, or even the only one truly worthy of existence”. Gil-White (undated:2) concurs and describes ethnocentrism as the act of “passing negative moral judgment on how ethnic others organize their lives”. Cunningham et al., (2004:133) describe ethnocentricity as the tendency “to form and maintain negative evaluations and hostility toward multiple groups that are not one’s own”. Ethocentrism is undesirable in society because it encourages intolerance among people and is a hindrance to cultural diversity and multiculturalism. Hence individuals will judge other groups in relation to their own particular ethnic group or culture, especially with relation to language, behaviour, customs and religion.

In Zimbabwe the media indulges in various levels of implicit and explicit religious ethnocentricity. There is a tendency to portray some religious denominations, particularly African Independent Churches and African Traditional Religion as, mysterious, inferior or simply evil. For example, African Traditional Religion (ATR) is equated with witchcraft, the same way as African Independent Churches are constructed as suspect. An example of this is found in a story published in Parade Magazine of December 2000 where traditional healers who gathered in Harare in 2000 to exhibit their wares were described by the magazine as ‘witches’ and ‘wizards’. The headline read ‘Big Indaba for witches’ (Parade, December 2000:3). This starkly contrasts with that of Larry Ekanem, a Christian Pastor who is described in the same edition of the magazine as “The Anointed Man of God” who performs miracles, (Parade, December 2000:7). Besides being described glowingly, the “Christian Pastor” denigrates African traditional religion by insinuating that Zimbabwe is facing daunting economic and political challenges because its people have embraced practices like totems, thus, alienating themselves from God. The Pastor is quoted as having said:

‘Zimbabwe is a blessed nation in Africa, look at the weather, its strategic position on the continent, its wealth and peace. You see, when tradition contradicts the divine plan of God people suffer, the totem system here in Zimbabwe for example, some people take certain animals as their totems and end up bowing to their symbols in praise to the extent of subjugating

themselves to the totems. Some even go to the extent of adopting the characteristics of these animals; in short, they end up worshipping them, now where does that leave God?' (Parade Ibid:7-11).

The fact that the reporter gives his interviewee a long leash to disparage other people's religion shows lack of sensitivity and tolerance of cultural difference on the part of the media and bodes ill for religious co-existence and cultural diversity.

While the primary focus of this chapter is the representation of African Independent Churches in the media, the above example shows that religious chauvinism takes place within and across faiths. It starts with some people viewing their denominations as the only legitimate and spiritually superior religion and others as "inferior" or "spiritually questionable" (the holier than thou syndrome). It is common to come across people who know very well that you go to a particular Christian church, but still ask you "*Mukoma makaponeswa here?*" (Brother, are you saved?), implying that your church is inferior to theirs. Such attitudes maybe conscious or unconscious and the media do not help matters when they represent certain church denominations negatively.

For instance, the media tend to depict African Independent Churches as suspicious and their spiritual leaders are often described as "self-styled prophets" or "bogus prophets" while spiritual leaders of other Christian denominations are described as "acclaimed" or "renowned" prophets without demonstrating or justifying such labels. This labeling is meant to legitimate some mainstream Christian denominations while de-legitimising others, thereby engendering negative perceptions of those that are cast in a bad light.

### **Media Stereotypes of African Independent Churches**

A stereotype is an exaggerated belief, image or distorted truth about a person or group. It is generalization that allows a little or no difference or social variation (Greater Rochester Diversity Council, 2005). Stereotypes are often used in a negative and prejudicial sense to justify certain discriminatory behaviours. The production of stereotypes is usually based on simplification, exaggeration, distortion, generalization and the presentation of cultural attributes as being "natural". Lester (1996:9) notes that a stereotype "imposes a grid mold on the subject and encourages respected mechanical usage". Prejudice differs from stereotype in the sense that it is an abstract or general misconception or

attitude towards individuals” or groups of people or culture. Lester notes that “prejudice, discrimination and stereotype make a lethal combination” (Lester, *Ibid*:10).

The use of stereotypes makes people see things through a narrow self-serving prism rather than liberate them from their prejudices. In the Zimbabwean media and popular culture, religious stereotypes operate at both the inter-faith and intra-faith level. Although inter-faith sentiments are not overtly expressed, the media sometimes exhibit subtle religious prejudice. Ignorance about certain religious groups results in stereotypical representation of these in the media. African traditional religion for example, is usually portrayed as shrouded in mystery, backward, barbaric, satanic and belonging to the backwaters of history. Such “othering” results in mystification of some religions and it may discourage some people from openly associating with such religions. For example the African Independent Church prophet or spiritual healers are major objects of parody and prime source of humour in radio and television dramas. In dramas, the Christian prophet (*Muporofita*) is male, a liar, and cheat bent on ripping off unsuspecting clients/patients of their hard-earned money. He is a conman, and confidence trickster who speaks in tongues but hardly communicates anything because his language is from the underworld. When he speaks it is to confuse rather than to help.

Thus the Apostolic prophets of the Johanne Masowe and Johanne Marange groups are lumped into the same category with the African Doctor as people who are trapped in a time warp. The media tend to represent African Independent Churches and African Traditional Religion as backward and anti-modernity. An example of this is found published in a privately-owned weekly, (*The Standard*, 22 May, 2010) where it was reported (in a story headlined, “Vapositori in climb down over immunization”) that the various Vapositori groups in the country had agreed to take part in the ongoing government-led child immunisation against measles programme after mounting a stiff resistance. The religious groups were represented as “rigid, uncooperative and derailing progress”. The newspaper reported that ‘resistance had become deep rooted among members of the Johanne Marange sect in particular’. Even though such stereotyping may be unconscious, it could be argued that it promotes negative perceptions about these religious groups. In order to promote tolerance and

harmony in society, the media should avoid being dismissive of other religious perspectives.

African Independent Churches, especially the Apostolic groups, are often bandied together in the media. Although the different media images seem to imply that all followers of apostolic churches are polygamists, are averse to western medicine, shave their heads, wear white robes and that they all do not send their children to school; the truth of the matter is that the media have not bothered to research deeper and try and understand the religious practices and differences of these groups, preferring, instead, to find solace in sweeping generalizations and hyperbole. An example of such generalization is found in a story published in Parade Magazine (October 2001 edition) where a wrong photograph of the African Apostolic Church led by E.P. Mwazha was used in a news article. The article also wrongly attributes certain practices of the Jonanne Marange to the African Apostolic Church. This error prompted the leaders of the African Apostolic Church to write to the magazine complaining that:

It appears the writer did not do enough research concerning the article. Johane Marange sect is different from that of Johane Masowe. What the article portrays about African independent churches is a blanket cover which is unfortunate and unfair...Giving a blanket cover to all African Independent churches creates problems as some who do not practice polygamy get tarnished. The African Apostolic Church of Zimbabwe does not practice polygamy. Its members practise monogamous marriages. On the question of education the African Apostolic Church of Zimbabwe encourages its members to be highly educated (Parade, December 2001:4).

The magazine acknowledged the error and apologised for the use of a wrong picture in its December issue 2001, but the damage had already been done and the stereotype endures.

Whatever the reason for the distortion, the point is that the media in Zimbabwe habitually indulge in contemptuous and gross generalizations of Independent African Churches which do not promote religious tolerance in the country. This bodes ill for religious tolerance and diversity. In spite of the fact that stereotypes are based on incorrect judgments, they are crucial in molding public opinion and most people are less inclined to rethink their attitudes towards other religious faiths. It is possible that religious faiths ostracized by the media may find it difficult to attract converts or sympathizers who would have the courage to stand up and defend their positions. Chitando (2002:76) notes how leaders of Independent African Churches and their members are

subjected to negative reporting in the Zimbabwean mainstream media when he notes that:

...within the mainstream media, members of these churches have generally been the subject of scorn and derision. Due to the dominance of mainline churches and the aggressive nature of evangelical/pentecostal churches when it comes to media technologies, independent churches have not had equal access to the media in the country. On the whole, their followers are portrayed as uneducated, and their religious beliefs as an uncritical mixture of traditional spirituality and Christianity. In the early eighties the popular musician (who turned to gospel music in the late 1990s) Zacks Manatsa portrayed the Apostles as bearded, tea-loving, patriarchal figures in his song 'Tea Hobvu' (Strong Tea).

This shows that the mainstream media and popular cultural media have played a significant role in cultivating negative perceptions about African Independent Churches, thus threatening the religious harmony which exists in the country.

### **Political Polarization, African Independent Churches and the Media**

In the context of deep political polarization, African Independent Churches, particularly the apostolic groups, have attracted considerable negative publicity with a potential to besmirch the image of some of these churches. There have been a number of negative media reports that portray the *Vapositori* group as political instruments of Zanu PF, while mainline churches have been linked with its coalition partner, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The privately-owned press and the online media published by exiled Zimbabwean journalists have not lost an opportunity to project the *Vapositori* as doing the bidding of Zanu PF. Media reports in these media tend to insinuate that the *Vapositori* are gullible political instruments devoid of independent thinking. Their leadership and followers have been, to a larger extent, portrayed as criminal elements because of their political affiliation. Typical headlines that create this impression are:

- Rapist Madzibaba Nzira dies (ZimEye, 24 October, 2011).
- Vapositori sect sing Mugabe praises at parliament opening (ZimEye, 16 July, 2010)
- Vapositori forced to wear Zanu PF regalia (The Zimbabwean, 8 February, 2012).
- The State and Vapositori: Religious leaders up the ante with Mugabe (Radio VOP, 1 August, 2010).

- Mugabe bishops face lengthy jail terms for rape (New Zimbabwe.com)

The online website, NewZimbabwe.com (11 December, 2009), reported that “Mugabe’s most vocal ecclesiastical supporters”, namely, Obadiah Musindo of Destiny of Africa Church, Lawrence Katsiru, of the apostolic sect, and Madzibaba Nzira were facing a combined total of 39 years in jail. While the alleged criminal offences of the three had no relationship with their political affiliation, the publication appeared to “lay extra charges” to the three. According to the publication, Musindo was described as “the most enthusiastic donor” to President Mugabe and his wife, who had previously offered prayers for the president and denounced the MDC, while Katsiru had “notoriously commanded his followers to Zanu PF gatherings”. Nzira was blamed for having “had a prophecy to the effect that Mugabe was Zimbabwe’s rightful ruler”. The publication sought to equate the “dubious morality” of the three clergymen to the “moral bankruptcy” of the party they supported, thus reinforcing the existence of a binary struggle between forces of darkness and forces of light. The story does not only cast aspersions on the personal integrity of the three individuals, but the religious organizations they represent, all of which happen to be African Independent Churches. By extending the supposed moral culpability of the three to the organizations they represent, the publication sought to reinforce the view that African Independent Churches have dubious moral standards.

### **Concluding Remarks**

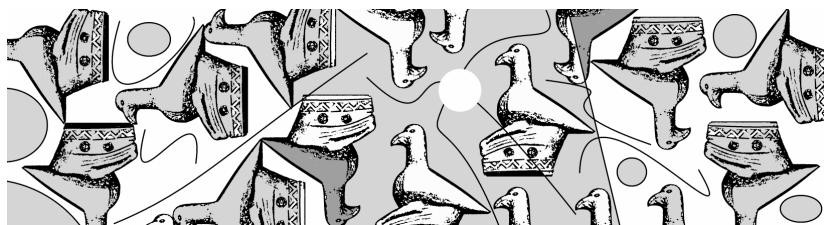
This chapter has discussed the representation of African Independent Churches in the Zimbabwean media. It has been argued that African Independent Churches are largely constructed as suspect and belong to the “Economy spiritual class”. They have far much less access to the print and electronic media, and when they are given space, they are negatively portrayed. Through outright or subtle bias, negative reporting, sensationalism, stereotyping, ethnocentricity and various acts of omission and commission, the media in Zimbabwe have the potential to promote intolerance and misunderstandings within and between religious faiths and denominations.

It is imperative for both the print and electronic media to implement strategies that promote harmonious co-existence of diverse religions and faiths. Appropriate training and educational programmes that may improve the journalists' ability to appreciate religious diversity in a multi-cultural and globalizing world are imperative. Journalism curriculum should incorporate modules that enable trainees to transcend their narrow cultural and religious prisms, thereby demolishing the artificial prefabs erected by individual cultures. It is a fact of life that "we are living during a period of history in which the earth has become a common homeland for a rapidly integrating human race" and there is need for the media to acknowledge and accept cultural difference. It is, therefore, important for media practitioners to accord all religious faiths and denominations equal and fair treatment if religious diversity is to be a reality.

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*Ezra Chitando and Pauline Mateveke*

## **Shifting Perceptions**

African Initiated Church Groups and Gospel Music in Zimbabwe

### **Background**

African Initiated Churches (AICs) have suffered from negative publicity in Zimbabwe for a long time. The tendency has been to caricature these movements and to present them as “backward and unsophisticated.” Members of Apostolic and Zionist churches have been projected as conservative and their movements labelled as “sects.” However, since the late 1990s, there has been a gradual (though not decisive) shift in attitudes towards AICs. We argue that the participation of AIC groups in gospel music has contributed immensely towards the more positive response towards AICs. This chapter describes the various AIC groups that have contributed towards gospel music in Zimbabwe. It highlights the key themes they address, including eschatology, indigenous spiritual beliefs, black pride and identity and others. Essentially, the chapter contends that AIC groups have demonstrated high levels of sophistication by participating in the gospel music industry in Zimbabwe.

### **Introduction**

African Independent/Indigenous/Initiated/Instituted/International Churches (AICs) have created considerable scholarly debate. As is clear, the search for the most appropriate term to describe the phenomenon continues (Ayegbojin and Ishola 1997; Chitando 2005). The term “independent” enjoyed great currency in the 1970s and 1980s. In the

specific case of Zimbabwe, the numerous and influential writings of Marthinus “Inus” L. Daneel (for example, 1971 and 1987) gave the term “Independent Churches” an uncontested status. However, other terms have begun to gain popularity amongst scholars. Thus, references to African “Indigenous,” “Initiated” and “Instituted” Churches are to be found on book covers and titles of academic articles and theses on the phenomenon. In this chapter, we will use the umbrella, AICs, to refer to the phenomenon of religious independency in Zimbabwe.

Whereas AICs have been portrayed as “backward and unsophisticated” by the mainstream media (Chitando 2002 and Chari 2010), there has been a notable development where some AIC groups have recorded gospel music. We argue that recording gospel music has been a strategic move by AICs to contest the negative images that have dogged them in Zimbabwe. Gospel music groups from AICs have contributed to the reappraisal of the movement in the country. We contend that Zimbabwean society has undergone a quiet (though not dramatic) re-evaluation of the AIC movement. Using gospel music, we capture the change in societal attitudes towards AIC groups. We suggest that AICs are gradually but decisively moving from the periphery of Zimbabwean society.

### **Images of AICs in Zimbabwe: An Overview**

Emerging as protest religious groups and attracting the marginalized Africans during the 1930s, AICs have generally been associated with members of the lower social classes. Due to the fact that mainline churches have dominated the provision of formal education in Zimbabwe, more members of mainline churches have had greater access than members of AICs. The net effect has been that most of the leading politicians and business people in Zimbabwe have their background in missionary Christianity. However, the postcolonial government’s education policies have ensured that more members of AICs receive tertiary education and the pattern of belittling AICs is changing, albeit at a slow pace. What has taken long to change, however, are negative images of AICs in the media (see the chapter by Chari in this volume).

Colonial images of AICs tended to present these churches as “sects” formed by “barely educated Africans.” By restricting the term “church” to religious institutions that were associated with missionaries, some

scholars contributed towards the marginalization of AICs. They reserved the term “church” to the more established denominations, while using the term “sects” for AICs. As Bourdillon (1990: 5) observes, the term “sect” carries negative connotations in the academic study of religion. However, the label, “sects” has enjoyed a lot of currency in Zimbabwean newspapers, radio and television stations as a term used to describe AICs. By portraying AICs as “sects,” media practitioners are suggesting that there is a particular “standard” way of being Christian which AICs are deviating from. In this regard, “standard” Christianity is associated with mainline/mission churches and, more recently, Pentecostalism. This confirms Chari’s observation that there are certain ways of reporting that portray certain denominations as more legitimate than others. Chari (2010: 181) writes:

This attitude manifests itself in situations where the media subtly or blatantly treats certain religious groups within the Christian faith as inferior to others or as spiritually questionable. For instance, the media tends to depict African Independent Churches as suspicious and their spiritual leaders are often described as self-styled prophets or bogus prophets. On the other hand, spiritual leaders of other denominations are described as acclaimed or renowned prophets. These labels are given without justification. Moreover, the labels are assigned with the intention of legitimizing some Christian denominations, while de-legitimizing others and thereby creating negative perceptions about those who are portrayed poorly.

The dominant stereotype has been the presentation of members of AICs as less educated individuals. Apostolic movements such as the Johane Marange and Johane Masowe have endured a lot of negative publicity in the Zimbabwean media. AIC communities are projected as those who resist Western education and medicine, modernity and progress. AICs have been projected as relics from the past, while Catholics, Protestants and of late, Pentecostals, are presented as legitimate representatives of Christianity. This ideological bias extends to the use of the AIC term of respect, “*Madzibaba*” (double respect for “Father”). When the term “*Madzibaba*” is used in many conversations, it is meant to caricature the person who is being described. The overall effect has been to project “*Madzibaba*” as a conservative man who still has to come to terms with contemporary developments.

“*Madzibaba*” evokes the sense of indigenous and Christian masculinities coalescing and producing a man who demands respect and is not progressive in his approaches towards gender. In fact, the

term is often used to provoke laughter and derision. The popularity of younger and newer Pentecostal churches such as Emmanuel Makandiwa's United Family International Church (UFIC), Tavonga Vutabwashe's Heartfelt International Ministry (HIM), Uebert Angel's Spirit Embassy and Walter Magaya's Prophetic Healing Deliverance (PHD) Ministries has been due to their self-conscious representation as progressive men. Thus, "some people were ashamed of attending apostolic JMC (Johane Masowe Chishanu) and spending time in the open and seated on the grass, so opted to join the contemporary versions of Pentecostal churches such as the UFIC, HIM and Spirit Embassy" (Dodo, Banda and Dodo 2014: 7).

Popular music has generated some negative images of AICs. In the song, "*Tea Hobvu*" (Strong Tea), Zexie Manatsa caricatured AIC prophets as fake male chauvinists who specialised in consuming strong tea and buttered bread. The net effect was to suggest to Zimbabweans that the AIC movement was not a spiritual movement, but that it was preoccupied with mundane issues. In this scheme, "the prophetic session" is emptied of all seriousness and AIC prophets are portrayed as buffoons. The male AIC prophets are shown as gluttons who coerce women to give them more food on the understanding that they are "breadwinners." The net effect has been to associate "*Madzibaba*" (and, by extension, the entire AIC movement) as one big joke.

While in general the media communicated negative views of AICs, the participation of AICs in gospel music sought to counter these negative views. From the late 1990s, AICs gained ground when they began utilizing the media positively, especially through the recording of gospel music songs. When radio listeners requested tracks from AIC groups, they were basically questioning the trend of treating AICs as the Other. The popularity of tracks from AIC groups, especially during the "decade of crisis" (1998-2008) contributed towards changing attitudes towards AICs. When the general population sang along to songs from AIC groups, they were embracing the AIC cosmology and musical performances. We elaborate on this in the following section.

## AICs and Gospel Music

Whereas gospel music has been dominated by artists from the Pentecostal stable (Chitando 2002; Mapuranga and Chitando 2006), the entry of AIC groups in the sector has had the effect of broadening gospel

music performance in Zimbabwe. One of the earliest AIC gospel music groups, Vabati Jehova, was formed in 1999. The group has been quite popular, winning awards and featuring in many live shows that are broadcast on the sole national television broadcaster. Vabati VaJehova has played a significant role in the re-evaluation of AICs in Zimbabwe.

Vabati VaJehova has been path finders for AIC groups venturing into gospel music in Zimbabwe. Whereas gospel music had been dominated by fast-paced guitar sungura music by Charles Charamba and others, they popularised acappella gospel music. This infused a greater sense of somberness and seriousness in Zimbabwean gospel music. One of the major criticisms of Pentecostal gospel music has been that it is too “worldly.” The dance routines employed in Pentecostal gospel have been “appropriated” from secular music. For religious people of a more serious disposition, AIC groups brought a refreshing sense of seriousness to gospel music, especially during the crisis years.

After the turn of the new millennium and with Zimbabwe facing major socio-economic and political problems, many other AIC gospel music groups emerged. These included Vabati VeVhangeri, ZCC Mbungo Stars, Mabasa Avatumwa, Apostolic Melodies, Chiedza Chavatendi, Apostolic Holy Vibes, Mawungira eDenga, Mai Patai and others. The names of these groups confirm the preoccupation with Shona as the language of communication. Whereas some Pentecostal gospel music groups in particular employed the English language, the overwhelming majority of AIC groups used indigenous Zimbabwean languages in their music. This is a result of the emphasis on African identity in AICs. English is regarded as the language of the colonizers and as insufficient for expressing one’s deepest religious longing. However, the group, Zambuko Kuvanhu recorded some songs in English in 2010. It is important to observe that these songs are accompanied by an indigenous beat and “indigenized” English. For example, they called one of the songs “*Tembarari Homu*” (Temporary Home).

AIC gospel music groups emerged from the different AICs found in the country. Like Pentecostal gospel music groups, most AIC gospel groups were traceable to specific denominations. However, they operated with different levels of flexibility. While some groups tended to be closer to their denominations, others were more independent. For example, the ZCC Mbungo Stars and ZCC Defe Dopota Brass Band

operated from within the ZCC (see the chapter by Chimininge in this volume on the ZCC), Vabati VaJehova were more autonomous.

By recording gospel music, AIC groups were challenging the dominant narrative that portrayed them as “backward and unsophisticated.” They were showing their versatility and dynamism in an environment where they have endured negative publicity. It is important to acknowledge that due to the expansion of the Zimbabwean Diaspora (Pasura 2012), some AIC groups outside Zimbabwe have recorded gospel music. One notable group is the Masowe eChishanu UK which recorded the album, “*Yesu Ari Kushevedza*” (Jesus is Calling) in 2010. Some Zimbabwean AIC groups have been active in the United Kingdom, as well as across Europe and North America. Alongside confirming the contention that African Christianity has expanded beyond the continent, the group also demonstrates the point that AIC gospel music has been produced beyond the borders of Zimbabwe. The availability of most AIC gospel music on the Internet also confirms the point that it circulates widely. In this regard, AIC gospel music in Zimbabwe has followed Pentecostal gospel music in terms of globalization (Chitando 2011).

Whereas gospel music had been dominated by Pentecostal musicians and groups prior to 2000, the arrival of AIC groups expanded this particular genre considerably. AIC groups challenged their marginalisation and produced music which gained popular appeal. In some instances, they reproduced hymns from the mainline churches and this endeared them to many Christians who felt that this constituted a return to “old time religion.” AIC gospel music began to receive airplay on radio and television programmes, newspaper columns analysing new music accorded space to AIC gospel music and AIC music groups began to participate at gospel music shows, especially at the Harare Gardens. In addition, AIC groups such as Vabati VaJehova were quite popular at the national galas. Although the galas were introduced with a clear political goal, namely, promoting the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) (Gonye and Moyo 2012), musicians utilised the opportunities the galas presented to articulate their own agendas. In the next section we explore some of the dominant themes in Zimbabwean AIC gospel music.

## **Themes in AIC Gospel Music**

In the following sections, we examine some of the more prominent themes that are found in Zimbabwean AIC gospel music. We do concede that it is quite difficult to select prominent themes as AIC gospel music is quite diverse and has expanded since the turn of the millennium. However, the themes discussed below featured prominently in artistic products from the AIC movement.

### **Eschatology**

Our analysis of AIC gospel music in Zimbabwe shows that the Bible serves as a major source of inspiration for most of the songs. Although some members of the Johane Masowe Church do not use the Bible (Engelke 2007), the Bible is behind most of the AIC gospel songs. One of the recurring motifs is the impending end of the world where believers will be rewarded and the evil ones will be punished. Many AIC gospel music tracks have a burning sense of urgency. They call upon the hearers to abandon lives of sin and convert to Christianity.

AIC gospel music in Zimbabwe is influenced by biblical ideas relating to the end of the world. Some sections of the Gospels and the book of Revelation have graphic descriptions of the cataclysmic scenes that will characterise the end of world or the Second Coming of Christ. Bishau (2010) argued that the formation of the Johane Masowe Church was a result of millenarian concerns. He is persuaded that the Johane Masowe Church is best understood by appreciating it as a movement that emerges from strong ideas regarding the impending end of the world. Other AICs in Zimbabwe share this belief and it features strongly in AIC gospel music. Thus, references to “Jerusalem”, “heaven” and “end times” abound in AIC songs and some accompanying videos, such as Vabati Vajehova’s “*Wauya Mucheki*” (The reaper has come). The images in the video portray scenes of utter devastation and are potentially unsettling.

As we shall argue below, the emphasis on “end times” in AIC gospel music was a reflection of the socio-economic context. As most Zimbabweans faced hyperinflation, unemployment, food shortages and a high death rate due to HIV and AIDS, the notion that these were “end times” gained currency. In making this assertion, we are challenging the notion that one can make a neat delineation between music that is “political” and that which is “religious.” We contend that when AIC

composers appealed for divine intervention, they were, in fact, making a statement on the limitations of the political leaders in Zimbabwe. Although Musiyiwa (2013:233-234) offers a detailed analysis of Vabati Vajehova's "*Wawayu Mucheki*" (The reaper has come), he overlooks the fact that the hymn is, in fact, a much older composition. What is striking was its appropriation during the crisis period. An old hymn gained popularity because it addressed contemporary fears and concerns. As the quality of life in Zimbabwe depreciated rapidly, the contention that the "end times" had come became quite pronounced.

AIC gospel music placed emphasis on the impending end of the world and invited Zimbabweans to convert to Christianity. In this regard, eschatology was closely tied to evangelism. Since the end was now near, it was imperative for "*vakaipa vose*"(all the wicked ones) to convert in order to escape "*kuparadzwa*" (destruction). In this regard, the preoccupation with Pentecostal churches as the ones who are zealous about spreading the Christian message needs to be modified as AIC gospel music groups have been equally determined. They have sought to galvanise Zimbabwean Christians to lead righteous lives and to be vigilant in preparing for the impending destruction of the world.

## Traditional Beliefs

The relationship between AICs and African spiritual beliefs remains highly contentious. Have AICs failed to promote radical conversion by continuing to uphold the indigenous worldview? Have AICs demonstrated theological sophistication by reinterpreting indigenous beliefs and practices in the light of the new faith? These questions continue to surface in the study of AICs. Our analysis of AIC gospel music in Zimbabwe shows that traditional spiritual beliefs continue to feature prominently. Beliefs relating to ancestral spirits (*midzimu*), alien spirits (*mashave*), as well as witchcraft and sorcery (*uroyi*) remain critical to the AIC worldview. However, all these spirits are believed to surrender to the Holy Spirit.

An AIC gospel group, International Apostolic Faith Mission released the song, "*Pandimire Pakaoma*" (Where I stand things are difficult) which was immensely popular at the height of the Zimbabwean crisis in 2008. The persona in the song laments to God, charging that his relatives/members of lineage have denied him prosperity by using a goblin (*chikwambo*, plural *zvikambo*) to drain his blood. If people had

been wondering why he had lost weight and he was not making progress, they had to be aware that he was fighting a spiritual battle. Thus:

*Pandimire pakaoma* (Where I am standing is difficult)

*Jehova ndibatsireiwo* (Jehova please help me)

*Baba pandimire pakaoma apa* (Father, where I am standing is difficult)

*Vatsvene vanobva kudenga ndibatsireiwo* (Holy ones from heaven, please help me)

*Muponesi wangu ndibatsirei* (My saviour, please help me)

*Ini verudzi rwangu/dzinza rangu vanondigare dare* (Those from my lineage hold councils about me)

*Vane chikwambo chinondisveta ropa* (They have a goblin which draws blood from me)

*Kuonda kudai chikwambo chinondisveta ropa* (I am so thin because of the goblin which draws blood from me)

*Kusara zidzoro chikwambo chinondisveta ropa* (Only my head remains because of the goblin which draws blood from me)

The notion of *chikwambo* (goblin) is informed by the Shona religio-cultural beliefs relating to wealth acquisition and its threat to egalitarianism. As the economy was liberalised in the 1990s and more blacks became entrepreneurs, the concept of *chikwambo* became more popular. It was believed that some individuals secured the services of goblins from unscrupulous traditional healers, or they bought them from South Africa. Essentially, the goblins are thought to bring wealth to their owners at the expense of their relatives. In the song, the persona cries out for help. He feels impeded by these spiritual beings as he seeks to be viable in a tough economic environment. This shows the persistence of African spiritual beliefs in AICs.

The popularity of the song indicated the extent to which it resonated with the spiritual beliefs of the majority of Zimbabweans. Whilst modernity and globalization have influenced Zimbabweans, it is vital to acknowledge the resilience of indigenous beliefs. The song was even adapted by soccer fans when their teams were facing serious challenges on the soccer field. This demonstrates that the song captured the national mood in terms of feeling hard pressed. Indeed, many Zimbabweans described their situation as “tight.”

In “*Nyika Ino Ichatongwa*” (This world will be judged), the ZCC Mbungo group describes the impact of “*mweya yetsvina*” (evil spirits) on family relationships. In the song, evil spirits are responsible for the breakdown of relations between the mother-in-law and the daughter-law,

as well as the collapse of father-son relationship. The song captures the family tensions that ensue as a result of evil spirits. The group demonstrates its sensitivity to the Zimbabwean approach to spirituality. Many people believe that there are evil spirits that frustrate individual progress. In most instances, it is believed that such spirits are activated by relatives and they cause serious divisions, to the extent that siblings may declare that they are “no longer related.” AIC music groups, therefore, are realistic in their approach towards indigenous spirituality. They acknowledge the existence of negative spiritual forces, although they proceed to invoke the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome such evil spirits.

### **Black Pride and Identity**

Zimbabwean pride and identity have been assaulted on many different fronts. Missionary Christianity largely sought to convert the African from “darkness” to “light.” Many African beliefs and practices were criticized and conversion was supposed to be characterized by a complete loss of African identity. AIC groups challenge the wholesale dismissal of African cultures by some of the missionaries and the educated black converts. In particular, they seek to celebrate the resilience of Africans and contend that Africans are included in God’s overall plan of salvation. The heart of AIC theology and ideology is that Africa is not destined to die (Bwangatto 2012). For example, the group Chiedza ChaVatendi’s song, “*Tsitsi NeRudo*” (Mercy and Love) asserts:

*Kune murume ari kuchema* (There is a man crying)

*Ari pamuchinjikwa* (On the cross)

*Ari kuchema tsitsi* (He is crying mercy)

*Ari kuchema rudo* (He is crying love)

*Ari kuchema runyararo* (He is crying peace)

*Kuvanhu vatema* (To black people)

This song challenges the earlier evaluation of founders and leaders of AICs as “Black Messiahs” who effectively replace Christ within the movement. As the song shows, the sacrificial death of Christ is acknowledged. However, what is striking is that the man on the cross dies to bring peace to black people. Historically, black people have suffered from dehumanizing experiences such as slavery, colonialism and neocolonialism. In the song, the group seeks to mobilise blacks to realise that the sacrificial death of Christ also applies to them. We argue

that the song contributes significantly to black theology (Hopkins and Antonio 2012).

Alongside the theological and ideological insistence on the integrity of black people in some of the AIC recorded songs, the dancing routines in AIC music are deeply African in orientation. While there is a lot of innovation, AIC dances must be understood within the context of Zimbabwean dances (Asante 2000). In addition, some AIC music groups, such as ZCC Mbungo Stars recorded classic songs within their movements. The ZCC's signature tune, "*Ndire Ndire*" is inextricably intertwined with ZCC's Zimbabwean identity. It serves to set the ZCC in a class of its own, amidst competition from other Zionist churches in Zimbabwe. "*Ndire Ndire*" also serves to narrate the history of Samuel Mutendi's ZCC and celebrates his role in the formation of ZCC identity in Zimbabwe. The song narrates one of Samuel Mutendi's dreams at Chegutu in 1913 where he saw people from many nationalities bringing bundles of grass to him (Chimininge 2012).

## Old Hymns

Some AIC groups also recorded old hymns. These hymns, from both the mainline churches and older Pentecostal churches such as the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe, were quite popular. They included Chiedza Chavatendi's "*MuKristu Usaneta*" (Onward Christian soldier). This was a powerful reminder to battle-weary Zimbabweans not to give up when they faced hyperinflation, violence and loss of hope. Interestingly, the same hymn was adopted as the "song of struggle" by the larger Anglican faction of Bishop Chad Gandiya as it battled the Nolbert Kunonga faction for legitimacy. The song has a mournful tone and encourages the "Christian soldier" to take up the weapons of war to resist the enemy and to stand firm.

Different AIC groups recorded hymns that have been popular in Zimbabwean Christianity. This endeared AIC groups to their audiences as hymns are an integral part of Zimbabwean Christianity. In particular, some older Christians in conservative denominations such as the Seventh Day Adventist Church felt that the Pentecostal brand of gospel music had become "worldly," critiquing the tempo of the music and the accompanying dance routines. They felt that music should be mellow and respectful (Makahamadze and Sibanda 2008) and found AIC gospel music groups more serene. As a result, Vabati VaJehova's "*Jerusalem*,"

Dombo RaMwari's "Mira SeGamba" (Stand Firm like a Brave Person), Maungira eDenga's "Tsitsi Dzenyu Mwari" (Your Grace Lord) and Vabati VeVhangeri's "Gare Gare" (Soon and Very Soon) became quite popular.

## Theodicy

One of the most pressing questions during the Zimbabwean crisis was: "who was responsible for the suffering of the Zimbabwean people?" A second, related question was: "where was God when the nation faced the crisis?" While politicians sought to apportion blame, a popular chorus emerged from the AIC movement, "*Ndiani Aronga So?*" (Who has planned this?) It was fast, poignant but simple: the Zimbabwean crisis could not be understood outside the context of God's own plan and design. What could possibly happen without God allowing it to happen? The group, Vabati VeVhangeri recorded the song, "*Ndiani Aronga So?*" (Who has planned this?) and it enjoyed a lot of popularity on the Zimbabwean airwaves. It was in tune with the pulse of the nation as most Zimbabwean citizens sought to make sense of the crisis.

The chorus, "*Ndiani Aronga So?*" (Who has planned this?) has enjoyed a lot of popularity in Zimbabwean Christianity. It is sung on both happy and sad occasions. When the mood is celebratory, people consciously assent that only God would have allowed the occasion to come to pass. At a funeral, the same chorus is sung, reminding mourners of God's sovereignty. The chorus essentially asks the community to accept that everything happens because God would have allowed the event to take place.

The dominant narrative in Zimbabwean gospel music, including music coming from the AIC stable under discussion in this chapter, has been that the crisis was authored by God. God's sovereignty suggests that the community must accept that God's plans are inscrutable. This theme is also taken up by Vabati VeVhangeri in "*Handimbochemi*" (I will not cry). This funeral chorus has enjoyed considerable popularity in Zimbabwean Christianity, especially as many citizens succumbed to AIDS and funerals became widespread (Gundani 2007).

## Evangelism and Ecumenism

The explosive growth of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe since the 1990s might lead some to conclude that it was only Pentecostals who invested

in evangelism. An analysis of AIC gospel music shows that AIC groups were actively involved in spreading the Christian message. Various AIC groups were involved in preaching the message of conversion, calling up their fellow citizens to take up the Christian faith. Our form-critical analysis of gospel music from AIC groups shows that they addressed issues relating to the economic meltdown, political violence, death due to AIDS, the impending return of Christ and others to call upon Zimbabweans to become Christians.

Evangelism, however, has tended to promote parochialism and narrow denominationalism. Some AIC groups challenge the notion that there are some strands of Christianity that are superior to others. In 2009, Mabasa Avatumwa recorded the song, “*Mandigonera*” (You Have Done Well for Me). The song actively promoted ecumenism, suggesting that all those who preached the gospel were doing well, irrespective of their denominational identities. Thus, “*Hamuna chamandipa, hamuna chamatora. Maunza Jesu mumba mangu mandigonera. Bethsaida, VaRoma, madhikoni, mazion, mabhishopi maunza Jesu mumba mangu, mandigonera*” (There is nothing (material) that you have given me. You have not taken anything. You have brought Jesus into my house, you have done well for me. Bethsaida, Catholics, deacons, Zionists, bishops; you have brought Jesus into my house, you have done well for me).

Space considerations prevent us from unpacking the song in greater detail. However, its ecumenical thrust lies in identifying the role of different denominations (Bethsaida (Apostolic Church), Catholics and Zionists, as well as different offices (deacons and bishops) in spreading the gospel. Whereas Christianity in Zimbabwe has been characterised by denominational competition and rivalry, the song places emphasis on preaching the gospel rather than denominational affiliation. For the group Mabasa Avatumwa, the central message is that of preaching Jesus Christ (and not deriving any material benefits from evangelism). They seek to entrench ecumenism, which, for Mary N. Getui (1997:91) “...is a cultivation and governance of the spirit of family, spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood, the spirit of oneness, the spirit of community and communalit.”

## Entertainment

Our discussion of the key themes in AIC gospel music might create the impression that it has been exclusively “heavy and serious.” In fact,

some of the music has been calculated to entertain, although it might have some didactic aspects. “Samson” by Vabati VeVhangeri is an entertaining song which dramatizes the biblical Samson’s physical strength. It offers vivid but light hearted descriptions of Samson’s wrestling match with a lion. Another song, “*Jobho*” (Job) by the same group playfully recreates the story of the biblical Job and dramatizes his perpetual scratching. While the music may be associated with warnings in contexts of HIV and AIDS, it is presented in an entertaining way. The accompanying “*Jobho* dance” is characterised by mimicking scratching and other active side movements. Remixes of the “*Jobho*” song by urban groove artists show that the song reached diverse audiences. Such music gave Zimbabwean citizens some relief in a highly challenging economic context.

## Challenges

Although AIC music groups have had a notable impact on the Zimbabwean music landscape, there are two notable challenges that need to be addressed. First, whereas Pentecostal gospel music has facilitated the emergence of women gospel musicians (Chitando 2001), AIC gospel groups are almost exclusively male dominated. During the period under review, only Mai Patai had emerged as a woman leader of an AIC music group in Zimbabwe. This is a reflection of the patriarchal forces that continue to assault the AIC movement and Zimbabwean society in general. As a result, women’s participation in music has been restricted (Chitando and Mateveke 2012). AICs need to invest in promoting women’s participation in gospel music in order to promote gender justice.

Second, young people are absent in AIC gospel music performance. Whereas young people have risen to the fore in urban grooves (Bere 2008 and Kellerer 2013), they have been marginalised in AIC gospel music. There is, therefore, an urgent need for AICs to support young people to record gospel music. Zimbabwe’s population is dominated by young people. Having young people compose and distribute AIC gospel music is strategic as this will ensure the expansion of AICs. Currently, AICs are dominated by children and older people, while many young have migrated to the more “sophisticated” Pentecostal churches.

## Conclusion

AICs have not remained in a time warp since their formation in the 1930s in Zimbabwe to the present. Instead, they demonstrated high levels of innovation in various sectors. In this chapter, we have highlighted the participation of AIC groups in gospel music in the country. This has gone some way in challenging the negative perception of AICs in Zimbabwe. By availing music from AICs, they have brought the AIC worldview and theology closer to their fellow citizens. When Vabati VaJehova appear in gospel music videos or at gospel music shows putting on white Armani suits, they project a more progressive image of AICs. Even as they sing about returning to “old time religion,” by recording their music electronically, with some groups throwing in English lines liberally, AIC music groups have demonstrated their versatility by “singing new identities” in Zimbabwe.

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## African “Biblical” Christianity

Understanding the “Spirit-type” African Initiated Churches in Zimbabwe

### Introduction

African Initiated Churches (AICs) arose in Zimbabwe as a response to the success and failure of the evangelization of the country by western missionaries. A discussion of AICs demands that we pay attention to the Christian landscape in Zimbabwe from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Christian missions made real in-roads into Zimbabwe. This western evangelization saw the setting up of mainline Christianity (Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Methodist and United Methodist Churches, the Dutch Reformed Church, the Lutheran Church, the Presbyterian Church and many others), as well as classical Pentecostalism represented by the Apostolic Faith Mission. Even though Zimbabwe experienced this Christian explosion, it would appear that indigenous people remained with many unfulfilled aspirations and questions. These unfulfilled aspirations and questions explain the rise of AICs in Zimbabwe. While there are different categories of these AICs ranging from the Ethiopian, Spirit/Healing/Prophetic to Pentecostal types, this chapter focuses on the so-called spirit-type AICs. These are churches that believe and proclaim the centrality of the Holy Spirit in their lives, hence credit the Holy Spirit with extraordinary deeds within the churches and by leading prophets.

Through a socio-historical and theological approach to the sources on the rise and development of AICs in Zimbabwe, this chapter contends that these AICs can be legitimately understood as Africa’s “biblical Christianity,” since “these churches appear to have seriously attempted

to establish a biblically based religious tradition” (Gunda 2011b:136). Their adherents believe that they are the churches that most closely follow the biblical prescriptions, hence Loveness Mabhunu (2010:65) asserts; “the Bible is the primary source of most, if not all, values that regulate the practice of prophecy in AICs”. In these churches, the Bible is clearly a source of power, which grants its power to those who follow its prescriptions the most. Its power is a result of its divine origin and status. In order to develop a fuller understanding of the “biblical Christianity” assertion, this chapter will address various issues under the following sub-sections: the first section looks at methodological questions, followed by an outline of the origin and history of AICs, then the complexity of calling AICs “biblical Christianity.” The penultimate section will focus on the interconnectedness of the biblical worldview and the African worldview, two worldviews which may have opened the way for greater correlation between biblical claims and African aspirations. Some concluding observations will be given to sum up this chapter.

### **Some Methodological Issues**

In doing this study, there are essentially two major issues concerning methodology. The first relates to how I will do this study and the second concerns how the AICs use the Bible. In essence, what is my method? What is their method? To briefly answer to the first question, this study relies on socio-historical and theological approaches to data analysis. While there is data in many publications on AICs, in order to achieve the aim of this chapter the data has to be socio-historically and theologically analyzed. The socio-historical approach is an approach that understands ideas, texts, movements and practices as contingent on the social and historical condition in which such subject arises. To that extent, the key questions put forward are: how is the idea, movement or text related to the general aspiration of the society within which it arises? Is it a movement that is in agreement or disagreement with the general aspiration of that society? Subjecting the AICs to this socio-historical analysis will shed light on the significance of the Bible in the origins and development of these movements. This approach allows for a closer look at the manner in which the Bible was and continues to be understood and interpreted in these churches.

Central to the use of the theological approach is the realization that Christians in general “are never content with the world of the Bible only, but in essence seek to transform the world they abide in” (Rogerson 2000:47). This means that it is not enough to treat the Bible merely as literature. In fact, the Bible claims that it is “theological,” that its subject is God. While the Bible is certainly not a systematic theology, it is nonetheless, theological in as much as it relates the manner in which ancient Israelites as well as early Christians spoke about God in the course of their daily lives. It is for this reason that any study of the Bible among AICs must employ theological interpretation as a method. “The Bible takes God’s existence for granted and relates how the world came into being, what went wrong with it, and God’s plans for its reconstruction and ultimate salvation” (Constantelos 1999:137) and AICs believe this to be a continuing truism hence they understand the Bible to be “a normative standard for the faith, practice and their worship” (Fowl 1998:2). A theological approach, therefore, is not a method of producing a systematic theology as is suggested by disciplines such as Old Testament theology, New Testament theology or Biblical theology. A theological approach, in this study, is a method of analyzing how AICs conceive of God as they reflect on the demands of being a Christian in Zimbabwe. The Bible comes in as the basis of understanding the nature and demands of God; hence the interpretation of the Bible becomes a critical component of these churches. This approach is not only important for scholars, it is also the method that “thrives outside the walled precincts of academic biblical theology even as biblical theologians wonder how they lost their mojo” (Adam 2006:23). In short, the Bible is more important for those Christians who approach it through a theological approach through which they have found answers to their never ending existential questions.

Among AICs a canonical-theological approach to the Scriptures is widely used. By calling their approach a canonical-theological approach, I am not suggesting that the approach is systematic and well-articulated, rather this labelling is descriptive. Their reading of the Bible is canonical because these churches rely on the canonical text of the Bible. They do not resort to any other texts behind, beneath or above the written text of the Bible. It is canonical because it is limited to the canon. The second adjective suggests that their reading of the Bible, over and above the selective literalism that we often highlight, is theological. The Bible is not literature, as scholars are fond of saying: the Bible is Scripture, it is

the Word of God, and it is the Law of God. As such, all readings of the Bible assume that the center of Scripture is God. Various methods such as allegory, typology and literal interpretations may be used only for as long as they conform to this theological goal of unlocking the message of God, not to the Israelites but to contemporary believers and non-believers alike. Their approach to the Bible coupled with tangible activities of the spirit through prophets is what keeps the Bible alive, sacred and central, giving credence to their claim to being “biblical Christianity.”

### **Origins and History of AICs: An Outline and Placement of the Bible**

The origin of AICs in Zimbabwe is one area that has been dealt with by many scholars. This section does not therefore claim to add anything particularly new to the tomes that already exist. It is widely agreed among scholars that “AICs are churches founded by Africans with no missionary links, in essence these are churches founded by Africans for Africans in Africa” (Makhubu 1988:6) as a response to various factors. However, this section will place some emphasis on an issue of particular interest to this chapter, that is, the Bible. In doing this, I acknowledge that “in an attempt to explain the causes for the rise of these churches, scholars from different disciplines have come up with various theories incorporating social, political, economic and cultural factors” (Sundkler 1961:37, Anderson 2001:24-5, Ndung'u 2006:484) while guarding against the tendency to “underrate the impact of the Bible” (Ndung'u 2006:484). Adrian Hastings (1979:68) is one of the respected voices on the history of Christianity in Southern Africa and he suggests that “from 1910 to the early 1930s spirit churches began in South Africa, Nigeria and Rhodesia [Zimbabwe],” and these churches largely “emerged as the following of a prophet or group of prophets” (Gunda 2010a:41). That central to these churches was the “prophet” should be understood “within the sacramental worldview in which the African generally lives, the services of ‘religious functionaries’ or ‘religious specialists’ are critical. These are people with a proven ability to read and interpret occurrences in the supernatural realm” (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005:95). What makes this development fundamental is that while the need for “super-religious functionaries” was emanating from the traditional worldview, this traditional worldview had been seriously undermined by the missionary

supported western worldview, which apparently did not appreciate this kind of religious functionary. This battle of worldviews is what led Desmond Tutu (1973:42-3) to argue;

Those who have denigrated things African would probably be surprised to discover that the African way of life, his worldview, his thought forms, are those, not only of the Old Testament but those of the entire Bible, since the New Testament is based so firmly on the Old Testament.

I am not at all suggesting here that the social, economic and political factors in the rise of AICs should be ignored; I am, however, suggesting that the religious reasons are much more important than hitherto acknowledged by many scholars. The prominence of religious reasons will also explain why the Bible becomes a critical factor in this historical development.

This became especially the case since the rise of AICs occurred concurrently with the rise of translated vernacular Bibles in many African states. “The vernacular scriptures provided an independent standard of reference that African Christians were to seize on” (Barrett 1968:129). Prior to these translations, indigenous Christians relied on the missionaries’ readings of the Bible, and as is now fairly understood, the missionaries did actually withhold some parts of the contents and distorted some of the things they reported from the Bible. They chose to share only some sections and leave out others (Kalilombe 2006:443). While social, economic and political factors could have been better fought by rejecting Christianity, the religious factors acknowledged the supremacy of Christianity hence had to be addressed by adopting and adapting the Christianity of the missionary. The resource that could allow this process was especially the Bible because it “provides a rich repertoire of inspiring, empowering stories and images through which believers can redefine themselves” (Maxwell 2005:20). These inspiring stories and images became readily available once the Bible had been translated into vernacular languages. Reading the translated Bible; “African Christians began to detect a basic discrepancy between missions and the scriptures on what were to them the major points of conflict, namely the traditional customs being attacked by the missions” (Mbiti 1986:30). To that extent Frans Verstraelen (1998:82) is right when he writes

Once Africans had the Bible at their disposal in their own vernacular languages; they made a number of discoveries. These can be summarized by their finding out that there were many things in the Bible that made

sense to them, but were not communicated to them because they were played down or overlooked by the missionaries from the West.

The African discoveries from the Bible were such that the Bible ceased to speak about the ancient Israelites. The Bible actually was speaking about and to contemporary Africans; those who were reading the Bible were the audience implied in the text. The Bible was then understood as a record of covenants, promises, pledges, and commitments between God and his chosen. This was not just a record of covenants and commitment to others in the past: so it was not primarily a historical document at all, it was and is a contemporary document (Gifford 2009:174). This realization gave birth to the religious protests that led to the rise of the AICs. The Bible, especially the translated Bible, became the major driving force in the rise of AICs alongside the prophetic revelations received by the leading prophet-type figures who led these movements from the beginnings.

### A “Biblical” Christianity: Possibilities and Complexities

Once the position of the Bible in the life of AICs is agreed upon as outlined above, it becomes relatively viable to think of AICs as “biblical” Christianity. While this is possible, as I shall attempt to demonstrate here, I am equally aware of the complexities of labeling any strand of Christianity as “biblical”. There are two possible ways in which one could explain the meaning of “biblical,” that is, it could be used to mean something that is confirmed or sustained by any part of the Bible or it could mean something that is confirmed or sustained by the entirety of the Bible. Of these two, Christians in general and denominations in particular tend to make claims that assume confirmation from the entirety of the Bible. In essence, however, it would seem that most claims are supported by some part of the Bible and not the entire Bible. That AICs form some form of “biblical” Christianity is implied in observations such as that the entire movement of AICs across Africa takes on the aspect of a drive to recover a more biblically based religion (Barrett 1968). This was observed especially when these movements were compared to western missionaries’ led de-nominations. However, we must quickly agree with Gifford (2002:180) in noting that “the claim to be simply ‘biblical’ requires careful scrutiny. Normally it masks an attempt to construct a theory out of a few texts, which is then fathered on ‘the Bible.’” The claim to being “biblical” can be a dangerous claim,

similar to phrases such as “the Bible says...” In response to such claims, Leonard Hodgson (1957:12) cautioned;

As one who has been a professional teacher of theology for forty-three years, I now publicly declare my hope that no pupil of mine will ever be guilty of using the expression: ‘The Bible says...’ Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, when that expression is used, it means the speaker has found some passage which he/[she] quotes as authority for the position he/[she] is maintaining, regardless of the fact that those who disagree with him/[her] may find others which support their views. In the hundredth case its use may be more deserving of respect: it may be based on a study of the Bible as a whole, and the words may be intended to mean that what is being said is in accordance with... ‘the Bible view of life’. Even so the phrase is misleading, and its use is to be discouraged.

I am, therefore, fully aware of the dangers of making claims to the effect that something is “biblical.” If by “biblical” we only mean that which is attested to by the entire Bible, we may as well suggest that there is nothing that is “biblical”. However, I remain tempted and convinced that the same claim can relatively explain the nature of AICs. I will briefly outline the basis for making this claim on their behalf.

One of the reasons why these AICs can be seen as biblical is because “these movements thrive on biblical traditions [and such] close connections between the legendary births of Johane Masowe [founders in general] and the biblical figure, John the Baptist, that Johane Masowe alleges he is a replica of” (Bishau 2010:424-5). The founders of these movements cease to be the ordinary boy next-door as they join the long list of biblical figures. Names of biblical prophets such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah are prominent names of contemporary prophets among these spirit-type AICs giving the impression that the Bible is a manual that is closely followed in ordering their life. Indeed, AICs use “Bible verses to justify their practices, and found new prohibitions there that were taken literally, from the Old Testament in particular” (Anderson 2001:32). As Anderson observes here, not only do these churches take names from biblical figures, they have equally adopted practices and taboos from some biblical texts especially from the Levitical laws (Gunda 2011a:132). That AICs are biblical has always been taken as a way of contrasting them from mission churches which are “widely accused of neglecting the Holy Spirit or in some cases even suppressing the work of the spirit” (Daneel 1987 100, Anderson 2001:33, Gunda 2007:229-246). Without taking anything away from mission churches, there is a sense in which “the growth of these AICs should be

seen as the result of a proclamation of a relevant message, an authentically indigenous response to the Bible" (Anderson 2001:34). The AICs, therefore, are a manifestation of "biblical" Christianity since they took little from Christian tradition and history and relied heavily on the translated text of the Bible.

The dependence of these churches on the Bible has led to one of the most popular dictums of the last decades, that is, the "Bible is an African book." Several claims have been made to the effect that the African worldview is the same as the "biblical worldview(s)", such that the story of the Israelites, Jews and Early Christians is continued on the African continent, especially from the period of colonialism to the present" (Gunda 2011a:14). The story of the Bible is not seen as an ancient story that was concluded; rather, the story is seen as having been started a long time ago and continues in the present. This explains why African Christians "come to the Bible armed with questions arising out of their time and circumstance" (Dickson 1984:142) implying that the questions we bring to the Bible are questions on issues that we must put into practice. In the history of Christianity, despite contemporary misgivings about the relevance of allegory as a method of biblical interpretation, allegorizing has been a predominant exercise "because allegorizing turned everything in the Bible that was particular and historical into something more general and immediately applicable" (Kugel 2007:19). Among AICs, the interpretation to which the Bible has been subjected was geared towards finding "ways in which they could translate the Bible to something pragmatic that could be lived" (Gunda 2011a:10-1). AICs have attempted to make themselves some "biblical" communities following the prescriptions they extract from some texts of the Bible from both the Old and New Testaments.

The active pursuit of a biblical lifestyle among disenchanted African Christians who flocked to join AICs is the reason why Gunda (2011a:12) contends that "the Bible has survived for close to three millennia because of many reasons, chief of which [being] the availability of some people who have vowed to "live according to its teachings" because it is "sacred".". These churches continue to live in a world that is dependent on the guidance of the spirits and not scientific explanations hence as Patrick Kalilombe (2006:447) writes;

In order to interpret and apply to life what is being taken in, they have such potent tools as *acting*, *retelling* in their own words, or *responding* through gestures or emotion-filled expressions. Through these appropriate methods,

messages and instructions are passed around, selected, interpreted and evaluated, and then assimilated so that they influence people's lives.

It is because of this reverence of the Bible that adherents of these churches accuse “mainline Christians [for being] ‘not biblical’ because they do not take seriously divine and demonic interventions and apparitions that fill the Old Testament. They ‘do not believe in miracles’ because they regard the stories of Elijah, Elisha and Jonah as unhistorical, and do not seriously expect to replicate New Testament miracles today” (Gifford 1998:329). All these aspects of the biblical narrative are lived in AICs, giving credence even if somewhat tentative, that these churches are indeed a manifestation of an African “biblical” Christianity. In this “biblical” Christianity, “the Bible became an independent source of authority apart from the European missionaries” (Anderson 2001:31).

### **The Bible in the African Worldview; the African Worldview in the Bible**

One of the central claims made by AICs and scholars who have studied them is the interconnectedness of the Bible and the African worldview, such that, in some instances “the use of the Old Testament as a manual for daily practice is readily observable from the practices themselves” (Gunda 2011b:132). This is especially pronounced in these churches because “Africans hear and see a confirmation of their own cultural, social and religious life in the life and history of the Jewish people as portrayed and recorded in the pages of the Bible” (Mbiti 1986:26). In other words, by living according to the dictates of the Old Testament, Africans must simply remain Africans. The demands on their lives are not foreign to their own traditional worldview. The enchantment of the African worldview, the spirits that affect, effect and infect everyday life, the individuals who have been bestowed with abilities to enter into the sphere of spirits are all retained in this African manifestation of “biblical” Christianity. This Christianity has echoes of traditional religion, which “dramatizes its unity in the universal appeal to the spirits that animate all of nature. Humans, stones, trees, animals, lakes, rivers, and mountains are conjoined in one grand movement toward the continuation of life” (Asante and Mazama 2009:xxii). We are talking here of worldviews that give eminence to spirits whether bad or good.

There are various ways in which the biblical worldview and the African worldview are married into a single unity that stabilizes the AICs as both African and Christian. Naming churches was one such issue, while African Christians were exposed to names such as the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Church, Lutheran Church, Dutch Reformed Church, Methodist Church and so forth, these names were not in essence “biblical.” Among Africans, as in many other societies, “names are not merely convenient labels used to distinguish people. Names are often symbols laden with meaning” (Chitando 1998:24), hence the names given to churches became a reason for labeling them “unbiblical.” In order to counter this, biblical names are normally chosen for these churches such as, Paul Apostolic Church, Bethsaida Apostolic Church, Followers of Jesus Christ Apostolic Church, Bible Apostolic Church, The Miracle of God Apostolic Church and many others (Gunda 2010:44) are therefore chosen. From the research done by Gunda (2010:45-7) it seems the New Testament-inspired names dominate in these churches, covering prominent figures, events and places in the New Testament. While the names of these churches are largely New Testament inspired, “the practices and beliefs appear to be dependent on the Old Testament more than the New Testament. There is no denying that the New Testament is important in these churches, as seen in the idea of the Holy Spirit and the belief in Christ as saviour. However, the daily life of adherents to these churches is governed more by the laws and injunctions of the Old Testament” (Gunda 2011b:134). Indeed “these churches stand far away from Martin Luther’s “Justification by faith alone” and apparently have adopted James’ “faith without works is dead” perspective” (Gunda 2011b:143). The Old Testament is critical in moulding a work-based-faith, “a faith that is sufficiently bold will produce evident this-worldly results. How can you believe in God if you do not see the results of your faith?” (Freston 2005:42). This belief is critical in understanding the demand for miracles among African Christians, a service provided by prophets.

Another way of looking at the correlation between the African worldview and the biblical worldview is by considering the institution of prophecy. According to Marthinus Daneel (1980:23), “in the Shona spirit-type churches, the prophetic office finds expression both in the reformed sense of the word of God being preached and in the Old Testament sense of revelations and divine communications being transmitted to the wider body of believers by individuals with special

prophetic gifts." The latter sense is more prominent among AICs prophets than the former, which is normally the interpretation of "prophetic ministry" given by mainline churches (Gunda 2006:20-1). In spirit-type AICs, "the idea of prophets is greatly inspired by Old Testament prophetism, contemporary prophets adopt names of OT prophetic figures, they are masters of prediction and they divine spiritual causes of misfortunes" (Gunda 2010:48-9). In these contemporary prophets, one is send back to the time of Elijah and Elisha, an era when the extraordinary was the mark of the presence of the living God of Israel. The same is true of the miraculous stories of Jesus and the Apostles in the New Testament, which are retold not to inform adherents of what happened in the past but to give them hope of what can happen to them today. In both worlds, the need for individuals who commuted between the spirit world and the world of the living was obligatory. It was not a question of whether society wanted them or not, these individuals were indispensable. With most mainline churches having done away with these religious functionaries, AICs made sure one could be a Christian and still receiving the service of such figures who clearly rivaled the traditional diviners (Gunda 2007:229-246). It is in this context that one can agree with the contention that;

Prophetism appears to me to be a perennial phenomenon of African life, and the basic operative element in it seems to be personal in character. Whether in relation to or independently of events or developments in society, the individual endowed with a striking personality and the ability to impose his will on others, believing himself, and believed by others to be a special agent of some supernatural being or force, will emerge from time to time and secure a following. Powers traditionally credited to such persons, of healing, of revealing hidden things, predicting the future, cursing and blessing effectually, etc, will be attributed to him whether he claims them or not...Such things... are facts of life and have their effects on African society (Baeta 1962:6-7).

In all this, "the Bible is used as though it transmits some mystical power which makes things to happen...the Bible is treated as though it transmits a power which will scare away or even destroy the evil powers responsible for the suffering the person is experiencing. The Bible is more than a text; it is a religio-magical symbol of God's presence and power" (Ndung'u 2006:489-90). What the Bible records as having happened before can be repeated today with the right faith and intermediary, it is not simply a text, it is equally an object. It works both opened and closed.

Looking at the worldviews, it is apparent that “the Old Testament was of particular interest because it resonated with much of what was important within an African outlook on life: the importance of fertility and sexuality, the place of ancestors, polygamous practice, the importance of land and a host of other cultural and religious similarities” (Anderson 2001:32, Clarke 2006:5, Ndung’u 2006:486). This close relationship in the worldviews is then seen in the manner in which practices such as *kuuchika* (a practice of divining for barren women to conceive) become a central concern to prophets. Infertility of women is understood as the work of evil spirits that seek to frustrate the God-ordained duty to procreate. It is in the same context that one can argue that “male domination is based on their reading of the Old Testament traditions and is further endorsed by St. Paul’s teaching on the role of women in the Church 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, 1 Timothy 2: 8-15” (Ndung’u 2006:491). Practices and beliefs are biased towards the dominance of men. This situation is taken as contrary to “the New Testament [which] presents women as ecclesial vanguards and progenitors of salvation. Jesus exalted the position of women” (Mabhunu 2010:68). Since Jesus’ exaltation of women was the exception of his time, it is possible to retain the argument that in both worldviews, women were generally seen as second class citizens, whose major function was making babies and keeping the house. Polygamy was such a critical issue in the rise of these churches that the Bible had to be invoked to license it:

The emphasis on monogamy was dressed as a biblical imperative yet as the Constitution of the Zion Christian Church (ZCCMutendi) of Ezekiel Mutendi expounds on the subject, it directly challenges the missionary reading of the Bible on that subject based on some discoveries made in the Bible: The Church members are not bound strictly to marry only one wife, nor did God blame those who married more than one wife; Lamek, Abraham, Jacob, David and Solomon [...] We are irrational if we think that monogamy is a way of preventing sin from entering the family according to Christian experience. God married Adam, the first man, to one wife, through whom sin penetrated into the family. This we write to some who think that marrying many wives is the gateway of sin in the family [...] If we read these books (II Sam. 5:12; [I] Chro. 14:3; I Sam. 1:2; Judg. 8:30; 12:8; Isa. 4:1), we shall have wisdom to know what God wants and what he does not want, because all wisdom is found in the Bible (Daneel 1971:499).

In the search for political mileage, Obvious Vengeyi (2011:351,362) argues that “all over Africa, political elites make use of religious

communities for purposes of mobilizing voters, creating clienteles or organizing constituencies" and in the same vein observed that "[Robert] Mugabe cite[d] the biblical basis for supporting polygamy when saying 'We will not force people into monogamous marriages. It's there even in the Bible. Solomon was not only given wealth but many wives.'" While it could have been easy to support polygamy on the basis that our forefathers practiced it and that it served them well, African Christians turned to the Bible for justification. Turning to the Bible was a sure way of deflecting criticism because what is in the Bible cannot be evil, was the understanding. What is apparent from this section is that while "western missionaries believed in the *content* of the Bible, they did not usually see any *continuity* or connection between the biblical context and the present African one; [however] this was a feature that Africans were quick to discover and proclaim, especially after the translation of the Bible into the vernacular" (Hastings 1994 527-9). African readers of the Bible saw their own worldview as the worldview of the Bible.

### **Concluding Observations**

For close to a century now AICs have been part and parcel of Zimbabwe's religious landscape, and from the evidence of their activities in urban, peri-urban and rural areas, these churches appear to have fully established themselves as permanent features of Zimbabwe. Unlike Pentecostal churches, the spirit-type AICs have largely been frowned upon by other Christians and even scholars for being backward. Other Christians accuse them of smuggling traditional religion into the church while scholars have tended to consider them unsystematic since their leaders are not trained. It is true that among scholars;

The Bible is seen primarily as an ancient document under the control of specialists and therefore remote from the concerns of contemporary life. In this perspective, biblical interpretation tends to be treated as a forbiddingly difficult attempt to find a way to leap across the great chasm of time that separates the present from the biblical era. The enormous effort thought to be required for this dampens the traditional Christian habit of reading the Bible spontaneously and experiencing one's life directly mirrored in its pages. This can have a desolating effect on preaching. Classic Bible stories of patriarchs and kings that have guided generations of Christians tend to fade from the preachers' imaginations as they are bombarded by scholars with questions of historical veracity, textual complexity, and obscurity of original intention (Harrisville and Sundberg 1995:11).

This understanding is clearly opposed to the manner in which the Bible is understood by AICs adherents, for whom the Bible is contemporary and valid as a manual for daily living. In these churches, there is no question on whether the Bible can be applied today or not. The question is how adherents should apply the Bible in their lives. Since this understanding and need to “live the Bible” is so central to these AICs, it would appear that these churches are better understood as religious protest movements against the rationalized religion of mainline churches. The Bible provided the basis of the religious ideas that have come to characterize faith, practice and spirituality in these churches. Through a canonical-theological reading of the Bible, these churches have established communities that are the closest Zimbabwe has seen to “ancient biblical communities.”

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*Molly Manyonganise*

## African Independent Churches

### The Dynamics of their Political Participation in Zimbabwe

#### Introduction

This chapter analyses African Independent Churches (AICs) and their political participation in Zimbabwe. It traces the history of political participation of these churches in a bid to reveal their contribution to the politics of the country. What this chapter disputes is the notion that AICs have been apolitical. This has also been disputed by Chitando (2002:1) who argues that some scholars have a tendency of isolating the political appropriation of religion from the religious critique of politics. From his point of view, there is need to appreciate that religion and politics influence each other in a myriad of ways, some blatant and others subterranean. In keeping with historical trends throughout the various epochs gone by, the church found itself inevitably as part of the ingredients in the melting pot of contemporary politics (Banana, 1996:144). African Independent Churches are no exception, hence, the need to take a closer look at how the churches have been contributing to politics in Zimbabwe. I have decided to use the term African Independent Churches knowing fully well that there are different terminologies that are used to refer to these churches namely: African initiated churches, African indigenous churches, African instituted churches and African international churches. Recently, some scholars have tended to refer to these churches as Apostolic groups. An in-depth analysis of these terminologies is beyond the scope of this paper.

Basically, the paper will look at among other issues the relationship between politics and the emergence of African independent churches, their role in the liberation struggle as well as in the Zimbabwean

transition; it will also discuss whether AICs are being used by politicians to further their agendas.

### **The Relationship between Politics and the Emergence of AICs**

The emergence of African Independent Churches on the African continent is closely linked to the rise of African nationalism. African Christians noticed that their experiences in the church were not very different from what their brothers and sisters outside of church circles were experiencing. Chitando (2004:121) concurs with the above view when he says that:

The emergence of AICs in the region was also tied to the nationalist awakening. Colonial regimes were wary of the brazen confidence of African prophets who asserted the right of blacks to worship openly and unhindered. Many colonial administrators were worried about the spontaneity characterizing AICs, rightly fearing that the Holy Spirit could blow in the direction of armed resistance. Prophetic utterances on the integrity of blacks coincided with the nationalist cry that Africa belonged primarily to Africans.

However, Daneel (1987:129) notes that in Zimbabwe, the AICs “reticence with regard to national and party politics was conspicuous.” He, however, agrees that in their preaching, the AICs sympathized with the Black struggle for political power and Black nationalist sentiments. This was despite the fact that the churches shunned active political participation. For example, Mutendi and other Zionist leaders were critical of active political participation. In April 1965, at a church service in Zion city, Mutendi appealed to his followers not to join the Black political parties (Daneel, 1987:129). From Daneel’s point of view, Mutendi’s actions should be understood in the context of a church leader who wanted to protect his movement from state authorities since he was aware that the CID were watching him. Despite all this, Chitando (2004:120) notes that independence from white racism, paternalism and oppression is a salient feature of the AIC movement in Southern Africa. Mai Chaza, the founder of the Guta RaJehovha church also tried to be apolitical. However, Ranger (1967:381) posits that:

Despite Mai Chaza’s own attempt to keep out of political activity, her movement was rapidly infused with notions linked to the Shona religious world of the nineteenth century and with millenarian expectations. Her followers believed her to call forth voices from the air, from rocks, from trees, even from the Zimbabwe ruins themselves. They organized

themselves into khaki uniformed troops and expected the aid of ‘spirit soldiers’.

Such mass emotions were later to find political expression in the political parties that were formed. Ranger (*ibid*) clearly explains that the black political parties made use of the influence of independent church leaders as well as that of renowned African members of the mission churches.

### **The Role of AICs in the Liberation Struggle**

Daneel (1987:130) notes that during the war of liberation, AICs did not openly join the guerillas or always support them. The freedom fighters detested the object of worship (Jesus) in AIC churches since they viewed him as the God of the whites who had oppressed the Black people for so long and were the reason why they were in the war. As such, they forced AIC members to burn their Bibles. Those that refused to comply were killed.

This analysis by Daneel reveals that there was no systematic mobilization for the struggle by AICs. Probably this was due to the absence of a coordinating body representing AICs like there was for Catholics in the name of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP). This, therefore, should help explain the varied responses offered by the churches towards the struggle for independence. For example, while some church leaders supported the fighters, there were some who were against it or who hesitated to openly support them. On the whole, Daneel (1987:131) concludes that:

Fundamentally, [the AIC church leaders] identified with their people’s struggle for independence and power. Some bishops expressed admiration for the way their “young men” (*vakomana*) a popular name for bush fighters managed to vanish (*nyangarika*) when government troops tried to hunt them down. At the same time, they were reserved and cautiously critical about the action which jungle fighters undertook against white churchmen and their own followers.

Certain leaders from AICs viewed freedom fighters to be their ‘Moses’ sent to liberate them from the oppression of the whites. One AIC member reminisced how they used to sing in their church every time they were praying for the fighters. The song goes thus:

Yasvika nguva yevana valsaeri,  
yekuti vapise zvidhinha nouswa x2  
Chorus: Vangani vachabudirira

Vachabudirira x3  
Vangani kuti tiende  
(The time has come for the children of Israel,  
to burn bricks with grass x2)  
Chorus (How many will succeed)  
Will succeed x3  
How many so that we can go).

This song reflected on the oppression (slavery) of the black people by the colonial regime. It was a call for perseverance from the members of the churches until such a time as they would come out of the impossible situation. Such songs enabled members to reflect upon the hardships that were a result of European colonialism and invoked the emotions of members some of whom joined the liberation struggle. Thus, African Independent Churches also became rallying points at which nationalistic sentiments were echoed through song and sermon. Like all other Zimbabweans, such members looked forward to a time when the settler government would be overthrown. This cry for liberation found its parallels in the Bible (the book of Exodus) in the story of the Israelites who had to endure years of oppression under the Egyptians. God had to send Moses to liberate his people. With such an understanding, these church leaders mobilized their members to offer moral as well as material support for the fighters. There were times when AIC gatherings became hiding places for the fighters. For example, a member of the AIC recalled how in 1978, freedom fighters who were fleeing from state soldiers in Mhondoro Ngezi, came at their gathering and pleaded with the men who were in their white garments to surrender to them the garments so that they could pretend they were part of the church when the soldiers would arrive. When the soldiers finally arrived, one of the freedom fighters was the one preaching and the whole congregation was shouting 'Amen'. As a result, they were not exposed (Interview with an AIC member in Mhondoro Ngezi). This clearly demonstrates that during the struggle AIC gatherings also acted as safety nests for the fighters. Apart from this, freedom fighters also depended on the prophetic gift of AIC prophets to foretell them about future events and battles. While this has not been largely documented, interaction with those who used to prophesy during the liberation struggle has revealed that freedom fighters also depended on their prophecies (Interview with Mr Tapfumaneyi Macheche in Mhondoro Ngezi). Thus, at the dawn of independence, it was not surprising that some members of AICs joined

the rest of the nation to celebrate not as people who had been bystanders during the war but as those whose who had strove also to do their part in making sure the journey to ‘Canaan’ (Zimbabwe) was a reality. Hence, while Daneel’s assessment about the attitudes of AICs towards the liberation struggle may to a certain extent be true, it is reflective of what transpired at the beginning of the struggle. These attitudes seem to have changed as the struggle progressed. As such the contributions of these churches need to be noticed and appreciated.

### **AICs in the Zimbabwean Transition**

After the attainment of independence, AICs like all the other churches withdrew from actively participating in the political arena. Their business became more religious than political. The reason for this withdrawal could be attributed to the fact that the war was now over. The liberation war had been concentrated in the rural areas which was the stronghold of AICs. When the war ended, it also closed the churches’ access to active politics as the arena for such politics shifted to urban areas.

However, as the years went by, Zimbabwean cities and towns began to witness an increased presence of AIC members (Gunda 2010). More and more of these churches mushroomed across the nation. Even to this day they have become a common phenomenon to the extent that it is no longer possible to ignore their growth and influence over the socio-religious as well as the political spheres of Zimbabwe as a nation. It is important to note that members of AICs are not isolated entities but are part and parcel of the Zimbabwean populace. In this case, they were in the same manner affected by the degeneration of the economy as all the other people. From the late 1990s, members of AICs were caught up in the socio-economic as well as the political crises that ensued in the country. It was no longer possible for churches to only focus on religious issues. The emergence of powerful opposition political parties in Zimbabwe could not but help to sow divisions within the Christian family. Churches were divided on partisan lines. While some were in support of the ruling party (ZANU PF), others were in support of the opposition. The majority of mainline churches came out strong against the government of the day.

What is interesting in the above scenario is the fact that ZANU PF applauds those that were on its side while castigating those against it.

Chitando (<http://www.osisa.org/openspace/zimbabwe/prayer>) notes very well that representatives of African Independent churches have openly come out in support of President Robert Mugabe. Vengeyi (2011:355) concurs with Chitando when he says that after 2000, *mapositori* became popular with ZANU PF as they constitute a ready and dependable support base. When the late Border Gezi (himself a member of Johanne Masowe weChishanu church) was ZANU PF's political commissar, a new phenomenon developed in Zimbabwean politics. The nation began to notice an increased visibility of AIC members especially those of Johanne Masowe weChishanu. They were and still are brought in to attend national events such as the burial of heroes, Independence Day celebrations, Heroes Day commemorations among others (Manyonganise and Chirimuuta, forthcoming). Apart from this they also offered support for the controversial land reform programme of 2000. For them land redistribution would entail economic emancipation of the blacks in Zimbabwe. Thus, salvation for these churches is not confined to the religious domain only but encompasses the religious, political and economic emancipation (Chitando 2004:122). Thus, with the western countries and some mainline churches castigating the government for the 'chaotic' land reform programme, Mugabe found comfort in the support of his own indigenous churches. Gunda (2010) cited in Chitando (<http://www.osisa.org/openspace/zimbabwe/prayer>) notes that:

Mugabe' rhetoric on reclaiming the land for the black masses and his emphasis on the integrity of African culture appeals to leaders of African Initiated churches (AICs)..... Leaders such as Archbishop Paul Mwazha of the African Apostles belong to this category of Mugabe supporters. They find his resistance to imperialism in all its forms compelling.....

Chitando (2002:11) also notes that:

From February 2000, the Johanne Masowe weChishanu indigenous church began to receive extensive and favourable press coverage because its leader had declared Mugabe to be God's chosen instrument to bring the land back to its rightful owners.

Such prophetic utterances were blind to the violent atrocities that were being committed as the land was being reclaimed for the blacks, for example, the murders, rapes and psychological torture were nothing to talk about. This AIC failed to condemn these evils despite a lot of media coverage. Madzibaba Nzira of Johanne Masowe weChishanu actually claimed that he had a vision during the liberation struggle in which God

showed him Mugabe parcelling out land to ululating land-hungry peasants (Chitando, 2002:11). Despite these supportive prophetic pronouncements, the land reform programme had a lot of negative effects. It resulted in the withdrawal of donor support upon which Zimbabwe had depended for a long time. In the years that followed after the programme, agricultural output declined and the majority of Zimbabweans faced hunger. The political situation in the country was not conducive enough for people to freely express their concerns. In such a scenario, the members of AICs sought to express their discontent through song.

### **AICs: Singing their Pain during the Economic Downturn**

The economic turmoil that Zimbabwe went through from the late 1990s to early 2009 led AICs to reflect seriously on their condition. Zimbabwe's political turf has been closed to the common man and it has not been easy to openly voice one's political thoughts. Given such a scenario, African independent churches chose to register their protest and despair through song. The following are some of the songs that became very popular in AIC circles during the economic crisis:

*Jobo muranda, muranda wababa* (Job is the servant of Father)  
*Jobo muranda, muranda* (Job is the servant, servant)  
*Jobo muranda, muranda* (Job is the servant, servant)  
*Muranda wababa* (servant of Father)  
*Ndichauya ikoko, ikoko baba* (I will come there, there father)  
*Ndichauya ikoko, ikoko* (I will come there, there)  
*Ndichauya ikoko, ikoko* (I will come there, there)  
*Ikoko baba* (there father)

In this song, AICs were reflecting on their suffering and like Job they were suffering in righteousness. Their desire to go to the heavenly places where their God dwells can be seen as an element of escapism. They were sending a message to the government of the day that they were no longer comfortable staying in the land due to the level of suffering they were going through. The other song that became popular goes thus:

*Kana zvarema x2* (when it becomes hard)  
*Daidzai Jesu* (Call upon Jesus)  
*Ndiye mutungamiri wakanaka* (He is the good leader)  
*Kana zvarema x2* (when it is hard)  
*Daidzai Jesu* (Call upon Jesus)  
*Ndiye mutungamiri ane rudo* (He is the leader with love)

When taken at face value, this could just be regarded as a general song but it has a lot of political connotations. AICs were calling upon their members to remove their trust from political figures who were expected to bring solutions to the hardships that they were going through but seemed to have failed. These leaders had failed them so they were not good leaders and they had proved to be devoid of love. Hence, generally, this is a comparative (pitting the national leaders and Jesus) song.

At the height of the hyper-inflationary period, they came with the following song:

*Sirivheri nendarama zvichaparara* (Silver and gold will be destroyed)

*Ahe nhai baba musatikanganwe* (Ahe oh father, don't forget us)

*Tadzungaira nenyika ino, musatikanganwe* (We are walking up and down, don't forget us)

*Ahe nhai baba musatikanganwe* (Ahe oh father don't forget us)

In this song, the AICs were spreading the message of the end times to the nation. While money had proved to be the cornerstone of many lives, it had just been proven that people could not depend on it totally. The hyperinflationary environment had pointed to the fulfillment of scripture and was reflecting the signs of the times. Hence, people should ask God to remember them.

## **African Independent Churches and the Harmonised Elections of March 2008**

It cannot be disputed now that most of the members of African Independent churches live in the rural areas. Up to the harmonized elections of March 2008, rural areas had been perceived as ZANU PF strongholds. However, the results of this election showed a changing trend in ZANU PF's rural support. Quite a sizeable number of rural constituencies were taken by the opposition. The loss by ZANU PF in the 2008 elections could be an indication that the majority of the AIC membership have crossed over to the opposition. For the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), this could have meant that these churches were a new field of support that needed careful nurturing. In this case, the competition to attend AIC gatherings by both parties should be understood as a way of trying to garner the support of the churches that have enjoyed large numbers of membership. As Vengeyi (2011:360) puts it, "it is therefore not naïve to postulate that the party that gets the

approval of these churches (together with traditional chiefs) especially their leaders is guaranteed of electoral victory.”

After the March 2008 elections, African Independent church members were not spared in the violence that ensued. They participated in the violence both as perpetrators and victims. In Mhondoro Ngezi, Dadirai Chipiro who was a member of the Zion Christian church was murdered for having a husband who was the ward chairperson of the MDC-T party (the husband had since fled his home). In Mashonaland Central, it was reported that two MDC activists were ex-communicated from the Johanne Masowe Apostolic Church on the basis that they openly supported the opposition party ([www.kubatana.net/docs/hr/zpp-summary-hr-...](http://www.kubatana.net/docs/hr/zpp-summary-hr-...)). Reports from most areas around the country reveal that after the 2008 harmonised elections members of AICs were also subjected to torture.

Investigations that have been done after the formation of the Government of National Unity have shown that some AIC leaders are coercing their members to support ZANU PF. Investigations by Zimbabwe Briefing on three apostolic sects in late 2010 and early 2011 reveal that they are using President Robert Gabriel Mugabe to represent the Angel Gabriel. Three different preachers were quoted encouraging their members during preaching that they should support Robert Mugabe (<http://relzim.org/news/926>). On the other hand, Paul Mwazha also joined the band-wagon of ZANU PF politicians in castigating the west for imposing sanctions on Zimbabwe. When everything has been said and done one is left wondering why AICs support appears to be crucial for Zimbabwean political parties? If the postulation by Vengeyi (above) is correct, could it be further from the truth to assume that these churches are being used by politicians for political expediency?

### **AICs: Sacrificial Lambs at the Altar of Political Expediency?**

After the creation of the Government of National Unity in 2009, ZANU PF and the MDC stampeded to attend AIC gatherings. Vengeyi (2011:352) notes that President Mugabe and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai in 2010 tried to outdo each other in attending Mapositori churches. On 24 April 2010 Tsvangirai visited the Johanne Marange Apostolic church while Robert Mugabe visited the same church on 18 July 2010. We are then left to wonder why this church in particular. The only feasible explanation is that the Johanne Marange Apostolic church

is the largest in Zimbabwe with an estimated number of well over 500,000 internationally (Jules-Rosette, 1997:159) . It is also common knowledge that numbers count in elections. The Johanne Marange church is also one church that is considered to have members that are not only ‘unsophisticated’ but ‘backward’ due to their attitude towards education and western medicine. As such it could be true that such members are viewed to be gullible, that is, they are easily swayed by any wave of propaganda without subjecting the propaganda to any critical analysis. When Mugabe visited the church, he wore their church robes and held their rod. A President ‘stooping’ so low, for what reason? This question was asked by many who saw him on television and in newspapers. But could Mugabe be that dumb? What seemed to elude most viewers is the fact that this was a calculated move by the President. He understood the philosophy that says, “if you want people on your side then you should pretend to be one of them.” Obviously, the Marange church members were elated to see that the President had joined their church, not only in word but in deed. The uncritical mind would not care to see beyond events of 18 July 2010. If they were to be asked today whether the President is still one of them, they might respond affirmatively, although it is possible that the President himself has ‘totally’ forgotten about it. Would they dare betray “one of them” at election time? Surely the answer is ‘No’. Noah Taguta, a faction leader of Johanne Marange, has openly voiced his support for ZANU PF after the visit by the President.

In order to gain their support, the President assured them that the new constitution was not going to condemn their polygamous marriages. As the head of the nation, one would have expected the President to highlight to these church members the implications of their polygamous marriages to HIV and AIDS and the negative impact on national development in general. However, the President chose power over life. It was better to overlook pertinent issues so long as he was guaranteed the support of these church members. When one looks at national development issues one is confronted with challenges of HIV and AIDS, poverty, illiteracy etc. Such challenges are also much more prevalent in members of AICs especially those of Johanne Marange. Given the opportunity surely the President was supposed to inform these church members on the need to educate their children, to desist from polygamous relationships as well as to engage in activities that aid in the alleviation of poverty from church members.

In October 2011, ZANU PF political leaders in Manicaland were accused of targeting African Independent Churches in the province as platforms from which to sell their political ideas ([www.zimbabwesituation.com](http://www.zimbabwesituation.com)). Oppah Muchinguri, Dydmas Mutasa, Chris Mushowe and Mike Madiro were reported to have attended church services of the Johanne Marange, Johanne Masowe weChishanu, Apostolic Faith Mission in order to spread ZANU PF messages. The year 2011 also witnessed the release from prison of the late Madzibaba Nzira of Johanne Masowe weChishanu. He had been jailed for seven counts of rape and two counts of indecent assault. The release of Madzibaba Nzira has been viewed by many as a reward for his support for ZANU PF (The Standard, 30 April 2011). Such actions put into question the government's commitment to the issue of justice for women in general as well as those women in African Independent churches. Instead of the Johanne Masowe weChishanu women protesting they actually joined their male counterparts in celebrating the release. Such actions continue to perpetuate instead of challenge notions of hegemonic masculinity in Zimbabwean society.

During the run up to the March 2008 elections, an African Independent Church in Masvingo was promised land if they were to vote for ZANU PF (<http://www.zimbabwesituation.com>). However, after the elections the party failed to honour its promise. This led to the members taking the law into their own hands and they invaded a farm in the province. What led the politicians in Masvingo not to honour their promises? No simple answer can be proffered suffice to say probably the politicians still view the members of AICs as gullible members of society. Vengeyi (2011:368) alludes to the fact that "there is a common belief that *Mapositori* churches are attractive to and filled with people who are gullible." However, a critical analysis of the action taken by these people in Masvingo may point otherwise. They were able to challenge the politicians that had lied to them to honour their word by giving them land in exchange for their vote. What may boggle the mind is why these people continue to be taken for a ride when it is election time. It is common knowledge in Zimbabwe that politicians promise the electorate a pie in the sky when they are campaigning and quickly forget about them once they win. Probably members of AICs need next time to demand that they be given the land before they cast their vote, otherwise they will continue to be taken for granted.

## AICs: Critical Partners in the National Healing and Reconciliation Project in Zimbabwe

The discussion above has shown how AICs are treading in the turbulence of the Zimbabwean political waters. The political conflict that heightened in 2008 made the calls for national healing and reconciliation even louder. Post-conflict Zimbabwe needs a carefully designed national healing and reconciliation process. It is a process in which AICs are critical partners. African Independent churches do not only boast of numbers, but they are in touch with the grassroots. A national healing and reconciliation project that turns a blind eye to this fact is bound to fail. It therefore, becomes imperative for leaders in the Organ for National Healing to ensure the inclusion of AIC leaders in the whole process. The advantage of such a move is that these being charismatic leaders are bound to be listened to by their followers when they condemn violence and encourage forgiveness. AICs leaders use the language that is easily understood by their members. Chitando and Manyonganise (2011:103) note that the Inclusive Government has gone ahead of the church, leaving it struggling to identify its proper and effective role when in actual fact the climate is conducive to active participation by the church. It is important therefore for the Organ for National Healing and Reconciliation to tap the potential that lies in AICs to bring national healing and reconciliation. The concept of confession and truth-telling in AICs is key for effective healing and reconciliation. It will help perpetrators of violence to come out in the open to tell the truth about what motivated the violence as well as who initiated the violence.

## Conclusion

This paper has endeavoured to show the dynamics of political participation by African Independent churches in Zimbabwe. It has revealed that the very formation of these churches is closely linked to the rise of African nationalism. What this implies then is that from the onset, the emergence of these churches had some political influence. The paper went on to highlight the role that was played by members of these churches during the war of liberation in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the paper discussed African Independent churches in post-independent Zimbabwe and has shown that these churches have become a very important support base for political parties in the country. The battle for

rural support hinges on these churches. In this case it was shown that the visit by politicians to these churches should be understood in this context. A very important question raised in this paper is whether in all this, there is anything for the African independent churches. The events cited in this paper leaves one wondering whether politicians want members of AICs to participate in politics so that they can use them as sacrificial lambs for their own benefit. On the whole the chapter has advocated for the inclusion of AICs in the national healing and reconciliation project. The argument put forward is that AICs has a large membership and also are in touch with the grassroots. Concepts of confession and truth-telling that are encouraged in AICs have been highlighted as critical for a successful national healing and reconciliation programme.

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## The Martyring of People over Radical Beliefs

A Critical Look at the Johane Marange Apostolic Church's Perception of Education and Health (Family Planning Methods)

We strictly use holy water as per our religious belief... While hospitals use medicines to cure, we keep our faith in the holy water.

-Wenceslaus Murape, *The Herald*, 10 August 2010

Family planning is against God's law. We don't use family planning. When a woman has many children, she'll be naturally pouring out what would be inside her. There are human souls inside her spirit, so if she has only three children when she was destined to have 10, it means she has actually sinned against the other seven souls. Children who would have been prevented from coming into the world might have added value to society

-Chidavaenzi, *NewsDay*, 02 February 2011

### Introduction

It is important to note that, the growing influence of Christianity in Zimbabwe cannot be overlooked, particularly when compared with its dwindling numbers in Europe. Demographic statistics have put the percentage of people subscribing to Christianity in Zimbabwe around 80-90 percent and 98 percent to a belief in God. Besides the influence of Christianity in the social, religious and economical lives of the people, its influence has also been witnessed on the political arena when contending political leadership have approached religious Christian leaders for mediation (Machingura, 2010:331-354). Prime Minister

Morgan Tsvangirai ([www.theundergroundsite.com](http://www.theundergroundsite.com)) echoed this when he said that:

You can't have healing in the country without having the Church playing a moral and leading role. I think it would be a misplacement of priorities to place the church as a political organisation rather than a spiritual organization with an important place in a country where the majority are Christian.

Even though the broader Church is regarded as one of the gatekeepers of spirituality and morality, the moral role of some of the religious Christian groupings like the Johane Marange Apostolic Church (JMAC) and Johane Masowe has come under scrutiny as a result of their radical beliefs and teachings. Some of the teachings and beliefs have led to the death of their members from cholera, measles and complicated pregnancies. Critics argue that, such problems arise because apostolic sects are generally ignorant as a result of their negative perception of education. Critics go further to argue that, most of the deaths could be prevented had it not been the teachings and beliefs held by the apostolic sects. The term 'sect' is used in a neutral way. It is such allegations raised against apostolic sects that have compelled us to critically look at the beliefs and practices of the JMAC in relation to education and health (family planning methods).

### **A Brief History of the Johane Marange Apostolic Church (JMAC)**

The JMAC was founded in the Marange Reserve in Manicaland Province in 1932 by Muchabaya Momberume (1912-1963), a former Methodist layman who broke away to start his own African church. Johane Marange (Chakawa, <http://www.ssrct.org/publications>) claims to have received a vision on his way home and heard a voice saying to him:

You are John the Baptist, an Apostle. Now go and do my work! Go to every country and preach and convert people! Tell them not to commit adultery, not to steal and not to become angry. Baptise people and keep the Sabbath day.

The dreams and visions of Johane Marange have been recorded in the *Umboo utsva hwava Postori* (New Testament of the Apostles or The New Revelation of the Apostles) which is regarded in the JMAC as a canonical addition to the Bible (Mazambara, 1998: 152). The dreams convinced Marange that the Holy Spirit had chosen him to do God's work. The opening of the *Umboo utsva hwava Postori* (Mazambara, 1998: 152)

identifies the JMAC with the founder's birth as follows: "This is the very Apostolic Church today beginning from the year 1912 when he (John) was born and receiving the Holy Spirit in 1917" (*Umboo*, 0:3). Obert Jesse (Mazambara, 1998: 152) asserts that, the birth of John of Marange in 1912 is testimony that God remembered Africa according to his promise:

In the year 1912, God remembered Africa as He promised saying "The world can never be transformed (end judgement) when I have not raised for each and every nation a prophet from its own (*Nhoroondo* 1:1)." And he continues as follows "In the year 1932, Muchabaiwa was baptised and he became the first apostle to minister to Africa. Those many years of the thick darkness called Dark Ages came to an end (*Nhoroondo* 1:3)."

It is the trend in the JMAC that, the light and truth of God is only found in the JMAC and nowhere else. The recorded revelations (*Umboo Utsva*) have continued to be a historical document, a theological point of reference and a model upon which members of the sect base their accounts of spiritual experiences. Johanne Marange claimed to have received a full charter of his Church with all its rules and practices through the direct dictatorship of the Holy Spirit (Anderson, 2001:116). The spiritual experience of Johane Marange has remained authoritative and cannot be put to argument by the JMAC followers.

Johane Marange rested his authority upon three credentials: his revelations (recorded in the above mentioned monogram *Umboo utsva*), his claim to heal diseases (healing miracles attracted many people) and his charismatic personality (Daneel, 1971:321-325 / ). As a result, many people joined the JMAC at its inception owing to Johane's ability to 'heal' diseases. Healing in the JMAC has also become a strategy of winning unsuspecting souls (Chakawa, [www.ssrct.org/publications](http://www.ssrct.org/publications)). The JMAC at first grew rapidly amongst his inner and extended relatives who were the first to be converted and receive leadership positions (Daneel 1971:321-325 / ). The church managed to attract adherents from the ranks of traditional religionists and various traditional Christian denominations like the Methodist and Catholic. In the JMAC, the relationship with God is made "live and direct" through the Holy Spirit. It is from his visions that Johanne Marange is regarded as the second John the Baptist sent to redeem the world. The call of Johanne Marange formed a strong evangelistic and radical mission in the JMAC. Interestingly Johane Masowe (1914-1973) had a similar call to that of

Johane Marange in 1932 (Chakawa, <http://www.ssrct.org/publications>). Johane Marange and Johane Masowe were convinced that, they had been sent from heaven to specifically preach to African people. John of the “wilderness” became the trademark for the sect members in either the Johane Marange or Johane Masowe sects because of their attraction to open-air worship and wearing of white robes during worship. The sect leaders organised their followers into sectarian religious communities that have thrived until today (Mukonyora 1993:210). The exact figure of JMAC membership cannot be presently established with certainty as no official count has ever been done. In 1999, the Johane Marange church was estimated to be around one million followers in Zimbabwe with thousands more in countries further north. This makes JMAC the second or third largest denomination in Zimbabwe (Machingura 2011:185-210). The JMAC is now found in southern, central and east Africa, Europe and America, something that confirms its growth. The JMAC is, however, known for its clashes with the authorities on issues to do with health, education and socialization. The aspect of “*Tisu Toga Tine Zvokwadi*-Us Alone are Beholders of Truth” mentality in the JMAC has led to sectarianism. And sectarianism leads to radicalism or “*kuoma musoro-hot headed*” as alleged by most Zimbabwean critics against the JMAC and some Pentecostal Churches.

### **The JMAC’s Sectarian Beliefs and Practices**

There are characteristics generally associated with sects and the JMAC easily fit into that characterization. The first characteristic of a sect as observed by R Scroggs (1999:72) is that of protest against relative deprivation. The deprived people come together not only to express their desire to get rid of relative deprivation but also to express their desire to form a new world order where they can find acceptance and value amongst themselves. The JMAC and Johane Masowe sects began as protest movements that rose against relative deprivation. Johane Masowe, for instance, came from Makoni District (Gandanzara village) known for droughts, infertile lands, hunger and economic depression. Gandanzara implies the land of hunger or the land where hunger always manifests. The name is a narrative on the colonial displacement of indigenous Africans from their ancestral lands. White settlers took large tracts of land for farming and mining (Cheater 1984:6). Isabel Mukonyora (2007:11) adds that, it is during the 1930s when these

apostolic sects were formed that Africans were not allowed in towns unless they were labour recruits or unless they had “special certificates or passes” which were used to control the population. The general status quo of the time was that the African population was relatively deprived. Apostolic sects came on the scene offering some spiritual chaplaincy that addressed the deprivation challenges. M F C Bourdillon (1986:294) notes that, the radicalism commonly found in apostolic sects has its origin in the conflict between white missionaries and their black congregations resulting in a number of apostolic independent sect leaders like Johanne Marange and Johane Masowe breaking away from the mission churches due to accounts of frustrated ambition to positions of leadership within the mission churches. Most of the apostolic sects were founded and supported as a result of racial hostility against blacks. Bengt Sundkler (1980:696), David Barrett (1961:76) and Harold Turner (1968:46) observe that, African Initiated Churches were formed in reaction to colonial oppression and missionary paternalism. They used non-violent means to resist authority and to bring about change. The colonial experiences are important in fathoming the JMAC’s perception of education and health (especially family planning methods). Johane Masowe radically proclaimed the message of withdrawal from all European things, destruction of all religious books (including the Bible though he had one himself from the start, a restriction that has remained with the Johane Masowe sect) and shun all inventions of the whites. Johane Masowe’s followers were not allowed to work for whites but to do their own trade as Korsten Basket makers (Welbourn, 1961:202). The reaction against the non-recognition of the dignity and self-respect of the Africans was also the factor behind Samuel Mutendi and the Zionist Church. In the face of grinding poverty, hunger and diseases, AICs offered the promise of health without paying anything (Bourdillon, Mashita and Glickman, 1977:203). But the outstanding contribution was to make their members economically self-reliant and they have to some extent upheld their teachings.

The second characteristic of a sect as identified by David Bishau (2010:152) is that, besides relative deprivation sects radically reject the view of reality taken for granted by the mainstream society. When people come together to form a sect on top of protesting against relative deprivation they express a desire to form a new utopian world where they can find acceptance and value in accordance with their standards. The broader society is viewed as evil, tainted, clueless to problems and

ignorant of God. Solutions to social problems can only be accessed through revelations given to the apostolic prophets. The third characteristic of a sect is Apocalypticism or Millenarianism, where the sect radically believes in the imminent end of the present aeon (Bishau, 2010:153). The Christian concept of millenarianism focuses on the eschatological expectation of the Second Coming of Jesus and the establishment of a Kingdom of God on Earth (Revelation 20:1-20). The rejection take the form of separation from that society which frequently is qualitative rather than geographical separation, for example, rejection of the mainstream offer of education and health (e.g. Family Planning Methods). The qualitative separation is established through the creation of a list of do's and don'ts for their followers, for example, what to eat and not to eat. The Johane Marange sect has not physically moved out of the community but their religious codes of conduct (qualitative) have given them a separate identity from the broader community as well as other religious Christian groups.

The post-independent Zimbabwean government, civic organisations and political formations have tried to proffer platforms for discussions and impose reforms against the JMAC's perception of medication and education without success. This has happened many times when the government through the Ministry of Health tried to force members of the sect to immunise their children. Unfortunately the government's (and non-governmental organisations) effort have been viewed in the JMAC as evil manifestations of political repression against their identity as Apostles. In retaliation the JMAC encourages its followers to resiliently accept persecution that target their beliefs and faith as a unique quality of purity and life. It is viewed as the will of God; a life intended and demanded by God. Salvation becomes the realization of this worth (Scroggs, 1999:72).

The fourth characteristic is that the sect is a voluntary association whereas the fifth characteristic is that of total commitment from its members. The JMAC requires that each member lives out the vision of the sect completely. Failure to do this is taken as betrayal of the cause of the sect. Members in the sect are not only born into it but some are converted and given new names (Scroggs, 1999:73).The giving of new names to new converts is popular in the apostolic sects. New names act as a symbol of confirmation that one has become a new creature. Those who join the sect make a committed decision in this journey of commitment to the apostolic teachings and beliefs. This explains why

such teachings and beliefs are sustainably held with each coming JMAC generation.

### **Religious Teachings, Practices and Obligations as Part of Identity**

The ‘Apostles’/*Vapostori* set themselves apart from their neighbours in many ways and have strict obligations to be followed by all JMAC members. The JMAC follows the Jewish sabbatical laws (Ex 20:8, 20:13, 22:15, 34: 21, 35: 3, Lev 26: 2, Dt 5:12, Neh. 10:31, Isa 56: 2, 58:13-14 and Jer 17:27) and don’t handle money on Saturdays. They also don’t allow their members to work let alone cook on the Sabbath day. The JMAC maintain strict rules which involve avoiding any contact with dogs, pigs and ducks which they take as evil and defiling. They even avoid eating food or drinking water at homesteads where dogs, pigs and ducks are kept. They uphold dietary rules based on Leviticus 11: 24. Additionally they teach against eating fish called “*mhatye*” which is understood to have swallowed Jonah as reported in the Bible (Shoko, 2007:53). All the prohibitions emphasize on purity and righteousness. The prohibitions inhibit the JMAC members from interacting with other members of society who keep dogs, pigs and ducks. The JMAC don’t own properties like Church buildings arguing that God had not approved of Church buildings. Instead they assemble on open spaces or under big trees or usually on a *ruware/a flat rock outcropping-inselberg*. It is as a result of their belief in the imminent end of this world that causes them not to own Church buildings. They expect the overthrow of this world to be quite radical (Bishau, 2010:152) hence their philosophical statement “*Nyika ichaparara saka kuvaka zvivakwa zvakakanaka kупедза nguva uye Mwari havadi pokurara sevanhu*—“the world will be destroyed hence a waste of time to have nice buildings and God does not a house like people”. As a result they continue occupying open spaces with no shade to protect them from rain and sunny weather. It is common to read and hear reports about members of the JMAC being struck by lightning during rain seasons. In most cases they have clashed with the local government authorities as the JMAC tends to use bush toilets. With the usual outbreaks of cholera, bush toilets have always been regarded by health officials as possible sources of health hazards.

It is at the open spaces where the members of the JMAC commonly don their church uniforms for the Sabbath services. Members of the sect sit in a circle, women and girls on one side and the men and boys on the

other. Women usually put a white veil tied to the head (sometimes with a red ribbon or no ribbon) whereas men wear white tunics, each with an embroidered decoration including a badge indicating the person's office in the Church. White or plain is the favoured colour for all their clothing. The white colour is their symbolism for purity, light and cleanliness. The JMAC members do not put on colours like black. In their perspective, black represents darkness and sin. The white colour is a call to their members to radically dissociate themselves from mainstream society which they typify as full of darkness. The members of the JMAC don't allow anybody to touch their 'sacred' white clothes or be greeted when putting on white clothes. Men usually carry long wooden staffs and keep long beards. Men and women are strictly commanded to always have bald shiny heads. They strongly believe that demons find refugee in the hair hence all members of the sect need to have bald heads.

During their worship services, all the members of the sect go barefooted and take off their shoes as they regard the ground and space where they carry out their services to be holy as in the case of Moses (Exodus 3:5). In terms of historical and theological inspiration, the JMAC beliefs and practices derive from the Old Testament figures like Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. The three figures were known to be radically ascetic and had no permanent residence (Exodus 13ff, 1Kings17:1ff, 2 Kings 2:1ff). The JMAC members imitate such Old Testament figures and their lifestyles. This could explain why the *Vapostori* of Marange conduct their services on the open places typifying the wilderness life of Moses and Elijah. The idea of 'Jordan River' is popular among the Marange followers and is traceable to the Old Testament figures especially Elijah and Elisha (cf. 2 Kings 2). Wherever these JMAC apostles are found, there are 'Jordan Rivers or streams' nearby where they perform baptism and cleansing rituals (Sibanda, Makahamadze and Maposa, 2008:60-85). They keep guard of such 'Jordan streams' resulting in clashes with people and leaders from their community. People from the surrounding community are not allowed to wash their clothes, swim and bathe themselves in such rivers declared as 'sacred Jorodhani/Jordan' by the *Vapostori*. They use the 'Jordan' rivers for baptising the *Vapostori* members and for taking 'holy water' for patients of the apostolic sect.

M F C Bourdillon (1976:292) refers to the Johane Marange and Johane Masowe as "spirit-type" churches because they emphasize much on inspiration and revelation of the Holy Spirit. A wide range of

charismatic gifts such as speaking in tongues and faith healing have become strong liturgical traits of the JMAC, making the Church a spirit-type church. They generally resemble features common in many of the groups categorized as 'Zionist' (Daneel, 1986:51; Sundker, 1961:54-59). The JMAC's emphasis on the operational power of the Holy Spirit has accounted for the momentous growth and expansion of the Church to other parts of the country (Sibanda, Makahamadze and Maposa, 2008:60-85). The phenomena of prophecy and speaking in tongues are associated with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The authority of the leaders in the JMAC stems from the spiritual realm (Machingura, 2011:79-90). The JMAC concept of prophecy has contributed to the growth of these sects and their prophecy share parallels with the traditional spirit mediums when it comes to communicating with the spirit world by being able to discern witches and destroy secret medicines (Machingura, 2011:12-29; Machingura, 2011:63-78). Healing is one of the important pillars in the JMAC and the centrality of healing can be noticed in most African Independent Churches (Zionist movements) as well as Pentecostal Churches. According to Bourdillon (1976:300), as a result of the radicalism of the Church, they don't use any medicines under whatever circumstances, neither traditional nor European. Some would rather die than receive any medical treatment. However, there are cases of members of the sect who temporarily stop going to their services in order to receive medical services or to consult African traditional healers' services in case of a severe sickness. Some people leave established churches to join apostolic sects for one reason or another especially seeking spiritual fulfilment through healing (Mukonyora, 2007:1). The JMAC have also offered material advantages to unemployed youths and women through the formation of economic co-operatives as part of their vocationalism independent from the formal education offered by the government, non-governmental organisations and established churches. It is interesting to note that, their members in the Zimbabwean rural areas are economically better than their rural folk. The JMAC members are known in Zimbabwe and neighbouring countries for self-help jobs like: carpentry, leather-working, building, basket-making and other income-generating crafts like tinware and furniture. It is common to find JMAC women and children in cities moving from one location to another selling their wares. In the 1950s, they were known in South Africa, Port Elizabeth and in the Eastern Cape as the Korsten Basketmakers (Hastings, 1979:78). The economical

dimension of JMAC empowers followers but at the same time becomes another centre of attraction to people with no other source of income. However, it is important to mention that, the historical reasons as raised above have dogged the JMAC in relation to their radical beliefs against western education, formal employment and medication.

Self-reliance became the epitome of the JMAC's economic activities (Kileff and Kileff, 1979:151-167). The followers of the sect are still encouraged to be self-employed than seeking formal employment. The members of the apostolic sects impacted positively the Zimbabwean economy during the time of crisis (1998-2008). Apostolic sect members were known for cross border activities that included importing basic commodities from neighbouring countries when most Zimbabwean supermarkets were empty. A lot of people survived the crisis of hunger by buying commodities from the JMAC members. They also contributed to the national economy by bringing the scarce foreign currency into the country when the Zimbabwean dollar had lost its value and the inflation had wildly gone to trillions percentage. The JMAC must be commended for radically indigenising Christianity and at the same time expressing the frustrations they had with the political and religious systems of their time.

### **The JMAC's Perception of Education**

The JMAC has on several times clashed with the government on educational matters. It is known for not sending children to school. In most cases, the lack of educational empowerment exposes the girl child to illiteracy and poverty when compared to their counterparts who are non-JMAC members. Although current data is not available, statistics from the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture district office reveal that out of the 10,000 girls who enrolled in Form One in the Marange district where the JMAC is dominant, only about a third completed Form Four in 2003. "Those who dropped out became wives with a small number dropping out because they could not afford the fees," said a senior district education officer who did not want to be named. Educational administrators have not realised the impact of JMAC's radical perception of education and national development. Studies have shown that, most girls stop schooling in July when the JMAC celebrates the Passover festivity during which marriage ceremonies take place (Kachere, <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=46447>). The children of

most of the JMAC members are still deprived of formal education. David Bishau (2010:25) noted that, the JMAC just like Johane Masowe belongs to the world of people who neither write nor read often because the majority are illiterate as a result of their religion and are rarely understood when expressing themselves. However, the same trend can be observed with some African Independent Churches (AICs) whose educational level is also very low though their perception of education is not as radical as in the JMAC. Daneel (1970:21) noted that, the most advanced JMAC members only claim 6-8 years of schooling. High school training is usually the preserve of the select few. The select few are usually employed in the public and private sector as nurses, high school teachers, lecturers, managers and to some extent as politicians, for example, the late Border Gezi. The lack of education in Apostolic sects contributes to a radical deficiency in knowledge of the anatomy of the human body in their healing ceremonies and a correspondingly greater receptivity to the traditional interpretation of the causes of illness (Daneel, 1970:21). This is in contrast to mission churches whose members are very educated. Members of most independent churches particularly the JMAC pride themselves on their independence from all white people, education, medication and culture (Bourdillon, 1977:307). The apostolic prohibitions include modern immunisation of children against diseases, visiting health centres and engaging in family planning. Any form of family planning is passionately prohibited as devilish. For most critics, their prohibitions hamper the nation from achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on health and education. Critics argue that, the JMAC always become a black spot on the good efforts of the government in relation to health and education.

The post-independent Zimbabwe government, mainstream society and non-government organisations have reluctantly engaged apostolic sects on national development projects (to do with education) as a result of negative attitude displayed by the JMAC. The government has not come with programmes that seriously involve leaders of apostolic sects on education and healthy. What features most in the media is the heavy-handedness of government health officials in arresting JMAC members who refuse to send their children to school as well as immunisation programmes. Nothing much has been done to educate apostolic leaders on the implications of their religious beliefs. The broader society on the other hand has tended to worsen the radicalization of apostolic sects by labelling them as anti-development and anti-modernity. It is then

difficult to establish whether the purported counter culture by the JMAC is only religious or is a result of the humiliation they suffer for their religious belief from the broader society.

### **The JMAC's Position on Marriage and Family Planning Methods**

Besides the above educational short-comings and challenges, the JMAC teachings on health issues particularly family planning methods leave a lot to be desired. It is sad to realise that, women who engage in any form of family planning are likened to murderers and are put in the same rank as those who engage in witchcraft. Philemon Mutumwa, Johane Marange sect member said:

Family planning is against God's law. We don't use family planning. When a woman has many children, she'll be naturally pouring out what would be inside her. There are human souls inside her spirit, so if she has only three children when she was destined to have 10, it means she has actually sinned against the other seven souls. Children who would have been prevented from coming into the world might have added value to society (Philip Chidavaenzi, Newsday 02 February 2011).

It is such type of teachings and beliefs that besides feeding into masculinity, put the lives of women at risk when they are deliberately and religiously denied access to health (family planning). Women and the girl child become exposed to acquisitions by men and seem to be there only to serve the sexual appetites of men (Francis Machingura, 2011:79-90). As a result, polygamy is highly practiced in the JMAC and in some cases involving little girls. Most JMAC men become polygamous because the bride price for their wives is not highly prized and burdensome. Polygamy is openly practiced and encouraged. The bride price is usually a small and reasonable amount as a token of appreciation to their in-laws and is paid in no stipulated time frame (Chakawa, <http://www.ssrct.org/publications>). No family planning methods are observed. As a result of many wives, it is not surprising that some men in the sect are not aware of the number of children they have. A good example is that of a 41 year-old Johane Marange man of Chiweshe, Muchinda Tarwireyi, who has sired 45 children with 14 young wives. And he says he won't be slowing down until he gets to 100 children. Most of his wives are below 30 years of age and some are as young as 14 years. Tarwireyi could not remember when he married his last wife or how many children he has sired so far (<http://www.newsdzi>

zimbabwe.wordpress.com). Surprisingly the JMAC polygamous men as head of families do not feel the burden of rearing children as the wives are the ones who take care of their respective children. Additionally no educational and health costs are incurred. What is noticeable in the JMAC is that, if a man has two, three or four wives and children, they all become members of the sect. This has resulted in small girls as young as 10 years being married as fifth or sixth wives to 65 year old men.

Young girls are religiously forced to customarily marry men who are older than their fathers. Forced marriages among members of the sect (force involves parents, prophets, the bridegroom and various church institutions especially the *dare* until the girl submits) usually take the form of customary marriages. Such forced marriages usually entail the consent of the parents and the prospective husbands. In the case of JMAC, marriage in most cases takes place without the consent of the bride. In such a development the teen bride ends up having to do with a husband imposed on her and become the source of traumatic tendencies (Kachere, <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=46447>). J Muronda asserts that 'the parents of a minor can facilitate marriage between their young daughters through the popular traditional customs of betrothal (kuzvarira). Normally this is done for economic gains on the part of the parents. A respondent revealed that, 'many families within the JMAC survive by marrying off their young daughters to fellow Church members' (Newsday, 10 October 2010). Religious biblical teachings and prophecies that compel and convince young girls to marry old men are popular in the JMAC. In most independent churches prophecy is a 'gift from God' and when one has such a gift bestowed upon him, he is uplifted to a higher level above the ordinary man and as such church members accord to such a person much respect' (Kachere, 2012). As a result prophecy cannot be questioned as prophets act as mouthpieces of God. What is sad is that, the manipulation and conniving of prophets and members of the congregation has also encouraged the continuity of girl child sexual abuse within the sect. Where pressure is continually exerted, the girl may find it hard to continue opposing demands from 'heaven'. Such lame prophecies are done to young girls who are often too young to reason abstractly and lack the mental capacity to critique such claims. To this end most *Vapostori* men prophesy on young girls still at primary school. So it is common to hear about cases of girls of ages between 10 and 14 years old being prophetically married to elderly men as old as 60 to 70 years. In most

cases JMAC prophecy is intertwined with lust or force (Chakawa, <http://www.ssrct.org/publications>). The JMAC prophecy is what I would call “masculinity prophecy”, that is, prophecy meant to serve masculinity egos and sexual lusts.

A common scenario usually portrayed by the respondents is that of older men from the JMAC who consults with the prophets on a particular girl that they will be interested in. All the church services the congregation passes through the ‘gates’ manned by prophets. It is at this time that the prophet ‘filled with the holy spirit’ will openly reveal to the old man that something is affecting his worship and should speak to the dare. When he outlines that, it is because a certain girl he wants, the parents of the girl are immediately informed and if they agree which mostly is the case, marriage arrangements begin (Chakawa, <http://www.ssrct.org/publications>). The marriage arrangements proceed without the input of the victim. In another case, a 14 year old girl, Matipedza Svosve, of Marange district in Manicaland was married off to a 67 year old man. Although her marriage is not legally registered, it is customarily recognised and the teenager is expected to live as a housewife and soon bear children. When Matipedza Svosve was asked about her feelings, she said that “I can’t go against the will of Church elders, my parents and leave my husband in order to attend school. Besides, where would I go if I leave? My parents will not welcome me” (<http://www.wafe-women.org/index2.php>). To facilitate polygamy, girl children are encouraged to marry within the Church and not to mix with other religions in order to maintain their ‘holiness’.

It is common to hear little girls being called ‘*Madzimai* or mothers or bearers of children’. This is the same with young boys’ who are addressed with the prefix ‘*Madzibaba* or Father’. Consequently children begin to accept their fate at a tender age and this can explain their compliance and complicit to forced marriages. They usually don’t see such marriages as ‘forced’ and martyring because of the religious teachings and beliefs they are fed on daily basis. This is despite the fact that, most infamous marriages in the JMAC are arrangements between adult men and under-age girls being mediated by Church elders against the consent of the girls. Yet it is criminal under the recently enacted Domestic Violence Act as well as the Section 94 of the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Act. The two Acts fight against pledging a female person or to marrying off an under-age girl (Kachere, <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=46447>). The age of sexual consent

in Zimbabwe is 16 years but it is difficult to stop these marriages as members of the JMAC are religiously complicit and secretive. The Union for the Development of Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe-Africa (UDA-CIZA), a coalition of 160 apostolic sects in Zimbabwe have tried to raise awareness among apostolic sect leaders on the dangers of early marriages. But in most cases it faces serious resistance. The police has been the biggest let down in early forced child marriages as they are accused of having continued to turn a blind eye to these crimes largely because police do not take such cases seriously as explained by the UDA-CIZA programme manager, Edson Tsvakai (Jules-Rosette, 1987:127-144). Forced marriages, teenage rapes and pregnancies are prominent in JMAC. Caroline Nyamayemombe, gender officer at the United Nations Population and Development Agency (UNFPA) country office in Harare, confirmed that teenage pregnancy is on the increase in Zimbabwe and a leading cause of maternal mortality (Chakawa, [www.ssrct.org/publications](http://www.ssrct.org/publications)). She observed that in apostolic sects:

Young girls are married off to men often older than their own fathers. This scenario has significantly contributed to pregnancy complications in teenage mothers. These harmful religious cultural practices are rampant in some districts in the country. Single adolescent girls who become pregnant more likely to drop out of school thus compromising their future earning capacity and end in poverty. Maternal mortality and mortality from HIV/AIDS related causes have become a reality for the JMAC girls (where family planning methods are regarded as taboo). Obviously pregnant teenagers face the risk of immature uterine muscles and mucous membranes that pose serious danger and high risk of ruptured uteruses in cases of prolonged labour.

A Harare-based non-governmental organisation Women and Law Southern Africa (WLSA) has shown that young girls in early marriages are likely to suffer birth complications that normally result in death. The young girls in most apostolic sects are prone to cervical cancer, suffer psychological trauma and encounter a host of problems such as failing to deal with the social pressures that come with being a wife in a polygamous union (Muronda, 2001:45). As a result of the psychological, religious, economical and social challenges, JMAC women and young girls are mostly pushed to the receiving end.

Women and young girls in the JMAC don't have the freedom to decide moving out. The restriction is the same with marriage which is supposed to be strictly between members of the JMAC. Any marriage outside that setting is radically censored and regarded as defiled. If it is a

lady married to a non-JMAC man, the parents of the woman are not allowed to receive the bride wealth. There have been cases of parents who forcefully take back their daughters from their husbands when the prospective son-in-law doesn't belong to the apostolic sect. However, men are allowed to marry women who don't belong to the sect provided the woman is prepared to become a member of the sect. Marriage in the JMAC is an institution that exposes the doctrinal radicalism of the sect where marriage is only pure as long as it is strictly within and by the members of the sect. Women constitute the biggest percentage in the JMAC just like most of the Churches in Zimbabwe. Women are the vital adepts of the JMAC by virtue of bearing many children making them bearers of a belief system in which they are not leaders. Jules-Rosette notes that, women are the 'bearers of religion' by virtue of occupying the main body of the clientele (Jules-Rosette, 1987:127-144). Unfortunately women bear the pain of the radical beliefs that hugely serve the patriarchal systems and structures. They are the bearers of children who get martyred as a result of sectarian beliefs on health and education. Without the necessary education, women are not empowered to face such challenges.

### Faith-Healing as the Epitome of the JMAC

The JMAC proclaim a holistic gospel of salvation that includes deliverance from all types of evil oppression like sickness, barrenness, sorcery, evil spirits, unemployment and poverty (Anderson, 2006:210). The JMAC's beliefs have been labelled in the media as retrogressive since their beliefs result in the martyring of innocent souls. This was in the case of measles outbreak that wreaked havoc in Nyazura's Nzvimbe area which killed around 30 people vulnerable children and women mostly members of JMAC. The preventable deaths occur as a result of JMAC entrenched resistance to vital life-saving interventions. The JMAC radically go against the Public Health Act. The Prime Minister on one occasion urgently sought an audience with the JMAC leadership by attending their service in a bid to convince them on the need and urgency of having their children immunized but his efforts did not yield any positive results (The Herald:21 May 2011; Zimeye.org/, Accessed Online, 20 May 2010; The Herald:08 June 2010; Sunday News:24 August 2010; Newsday:10 October 2010).<sup>72</sup>

What is interesting is that, their radical beliefs don't take into consideration the disturbing number of JMAC children dying from: polio, measles, diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis (whooping cough). The sterling efforts by the Zimbabwe government seem not to bear any fruits as the members of the Johane Marange sect have continued to play "hide and seek" with government health officials particularly during times of immunisation programmes. The religious reasons offered for avoiding hospitals are that, their health and lives are taken care of by the Holy Spirit; so it is the duty of the JMAC prophets to miraculously heal and restore the health of the JMAC followers. Yet according to Machona Bumhira (<http://www.zimgossip.com>) "denying women and children treatment in the Johane Marange sect is a violation of their fundamental rights and an unpardonable transgression". What is interesting is that, the majority of the victims of measles outbreak are aged between 1-10 years, in other cholera cases it ranged between 1-40 years. The JMAC is usually accused of fleeing with patients to secluded places like mountains and bushes where they treat them with prayers and contaminated holy water instead of the recommended warm saline, antipruritic medication, tepid sponge baths and cool mist vaporiser to relieve cough. In some cases the JMAC members lock up their sick relatives and when health officials pay them a visit they deny having any sick members. Sadly there is the denial of treatment regardless of clear evidence of the majority of their colleagues being needlessly wiped out by treatable disease like cholera. Sometimes it is not easy to trace mortality statistics as a result of JMAC's secretive nature where it does not go public about health issues which in some cases might be higher than projected. There are incidences where the JMAC members die at home and the burial of their members are fast-tracked to conceal the records. Critics have regarded the JMAC's teachings and beliefs (particularly on health issues) as needing urgent de-mystifying programmes to stop the annual sacrificing of innocent souls. The JMAC regards the use of traditional and western medicine as synonymous with idolatry and ancestral worship. All the healing miracles are regarded as emanating from total commitment and faith in the operational power of the Holy Spirit (Mukonyora, 1989:65). Faith is emphasized both on the part of the leaders and the members (patients) of the sect. Every non-JMAC patient who comes to the sect is regarded by the apostolic community as a potential member. Even though the radical beliefs can

be martyring, critics take the healing miracles in the JMAC as strategies of recruitment.

The pattern of behaviour and belief system is representative of much of the central and southern African independent church life that fulfils the African person's religious needs (Mukonyora, 1993:207). The apostolic members are expected to put their trust in God against whatever diseases and never to resort to any other means for healing. The trust in God includes trust in the religious practitioner who sprinkles members of the sect with 'holy water'. The 'holy water' is believed to remove all impunity, expel all evil spirits and heal all diseases (Bourdillon, 1976:300). Witchcraft is always suspect on all diseases, for example, it is alleged on accidents, malaria fever, bilharzias and stomach ailments. The members of the sect are so tied to group beliefs that they would rather lose their lives than undergo timely medical treatment. Some JMAC leaders have gone to the extent of beating their wives who are not convinced by such beliefs for insisting that children be send for immunisation (The Herald: 09 June 2010; The Herald: 08 June 2010). The Herald reported that, Jeremiah Makumbe (39) of Bhuka Farm in the Soti Source Resettlement Scheme allegedly murdered his wife, Beauty Mboneki (33), by kicking and hitting her with an iron bar after taking their children to the local clinic to be immunised (The Herald: 24 September 2010). It is now commonly feared that communities where the JMAC has many followers remain at risk of contracting measles, for example, parts of Mbire and Chiweshe districts in Mashonaland Central reported an outbreak of measles that claimed 70 children mainly from the JMAC. In 2009 the measles outbreak claimed more than 400 children in Mashonaland Central mainly from the apostolic sects like JMAC prompting the government and its partners to launch a national immunisation campaign (The Herald: 24 September 2010; Chateta, *UNICEF Intensifies Engagement with the Apostolic Sect*, Zimeye.org, 28 July 2010; <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/news>). Any visit or treatment at hospital, clinic or traditional healer implies apostasy. The sect enforces conformity by cultivating maximum contact within the group only.

Faith healing is encouraged against all odds. It is not surprising that people with troublesome diseases as observed by Bourdillon (1976:306) may move from one group to another in search of a cure. At the end people give to the group from whom a cure is sought temporary allegiance if treatment is successful. The healing factor has resulted in

most adherents shifting their faith from God to the high priest and prophets. It is a usual phenomenon that conversion to sects like the JMAC and Johane Masowe is mostly motivated by the desire to be healed on the part of the patients and the genuine conviction in the healing powers in the JMAC. The radical rejection of medicines does not matter the circumstances, even in cases of serious accidents. Rev Mujimba Kora (<http://www.docstoc.com>) narrates that:

Someone was talking to me and said that, it happened one woman caught fire and was seriously burnt. Since she was a Marange follower they didn't take her to clinic instead they kept her in the hut applying margarine to her burnt skin and the Holy water. This resulted in her flesh becoming very bad. She was later forcefully taken to clinic by fellow villagers.

The leaders of the JMAC convince their members that Western and traditional medicine had failed the people and that the only solution is found in the healing faith in God. The allegations against western medication are true to some extent in the sense that medical practitioners do not probe into the possible spiritual causes of some illness. M L Daneel (1970:23) concurs that:

In this respect not only the secularised medical service of the Government hospitals are found wanting. Western therapy is not sufficiently concerned with or cognisant of evil forces as a very potent reality in the patient's life. There was generally some lacking on the part of missionaries in Africa to probe the reality of witchcraft in the African's life and to accommodate medical treatment accordingly. It is for this very reason that so many people joined AICs when they became sick.

The JMAC claims to offer spiritual solutions to spiritual problems. As an interesting development the JMAC has come up with their home-grown huts for their patients for women waiting to give birth. They claim such facilities will cater for the spiritual needs of their followers. The JMAC has set their own maternity "hospital" in makeshift tents and shacks to cater exclusively for pregnant women of their faith. According to the 52 year old Mbuya Netsai Mohwa (The Herald, 10 August 2010):

The popularity of the "hospital" had risen dramatically over the last five years and we've attended to members of our sect as far as Angola, Namibia and Zambia. The maternal service is strictly for Johane Marange members but of late other people have come here seeking help. Our services are for free and we don't use any modern medication. We strictly use holy water for healing. When women come here, we consult the Holy Spirit which guides us on the patient's

problems. Because of some protracted problems foreseen by the Holy Spirit, the women can be here for up to five months until they deliver. When it's imperative for a pregnant woman to stay here, she and her husband have to bring a tent, food, blankets and clothes. The husband can stay or visit. I gave birth to all my 10 children at home as per our church regulations which radically stipulate that we should not attend antenatal clinic. She said her own children had never been to a conventional clinic and when they had measles, she gave them okra and bathed them with a herb called ruredzo. The measles would take a couple of weeks to heal and none of my children died. While hospitals use medicines to cure, we keep our faith in holy water. We're against the idea of forcing people to take medication or vaccination against our religious belief.

However, besides this emphasis on faith, it is common to get reports of women who die from complicated pregnancies at the makeshift hospitals of the JMAC. Some of the victims are mostly young girls who were married off and fell pregnant early. It is feared that hundreds if not thousands of girls die from birth complications as no one can track how many underage girls die from birth complications. Such cases are not reported to responsible authorities save to be buried soon after death.

## Conclusion

The radicalism towards health and educational policies in the JMAC still presents some challenges in Zimbabwe for the government and the broader society. The shunning of western medicine and family planning methods has resulted in extraordinarily big families and preventable deaths. Additionally the number of martyring deaths could be prevented if such sects are included on awareness programmes. The shunning of women from executing leadership roles has made JMAC women play second-fiddle roles to men in the church and this prevents them from making positive decisions that benefit them on health and education. If Millennium Development Goals are to be realised, the government and non-governmental advocacy programmes must target such sects on health and educational issues. Civic organisations must help children in such sects to go to school. Health programmes must be formulated to help them appreciate the importance of family planning and the realization of women as equal partners in making binding decisions. Apostolic movements need to be taught that religious adherence and radicalism in relation to water-borne diseases like cholera is not worth anyone's death. If the parents die, the children become unnecessarily

orphaned. If children unnecessarily die, it puts the future development of the nation at risk. It is commendable that JMAC followers strive to relive in the era of their founders who engaged in radical beliefs in their fight against racial domination leading them to shun western education, education and political system but that is no longer helpful now in the development of the nation. The JMAC must realise the importance of education in the new global world that is becoming technologically complicated by each passing day. Additionally the JMAC must realise that the medical personnel are not there to adulterate their religious beliefs but to save peoples' lives through immunisation.

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*Elizabeth Vengeyi & Canisius Mwandalayi*

## Dress as a Mark of Differentiation

### The Religious Symbolism of Dress in African Initiated Churches

#### Introduction

Researching on African Initiated Churches (AICs) in Zimbabwe is admittedly not venturing into new waters as there has been a proliferation of works dealing with that subject matter. Much of the research that has been done so far, especially by western scholars, tends to focus on issues of the historical development, particularly the terminology, emergence and dogma of AICs (Sundkler, 1964, Daneel, 1987, Jules-Rosette 1979ca.) Responding to the work of western authors on AICs, Tinyiko Sam Maluleke notes that 'AICs were seen by white male researchers such as Oosthuizen, Anderson, Sundkler and others as 'uneducated and therefore dangerous challenges to historic missionary churches... AICs studies were not about the AICs at all but about the researchers and their churches.'(Maluleke, 2003:179). This has seen Zimbabwean scholars such as Chitando, Togarasei and Mukonyora among others, publishing works on various aspects which include, regional integration, HIV and AIDS and gender respectively (Chitando, 2004; Togarasei, 2011; Mukonyora, 2007). The work that has been published so far hardly paid attention to the forms of ecclesiastical dress used in AICs. It is the goal of this research to fill this gap. To address the issue in a profound manner, the paper shall address the twin aspect of the adaptation of some of the various forms of ecclesiastical dress used in mainline churches and the incorporation of indigenous elements by AICs as both an expression of their discontentment and a marker of differentiation from mainline churches and from each other. Aiding the

progression of this research are questions such as: What form of dressing is used in mainline churches? What type of dressing is commonly used by AICs and why? How do AICs use the aspect of the dress code in their worship? What is the role of the dress code in AICs? How has the issue of dressing influenced, or, been influenced by African culture? Has modern technology influenced the dress code in AICs?

## **Ecclesiastical Dress**

While Emile Durkheim's argument that the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane is a characteristic feature of religion (Durkheim, 1915:47) has been found wanting in that it is not universally applicable (Coleman & White, 2004), it remains valid to some extent as the distinction between the two spheres is upheld in almost every religion. This is seen even in the forms of dressing used when entering such spheres. The abode of the divine or sacred space is regarded as too holy to be approached ordinarily dressed hence the tendency to remove part of the ordinary forms of clothing, like shoes or hats, dress oneself in entirely new clothes or covering the ordinary clothes with the proper regalia suitable for such occasions. In Christian circles, such form of dressing is generally referred to as ecclesiastical dress. The term "ecclesiastical" is a derivative from the Greek *ekklesiastikos*, from *ekkleisia*, an assembly or meeting called out, which in turn derives from *ekkalein*, to call forth or convoke (Clothing and Fashion Encyclopedia, 2009). In its narrower sense, ecclesiastical dress, thus means the garments worn by Christian leaders, including members of monastic orders from the early Christian era until the present, not only in the West but also in all parts of the world where the Christian religion is practiced. In its broader sense –a perspective largely adopted in this paper -ecclesiastical dress encompasses all forms of religious regalia which have been set aside for purposes of worship and this need not be confined to those in leadership positions only but is worn even by the general assembly.

### **Ecclesiastical Dress in Mainline Churches: Origins and Development**

The circumstances which led to the Christian Church adopting ecclesiastical dress have not always been easy to establish, given that its founder, Jesus Christ, gave no directions to the apostles or to the

Christian Church in regard to this matter. Had he done so, surely we would expect to see the apostles carrying them wherever and whenever they went out to meet the assemblies of the Christians, but this was not the case (Baier, 2012). In the early days, Church leadership appears actually to have been opposed to the idea of the clergy having to put on a distinct garb from that of the laity. Pope Celestine I (422-432), for example, is known to have issued a letter to the bishops of Provence in which he reproved the bishops for using a special costume at liturgical services (Baier, 2012). As can even be gleaned from New Testament writings, the early Church repeatedly encouraged the placing of more importance on adorning the soul with noble virtues than the bodies with precious clothing (1 Peter 3:3-4; 1 Timothy 2:9-10). Several centuries thus elapsed before the clergy were required to put on vestments which were different in style from those of the laity during liturgical functions. What it simply shows is that there appears to have been some later developments which triggered the adoption of a distinctive garb for the clergy.

Historians of liturgy put forward at least two reasons which led to introduction of a special kind of liturgical garb. The first push factor was the Roman legalization of Christianity in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century. The newly converted emperor, Constantine, took a move to increase the status of bishops by promoting them to the level of civil magistrates. As a result of this promotion, senatorial sandals, the dalmatic and the ceremonial pallium all became symbols of their office (Halsall, 1997). The second push factor leading to the introduction of liturgical garb was a dramatic shift in the style of men's secular clothing during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The shift came as a result of the Germanic tribes which had invaded Rome. Coming from harsher northern climatic conditions, these tribes introduced in Rome their culture of wearing trousers (Mayne, 2000). The clergy were no exception to the changes which were taking place in the secular society. Though, however, they adapted to the times, they continued to wear their traditional clothes at the celebration of liturgy. Attesting also to the changes that took place in men's wear during that period, Baier says that the graceful flowing garments of former times were retained as more becoming in the celebration of the liturgy (Baier, 2012). Later, there developed the additional practice of wearing liturgical vestments over one's ordinary clothes.

What the above push factors point to is that there was no conscious purpose in the mind of the Christian Church in adopting a distinctive

garb for the clergy during its early days. It was also by no means due to the existence of liturgical vestments in the Old Testament. What possibly one may posit is that the Christian Church imitated the practice, which existed in the Old Law by reason of a positive divine command but even then one cannot say there is evidence of a conscious imitation (Baier, 2012). The later move by the Church to set aside particular dress for the clergy can therefore be described as just circumstantial. Be that as it may, the use of ecclesiastical dress soon found justification among the influential thinkers of the time. We find Jerome, for example, arguing: "The Divine religion has one dress in the service of sacred things, another in ordinary intercourse and life." (Jerome cited in Saunders, 2003). Thus, in Jerome's eyes one ought not to enter into the holy of holies in everyday garments, just as one pleases, when they have been defiled from the use of ordinary life, but with a clean conscience and in clean garments hold in the hands the Sacraments of our Lord.

A comparative analysis of Eastern Orthodox Churches, Roman Catholic Church and various Reformed Western Churches shows that there are various forms of ecclesiastical dress which are basically similar to each other. Among the commonly found forms of ecclesiastical dress we have: the alb, chasuble, dalmatic, stole, pallium, chimere, rochet, mitre, mozzetta, cassock and the girdle. Due, however, to the complexity of tracing the historical development of each of the various forms of ecclesiastical dress in each of the aforesaid Churches, bearing in mind also that they have developed over a long period of time and undergone various changes, it may suffice here to note that ecclesiastical dress largely had its origins from the Roman secular world and that almost each of the various forms has been subject to fashion and to the availability of various types of material; changes in style reflect to some extent various ecclesiological and sacramental doctrines of particular churches; some of their features have lost their original usefulness and may just be surviving as vestigial appendages, and that those various forms have undergone periods of rejection and revival (Cope, 1972: 366).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed historical development of ecclesiastical dress one needs to look at such works like Gilbert Cope, 'Vestments' in *The Westminster Dictionary of Worship*, 1972; Shawn Tribe, 'On the origins and development of Vestments,' 2006; Victor Schultze, "Vestments," in *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge*, 1950.

## **Ecclesiastical Dress as a Marker of Differentiation**

While various mystical interpretations have come to be ascribed to ecclesiastical dress, the use of such kind of dressing has seen the whole issue at times take on other meanings from those originally intended by liturgists. During periods of religious reform and political change, for example, ecclesiastical dress has often served as a symbol of the old regime which must be replaced or denigrated by reformers, while those opposing the abandonment of older forms of ecclesiastical dress and the church doctrine associated with them have sought to maintain them ('Ecclesiastical dress' in *Clothing and Fashion Encyclopedia*, 2009). In the 16th century, for example, the Lutherans led by Martin Luther are known to have rejected the cincture, the symbol of chastity, as well as the maniple and stole, the insignia of Holy Orders following their rejection of celibacy and the degrees of Holy orders but these vestments were retained by the Catholic Church.

Apart from serving as a symbol of old regime which must either be replaced or retained, ecclesiastical dress has also come to serve in African Initiated Churches (AICs) as a vehicle for expressing anticolonial sentiments during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A closer look, however, at these AICs shows that its adherents did not reject completely European styles of vestments but rather incorporated indigenous elements into ecclesiastical dress as an expression of their discontentment ('Ecclesiastical dress' in *Clothing & Fashion Encyclopedia*, 2009). The incorporated indigenous elements were not only an expression of discontentment but they also helped identify the new churches as well as emphasize particular aspects of their doctrine. Coming up now is a look at how AICs have adopted and modified ecclesiastical dress.

## **Origin of Dress and its accessories in AICs**

Before we discuss the origin of dress in AICs, it is worth noting that the study of AICs is a broad topic, hence an attempt by scholars such as Bengt Sundker to classify the churches into two groups: the Zionists, which is a charismatic group concerned with healing and the 'Ethiopian', a group which retained much of the structure of the mission or main-line churches from which they withdrew from (Sundkler, 1976:15). Thus, in light of this, the paper will refer to any church which falls under the mentioned groups. Also, there is no universal dress code

used by AICs, though generally they are referred to as ‘white garmented churches’ since most, if not all of the AICs wear white garments as their basic dresses (Vengeyi 2011:352).

The origin of dress or uniforms in AICs is difficult to ascertain as the churches could have adopted and modified what they now regard as their dress code from various institutions. Isabel Mukonyora (2007:69) notes that the introduction of uniforms could have started with the coming of missionaries during colonialism in Zimbabwe. The missionaries introduced dress code as part and parcel of evangelism. Women, for instance, were taught to dress in clothing that covered the breasts and the legs below the knee. Today, it is common to find women attending prayer meetings and other church gatherings, wearing uniforms with long skirts, sleeves that cover the shoulders and hats or *dhukus* (head scarves). Bengt Sundkler (1976:48) has a different perspective on the origins as he argues that the issue of dress lies in the personal visions of early African church members. For example, in Zionist-type churches, he attributes the white tunic to Michael Ngomezulu who, acting in response to a vision supported by Bible references, was the first to wear a white tunic. Sundkler also mentions the possible influence of the pictures of John Alexander Dowie, ‘First Apostle’ of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion which circulated in South Africa at that time. Similarities between Dowie and his followers’ ecclesiastical dress and a typical modern Zionist uniform which consist of a long tunic which is decorated with patterns in form of crosses and circles attest to such a link (Sundkler 1976:48). The origin of the Zionists’ distinctive white robes with coloured sashes and accompanying staffs seem to have derived from Protestant Sunday school illustrations distributed at the turn of the century or the Zionists borrowed from Catholicism (Maxwell, 2006: 44). Thus, uniforms that started out as simple blouses in variety of colours, lengthened into robes, and developed long sleeves upon which wings sometimes sprouted (Maxwell, 2006:45). A closer look at most of Protestant churches in Zimbabwe’s uniforms are marked by long-sleeved creme blouses and coffee skirts for Catholic women, blue and white long-sleeved blouses and black skirts for Anglican women and long sleeved white blouses and black skirts for Reformed Church women among others. Thus, the implication could be that AICs’ dress code could have developed from some of the mentioned Protestant churches.

While Mazambara stresses that accessories such as staffs or sticks are part of dress in AICs like Johane Marange Apostolic, he argues that their origin could have stemmed from Shona indigenous religion where men carry wooden sticks as a sign of leadership and authority (Mazambara 1999:239). Thus, the same can be said in Johane Marange where every male member of the church has to carry the wooden staff. Mazambara argues that ‘because of the inconveniences of carrying a staff around everywhere, many males in most churches of Apostles are neglecting the practice’ (Mazambara 1999: 239), but the fact remains that the Apostolic churches could have adopted the style from Shona indigenous religions.

To add on, Kiernan, in his discussion of the origin of staffs in Zion churches, refers to the herding stick used in traditional Zulu society to drive cattle into pastures, and at times to ward off lightning, that it could be the same stick which now receives religious significance within the AICs as they have integrated African religion with Christianity (Kiernan, 1979:15). Thus, it remains a challenging task to pinpoint the exact source of AICs’ use of dress or uniforms as the aspect could have stemmed from indigenous religions, Christianity or both. We now turn to the description of dress in AICs.

### **Description of Dressing in AICs**

As Mercy Makuwatsine writes, ‘when one talks of a church they associate the church with a type of uniform. Different church congregations are usually known for their different types of uniforms,’ (Makuwatsine, 2012). The same applies to AICs as they are too broad to study, dressing also differs from one church to the other, but all the same, AICs’ basic dresses are long white garments (*magemenzi*). White is the basic colour for both men and women. As men and women start their church services, they both wear garments over their daily or ordinary wear (Oosthuizen, 1979:13; Daneel, 1987:224). This is done to differentiate sacred time from the usual profane daily lives of people. Women also put on head dresses, which are usually called veils or cloths, around the head, to cover their heads at the place of worship. The reason for head covering in girls and women is applied by some AICs literally from the Bible as is reflected in 1 Cor 11: 3-16, where women should cover their heads during worship (Oosthuizen, 1979:19). The size and decoration of the veil varies with churches, as in some churches

such as Johane Marange, the white veil should be tied to the head with a red ribbon (Bourdillon, 1976:299).

As part of their dress, most of AICs' male members shave their heads and keep their beards long. For instance, Johane Masowe male members shave their heads as a symbol of their servitude to God (Kileff and Kileff, 1979:160). Upon baptism, each male Apostle's head is shaved as a vow to God. The beard is allowed to grow as the 'glory of God' and this is biblically affirmed from 1 Corinthians 11:7. Also, for men, shaving one's head is a sign of pride and strength, hence quoting Pauline advice regarding this. Also, by shaving the head, it demarcates members from outside by providing a visible symbol of separation (Jules-Rosette, 1975:208). Hair shaving generally represents discipline, self-control and the repression of desires (Leach, 1967:77). In explaining the symbolism of shaving heads and keeping long beards, Mazambara, who carried an extensive study of the Johane Marange Apostolic Church, notes that these practices were instituted by the founder, Johane Marange to make a distinction between apostles (Marange adherents) and other church members from other mission or main-line churches, who usually cut their beards short (Mazambara, 1999:239). Thus being bald and wearing long beards become clear signs of one's identity as an apostle-a follower of Johane Marange. Another reason for head-shaving is the belief by church members that demons stay in the hair on top of the head, and this is why the head is rubbed by male members to remove evil forces during exorcism and before baptism. Also, long beards are a common feature among AICs, for instance in Johane Marange since in his vision of heaven, Maranke saw 'elders whose beards were as long as an arm from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger' (Jules-Rosette, 1975:210). Thus, in Zimbabwe today, it has become obvious to identify an AIC member by merely looking at the length of one's beard and baldness of head.

### The Symbolism of Colours in Mainline Churches

Liturgical activities in the mainline churches are performed for various purposes and the purpose of each activity is usually symbolized by the colour of vestments that are used for that particular occasion. Up until the 12th Century, hardly was there use of a variety of colours. The only distinction that marked liturgical vestments of that period was that they were light or dark, – light, or white as in the case of the Roman festival

colour, for festival occasions, and dark for more penitential occasions. It was actually at the end of the 12th century, as averred by Trible, that a variety of liturgical colours in the Latin rite became formalized under Pope Innocent III. (Tribe, 2006). As understood from the perspective of the Latin rite, the variation in liturgical colours has the following explanation:

- Generally in mainline churches, when the Christian Community wants to denote Purity, Innocence or Glory, it uses White. This white colour is used, for example, on the Feasts of Our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the festivals of the Holy Angels and of those Saints who were not Martyrs.
- Red is the color of fire and of blood; it is used in Masses of the Holy Spirit, such as on Pentecost, to remind us of the tongues of fire and on the Feasts of those Saints who shed their blood for the Faith.
- The colour Green symbolizes life and is used from the Octave of the Epiphany to Septuagesima/Lent and from the Octave of Pentecost to the 1st Sunday of Advent, except on Ember Days and Vigils during that time, and on Sundays occurring within an Octave.
- In liturgies that denote a penitential character, the Christian Community usually uses Purple or Violet. Hence one finds the use of Purple or Violet from the 1st Sunday of Advent and from Septuagesima/Lent to Easter, on Vigils that are Fast days, and on Ember days, except the Vigil of Pentecost and the Ember days during the Octave of Pentecost. Purple/Violet is also used for Mass on Rogation days, for Votive Masses of the Passion and at the blessing of candles and of holy water. The Stole used in the administration of Penance and of Unction and in the first part of the Baptismal rite is to be Purple/Violet.
- Black Vestments have traditionally been worn at all Requiem Masses including All Souls' Day; at the Good Friday Liturgy up to but not including the Communion service. Since the early 1970's the use of White has been allowed for Funerals. Traditionally White was also the use for Funerals of children under the age of 6-8 years. (Vestment Colours, Their Meanings and Time of Use, 2011)

## The Symbolism of colours in AICs

Before we discuss on the symbolism of colours in AICs, it is worth noting that colour symbolism possibly existed in indigenous religions before the introduction of Christianity. This is so in that traditionally, in the Shona society for example, there are basic colours such as red, white and black which are symbolic. Red refers to blood; white to mother's milk and black signifies death or dirt (Oosthuizen, 1992:17). For instance, in the Shona society today, if one is grieving, one is expected to dress in black, which is sign of death. Thus, the symbolism of colours continued to exist even with the introduction of AICs, though the meaning ceased to be the same as before. The significance of colours can differ from one church to the other, but all the same, AICs find religious symbolism in the colours they use in both ordinary church services and during healing sessions. One or a wide range of colours and colour combinations are often used, even within a single church group. One prophet from Johane Masowe weChishanu commenting on the symbolism of colours said, 'If ever one were to think of flags, colours and symbols entirely in terms of Government buildings and other platforms of the secular world where the assertion of power is necessary, he or she must think the same when it comes to the spiritual world,' (Yikoniko, 2011). Thus, there is always meaning in colour.

Usually, it is the leader or senior leader of an AIC who, through dreams and visions, determines colour combination of garments (Larlham, 1982:31). Thus, the Holy Spirit prescribes what colour to put on, on both the prophet-healer and the 'patient' who is in need of healing. A particular illness might require a particular uniform and a particular colour (Sundkler, 1961:13). For instance, a Johane Masowe weChishanu prophet said, 'I wear a garment of a certain colour depending on the angels that will be guiding me on that day (Yikoniko, 2011). This is the reason AICs have a variety of colours of vestments. The colour of vestments used by the healers is of great significance as it has a bearing on the outcome of the healing session. Also, the colours give strength and power to the prophet-healer. One AIC prophet said, 'The colour thus gives 'more power' to do the work more properly, more successfully...it gives me power and makes the evil spirits flee from me. The colours make communication between myself and my messenger strong, effective and clear.' The role of colours in the healing procedure is explained as follows: white is for visions and blue is for healing

(Oosthuizen, 1992:43). Thus, sometimes, though it is difficult to draw a line between the two, the symbolism of colours in healing sessions may not necessarily be the same meaning that members get generally when they put on their garments. For instance, the colour red in several AICs means through the blood of Jesus Christ, church members were made clean (Bourdillon, 1976:299). Mazambara, basing on Johane Marange Apostolic church, explains the use of the colour red. He notes that it has been related to the healing and contesting demonic powers which may be on the church members, or would want to attack church members (Mazambara 1999:238). Thus, the colour red, is used in AICs in various contexts, hence the symbolism also varies.

Sometimes colours are determined by reference to passages in the Bible. For example, the Apostolic Full Gospel Mission of South Africa referred to Revelations 6:1-6, which refers to four horses of different colours, that is white, black, red and pale and these colours are the basis of the church uniform in some AICs (Larlham, 1982:32; Sundkler, 1961:214). For instance, white usually symbolizes purity. Bennetta Jules-Rosette, who carried an extensive study of the Johane Marange Apostolic Church, also notes that they (Johane Marange members) wear white robes to symbolize their quest for purity (Jules-Rosette, 1988:140-159). Thus, by putting on white garments, one would have been or will be purified from all the sins committed in the past. Also, another explanation is that in the prophet's dream or vision, Jesus Christ and/or the angels appear in white. Hence for this reason, the church members put on white garments. Just like in mainline churches, the colour white has connotations of purity and it is encouraged that church members should put on white during and/or after baptism (Larlham, 1982:31). The whiteness of the uniform increases one's perception and is instrumental for the reception of the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

As the symbolism of colours differs with people and denominations, black may symbolize impurity, death or shame and red may symbolize blood or ill-health. Red and black in some churches like Zionists are taboo just as we find them in African Traditional Religion. Since red symbolizes blood, traditionally, menstruating women are not allowed to participate in rituals such as rain-making ceremonies (*mukwerera*) (Sundkler, 1961:214). Women of child bearing age are not normally allowed in the vicinity of the brewing beer since spirits do not like milk and blood (Bourdillon, 1976:260). It is traditionally believed that blood and milk are very powerful fluids that they may deter the success of

rituals. Thus, for this reason, some AICs do not use red as their garment colour. Colours such as green and white overcome or prevent illness, as green is regarded as the colour of life and protection (Oosthuizen, 1992:16). In other churches, green represents colours of the veld (flat open rural spaces) (Bompani, 2010). Dress and specific colours worn by individuals are sometimes determined by the personal need of each participant. Since coloured garments or cords are usually prescribed to members by the prophet-leader, they are worn by the participant for members to protect the wearer from illness (Larlham, 1982:31). Blue symbolizes love, faithfulness or the sky, depending on the type of an AIC (Oosthuizen, 1992:43). Yellow in Johane Masowe weChishanu represents the power of the Holy Spirit that works in prophets and healers.

In some AICs, particularly Zionist-type, a strong contrast is sought where, for example, white is worn against blue or green. In most cases, the leader's costume is more elaborate and decorative than the other church members' costumes (Larlham, 1982:31). Dress is not just contrasted without reason and the issue of contrasting colours also depends on churches, as some churches such as Johane Marange Apostolic use red ribbons on women and girls' veils (Bourdillon 1976:299). Though anyone can make these uniforms, in some denominations, specific people are supposed to be doing that as they will be acquainted on the pattern and colour combination.

Cords, crosses and badges are also part of dress in AICs. The cords, crosses and badges differ in colour as they depend on a particular church in question. In Johane Marange Apostolic Church, a badge is worn by male members and it indicates the person's office in the church (Mazambara 1999:239). Most of Zionist-type churches, for instance Zion *yekwaMutendi* (ZCC), use green badges which have an emblem of a star (see the chapter by Chimininge in this volume). For Zion *yekwaMutendi*, stars on uniforms are usually silver and are placed on the left shoulder of one's uniform be it male or female. Thus, stars on the uniforms can either be white or silver depending on churches too. These stars symbolize divine presence or a symbol of grace (Oosthuizen, 1992:17). Other churches are known as *chechi dzendaza* (church which use cords), because of their use of cords. Some of the cords are dipped in holy water for them to ward off evil forces. One prophet-healer in Johane Masowe weChishanu confirms that '*Ndaza dzeminamato* are intertwined different colours of wool which are mostly given to pregnant women to protect them from evil spirits and bad omens that cause miscarriages.

These are worn on the right hand, around the waist or on the neck' (Yikoniko, 2011). As in traditional religions, where amulets (around the neck or wrists), and the strings (round the neck or across the shoulders), emphasize protection against witchcraft, sorcery and other evil forces, the cords, crosses and badges fulfil the same function and have the same aim. But the cords appear in a new context in which traditional accessories were Christianised to suit the dogma of AICs, hence the role of Christianity in the practices of AICs (Oosthuizen, 1992:44), for instance on the use of crosses on garments, veils and staffs. The concept of crosses could have been adopted from Christianity. Thus, AICs could have adopted and modified both indigenous and Christian elements to suit their doctrines.

### **Dressing and its Symbolism in Mainline Churches**

The course of history has witnessed the assigning of various symbolical meanings to particular liturgical vestments. A follow up, however, to each of those meanings is not envisaged in this paper due to the complexities involved. Liturgists note at least three general classes of meanings which have been prevalent in the historical development of ecclesiastical dress. The first general characterization of such meanings is the one which has come to be termed moral symbolism. Liturgical historians have observed that from the 9th to the 11th century liturgical vestments were made to symbolize the official and priestly virtues of their wearers.

Apart from the moral symbolism, liturgists note also the development of typical-dogmatic symbolism during the 12th century. During this period liturgical vestments were expounded in reference to Christ whose representative is the priest. It did not take long before liturgical vestments were made to symbolize Christ's Incarnation, the unity and relation of the two natures of Christ, the virtues of Christ, His teaching, and later, His relations to the Church ('Vestments' in Catholic Online, 2012).

During the course of the 13th century there appeared yet another interpretation to liturgical vestments called typical-representative. Liturgists of the time interpreted the vestments as symbolizing the instruments of Christ's Passion. The amice was taken to represent the cloth with which Christ's head was covered and the alb was seen as representing the robe which was put on Him in mockery. The cincture

and maniple were seen as representing the fetters with which Christ's hands and body were tied and the priest who was clothed with these was regarded as typifying the suffering Saviour ('Vestments' in Catholic Online, 2012). Such a symbolical interpretation quickly became very popular because it was the most easily expressed and consequently most easily understood by the people.

### **The Symbolism of Dress and Accessories in AICs**

While the symbolism of dress in mainline churches is generally New Testament oriented, the same cannot be said about the dressing in AICs. In AICs, the Old Testament tends to take a major role, hence a lot of symbolism in these Churches is drawn from the Old Testament itself. One finds, for example, that as part of uniform, shoes are taken off at the place of worship in some AICs (Gunda 2011:152). In some denominations, the wearing of shoes even when going to church is forbidden. Even though most of their places of worship are open places, whenever they approach them, they cease to become profane, hence sacred places. Often, AICs literally base their practice on Exodus 3:5, where the biblical Moses was instructed by God to remove his shoes for he was standing on Holy ground (Oosthuizen, 1979:18). As is argued by Mazambara, one should not castigate AICs for presumably following traditional way of worship by removing their shoes since in Judaism and Islam it is part and parcel of their worship too (Mazambara 1999:64). The fact of AIC members removing their shoes is not something new since in Islam, they remove their shoes when worshipping Allah and the same applies to African Traditional Religions when Africans venerate ancestors. Thus, removing shoes in AICs is part and parcel of ritual or sacred dress.

Besides, the issue of dressing, as Peter Larlham points out in his study of South African independent churches, is a powerful and dramatic feature of the ritual performance (1985:32-33). Dressing links church members to both traditional religious conventions and the newly adopted ideals of African Christianity (Larlham, 1985:32). The difference in dressing between various AICs is an indication of identification as members are linked to a certain church because of how they dress (Makuwatsine, 2012). Thus, church dress is a powerful means of excluding the 'outside world', symbolically separating the members from the other 'non-members.' As church members are separated from the

outside world, the church dress binds that community of believers together through the use of a common uniform or dress (Larlham, 1985:32; Kileff and Kileff, 1979:160). These features of clothing and grooming provide a visible sign of their separation from other groups. The wearing of uniforms or dress contributes to a rich diversity which helps to determine the identity of each group and psychologically permits an experience of uniqueness, self-esteem, newness and release from daily drudgery (Daneel, 1987:224).

Even the carrying of sticks and staffs which is done by church members in AICs goes back to Old Testament times. The carrying of sticks and staffs in Old Testament times symbolized leadership and shepherds used to carry such staffs to ward off dangerous animals from their flocks. In AICs most members own a staff which functions as a weapon, warding off harmful spirits and illness. The main emphasis is fortification against evil forces. For instance, a Johane Masowe prophet notes that, '*Munondo* is a spiritual weapon which I use to fight *hondo* (spiritual wars)' (Yikoniko, 2011). Thus, it means to the ordinary person, the weapon is depicted as an ordinary instrument, while to the believer, that is the prophet-healer, it remains as a spiritual weapon. Although the prophet-healer believes that the spiritual weapon possesses its own power, this power is depended upon the psychic and physical well-being of the owner (Larlham, 1985:32) as the owner knows how and when to use it. For instance, President Mugabe was given a 'walking stick' at a Johane Marange gathering where he was told that if he points to any woman of his wish, he will marry that woman (Newzimbabwe.com, 2011). In the eyes of the giver of the walking stick, it was a powerful spiritual weapon, but we do not know if the President believed in the 'holiness' of the stick or not.

## Conclusion

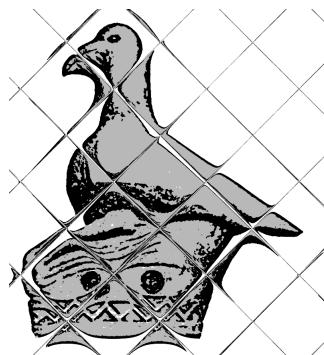
While it is difficult to ascertain the origins of dress in AICs, one can note that the churches could have adapted some of the forms of ecclesiastical dress from the mainline churches, for instance, the use of various colours imprinted on their garments. The AICs have also incorporated indigenous elements which include the use of staffs or 'holy sticks' which play a crucial role to drive away demons and all sources of evil. The garments which are a characteristic feature in AICs, have religious symbolism to the believer as they possess power over evil forces. Dress

also acts as a marker as it separates the believer from the ordinary life or the profane world.

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*Fortune Sibanda & Richard S. Maposa*

## **The Ethic of Economic Engagement in AICs**

### **Introduction**

The intricate relationship between religion and development continues to attract scholarship the world over. As a number of scholars have asserted, religion has a strong connection to economic activities in societies. Weber (1963) and Meagher (2009) posited that whereas the importance of religion was often underrated in most communities, its enduring influence is pervasive. In fact, religion shapes human existentiality. For instance, religion is the repository of social identities as the basis of the material culture or activities of humanity as a collective group, sub-group, class or any other social organisation.

This chapter explores the ethic of economic engagement in the African Initiated Churches (AICs) which represent the form and reality of Christianity in Africa (Daneel, 1977:177). It is a fact that this form of Christianity is heterogeneous in nature since it is one of the major strands of African Christianity including mainline and Pentecostal churches. It is argued that AICs pursue existential principles of Christian materialism which are largely anchored on "vocationalism". In essence vocationalism is an ideology of human self-reliance and is geared to empower people as individuals and groups. In fact, the vocational thrust which manifests in AICs can be seen as a form of an indigenous spirituality in Africa. The ethic of an economic engagement is conceived in AICs as part and parcel of a spiritual calling. This insight is not without justification, given the nature and impact of colonialism in Africa. In general, 'mainline' churches as handmaiden of the colonial State dwelt so much on the superficial demands of Christianity at the

expense of the material needs of the people. Although the majority of blacks were disadvantaged under the colonial system, economically, politically and socially, the chapter posits that the economic grievances provided a stronger rallying point for the emergence of the AICs. Therefore, the ethic of economic engagement in AICs is upheld as a key theological ingredient for a spiritual edification. However, it must be noted that this indigenous spirituality is biblically inspired. For instance, references to the call to enjoy life in abundance (John 10:10) have wider practical implications for the economic performance of AICs.

In the Zimbabwean context, the study will highlight the thrust of some economic activities of Johane Marange Apostolic Church (JMAC) Masowe Apostolic Church (MAC), African Apostolic Church (AAC) and Zion Christian Church (ZCC). These four constitute the largest denominations under the AICs in Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, the nomenclature of the label 'AICs' continues to be contested in African studies (Chitando, 2004:119; 2005: 10). In this chapter, the term 'African Initiated Churches' is used because it embraces all Christian churches that were founded and are controlled by the black indigenes. As the study perceives, the AICs constitute a group of African-led churches, which are exerting a stronger challenge to the dominance of the historical mission churches that originally confronted African Indigenous Religion (AIR).

## Dynamics of Economic Engagement in AICs

In this section, the chapter explores the economic engagements of AICs as part of the transformation of society in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The economic activities of different social groups and individuals across age, class and gender divide are examined under the following four sub-headings: AICs and the informal business ventures, AICs and cross border trading, AICs and Operation Murambatsvina, AICs and the land reform programme.

### AICs and Informal Business Ventures

Historically, the informal sector of the pre- and post-colonial period was dominated by unemployed people who utilised their creativity to have a livelihood. Notably, there was a religious inclination in some of the players in this sector as some were members of the AICs who settled for

self-employment and in order to be self-sufficient in regard to the fulfilment of their material needs. Only thus could they protect themselves from the corroding influences of the outside world on their new way of life and mission (Dillon-Malone, 1977:212). As a matter of fact, some AIC members pursued a life-style of self-sufficiency because they had no formal educational and technical qualifications that were expected in the formal sector and what were regarded as 'white-collar' jobs. Deliberately, some of the AICs never bothered to send their children to a system of education that they suspected would 'corrupt' their minds. Therefore, the most likely alternative would be to participate in the informal sector with no particular formal qualifications required but in the long run, the AICs became 'havens of stability' (Daneel, 1973:188). For example, a parent could induct his or her child through a 'hands-on' approach. The vocational occupation of the head of the family was usually passed on to the male children almost effortlessly. In general, the formal sector had some demands that could easily make members of AICs to break the Sabbath given that most companies operate on Saturdays. Even the dress code of some work places was not conducive to that of some AIC members. Therefore, the informal sector became a lucrative vocation commensurate with human spirituality and economic well-being.

The above scenario cannot be universalised among and across all the members of the AICs. Some adherents are engaged in the formal sector on the basis of their professional qualification, given that the policy framework on education and in AICs gradually catapulted some individuals. Today, some members of the AICs are holders of high ranking government portfolios dealing with economic and technical issues. Arguably, the informal sector in Zimbabwe was largely pioneered and pursued as a vocation by AICs. Nevertheless, the informal sector is undergoing social and economic transformation that is no longer confined to the domain of the *homo religiosus* just as cross-border trading has become a lucrative business to AICs.

In fact, it must be realised that the informal sector is one of the avenues through which AICs have accumulated a lot of wealth and influence in society over the years in Zimbabwe. The sector is vital for two crucial reasons. First, the informal sector is a spring board for revealing the extent to which the ethic of labour in AICs can be realised and evaluated. Second, this sector is a platform on which a theology of

reconstruction can be tested and discovered under the auspices of an economic engagement within the AICs in Zimbabwe.

First and foremost, the operation of the informal sector thrives on the division of labour. Through this structural arrangement, men are engaged in the production of the majority of items for sale. On the other hand, women and children are involved in the merchandising of the wares. For instance, given that the JMAG *Vapositori* are polygamous in nature, the study observed that there are teams of women who move around with tinkered pots, buckets, dishes, kettles, candle stands, paraffin lamps, baking sheets; tailored products like door mats and pillows and skilfully woven baskets. Whereas the majority of the wares are meant for the local market, some penetrate the transnational markets within the SADC region. Some of the products from the informal sector have remained household choices that have stood the competition of products produced in the formal sector. For instance, the AICs make durable tinkered products some of them creatively made from scrap metal whose life-span outmatches some imported Chinese products euphemistically known as '*zhing-zhong*'. The label '*zhing-zhong*' in the Zimbabwean context refers mainly to the cheap but short-lived Chinese products.

### AICs and Cross-Border Trading

Cross-border trading is another area where AICs have significantly registered their presence in Zimbabwe. In general, cross-border trading intensified with the attainment of independence, particularly of States in Southern Africa, including Zimbabwe and South Africa. Chitando (2004) rightly notes that cross-border trading became an avenue for networking amongst AICs in the region resulting in integration. Women often form the majority of members in AICs, but play secondary leadership roles. However, in the field of cross-border trading, most AIC women have demonstrated their resilience and tenacity that have contributed significantly to the income that sustain their families.

The goods that are often at the centre of cross-border trading fall under two main categories. On the one hand, there are export goods that include mats, crocheted works, basketry, tie and dye cloths, and agricultural products such as legumes that include *nyimo* (round nuts), *nzungu* (ground nuts), and *mufushwa* (dried vegetables). These traditional agricultural products are on high demand in South Africa and Botswana

to the extent that members of the AICs have exploited this opportunity to their advantage. The demand for indigenous foods is high in these countries partly because of the high prevalence of HIV and AIDS, given that these foods provide a recommended alternative healthy diet. On the other hand, there are also some import goods which include household items like fridges, stoves, television sets, radios, clothes, blankets and groceries. These goods are far much cheaper in these neighbouring countries as compared to the same goods manufactured locally.

The AIC members involved in the cross-border may be perceived as people on the divine mission of God. Under the auspices of economic ventures, they cross the border into neighbouring countries whilst overloaded with some goods for sale and return, again, with another consignment for sale back home. This is a double jeopardy which is even worse to women who are “widowed, divorced, abandoned or separated” (Oosthuizen 1999:169). It is interesting to note that even if these women belong to the category of ‘people of cloth’, when it comes to some commercial transactions required by the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) at the border posts, they tend to join the bandwagon of ‘smugglers’ to evade paying duty. One informant narrated a shocking incident in which some Masowe members who plied the Zimbabwe-Botswana border post attempted to ‘ship in’ a consignment of digital watches inside a coffin. Unfortunately for them, a dutiful officer at the border post insisted on verifying the contents of the coffin. Alas, there was no dead body but glittering watches. This incident, therefore, shows that the AIC members as cross-border traders are involved in an informal and aggressive economic activity at any cost. One major explanation which could be advanced for these unethical business approaches is the dominant Machiavellian ‘rule of the jungle’ characterising the Zimbabwean society today. Some ways in which the AIC members try to fit within this scheme for economic survival is through the use of sanctified passports (Chitando, 2009) and *muteuro* (holy water) which form part of their spirituality (Mukonyora, 1993:254).

### **AICs and Operation Murambatsvina**

The Operation Murambatsvina (Restore Order) was a government clean-up initiative that started in May 2005. Accordingly, it was associated with the forced eviction of people across the country. The Operation largely targeted the illegal business premises which housed indigenous

entrepreneurs like the sprawling flea markets, tuck shops and shanty backdoor shelters. It also targeted churches that worshipped in open spaces such as JMAC, MAC and Mugodhi Apostolic Church. It must be noted that Operation Murambatsvina should be understood in the context of the much acclaimed 'Zimbabwe crisis'. As the majority of AIC members are involved in the informal sector situated in the backyard light industries, where they manufactured handcraft goods such as baskets, pushcarts, tinkered pots and chicken troughs (Sibanda, Makahamadze and Maposa, 2008) they ended up being destabilised. In fact, the Operation evoked human rights issues both at local and international levels. For instance, on 17 and 20 June 2005, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference released press statements to reveal the extent to which the Zimbabwean society had been divided as a result of Operation Murambatsvina. Their observations and concerns were echoed by the World Council of Churches. The latter went to the extent of condemning the forced evictions of Operation Murambatsvina. Much of the condemnation was based on the fact that the operation was inhuman, ill-timed for it was undertaken at the height of the winter season under an ailing economy due to the 'Zimbabwe crisis' (Weiderud, 2007:271).

Nevertheless, in the face of the impact of Operation Murambatsvina, most AIC members responded in a number of ways to sustain their livelihood. Some adopted the spirit of never die pertaining to their economic vocation. In that way, they hatched plans of dodging the Municipal police as well as officers of the Zimbabwe Republic Police deployed to stem the illegal economic activities. Notwithstanding that in the post-Murambatsvina era the government set some market stalls for the informal sector including members of AICs to use, the study established that a significant proportion of *Vapositori* preferred to move around with their wares for sale as in the pre-Murambatsvina era. One interviewee described the peripatetic nature of some *Vapositori* who thrived in the marketing of their products as '*vanaswerakuenta vakwasha vezuva*' (people who move around the entire day selling their products). In other words, the spirit of resilience is apparent in the work ethic of *Vapositori* who shun formal professional employment in favour of their self-initiated entrepreneurship. Hence, vocational activities are done out of a religious commitment through which they have developed a humanistic vision based on self-reliance and sacrifice. These attributes are understood in AIC belief system as part of divine injunction in

which man must labour in order to enjoy the fullness of humanity (Gen. 3: 17). In a wider context, it must be mentioned that some AICs have been pro-active towards mitigating the economic challenges brought about by the ‘Zimbabwe crisis’. The *Vaporiori* engaged in a theology of reconstruction to address a number of challenges including the land reform programme.

### **AICs and Land Reform Programme**

The land reform programme which was meant to address the historical land question has created much controversy in Zimbabwe. Some stakeholders like the prisons, war veterans, commercial white farmers, the government, NGOs and the churches have expressed dissenting opinions to the issue of land. Broadly speaking, the government tackled the issue of land resettlement through a number of stages from 1980 (Moyana, 2002). For instance, the initial stage was orderly but not fully financed by donors and western governments. This initial phase was crippled by the flawed principle of willing-seller and willing-buyer. In principle, the majority of the churches supported the government despite the fact that some churches stand as landowners to large tracts of land. Notably, amongst other AICs, Mugodhi Apostolic Church and ZCC support the land reform programme. For instance, in a recent forum where top government officials such as Vice President Mujuru attended, the leader of the Mugodhi Apostolic Church, Bishop Tadeu Mugodhi pressed the government to allocate land to his members. In his request he remarked: “We want the government to assist us by giving us farming land” (Masvingise 2012:2). This request is significant in the context of the ethic of economic engagement in AICs. The acquisition is vital because it reflects human empowerment which would help to better the lives of people. Incidentally, the demand for land reflects the extent to which some churches are steeped in political processes affecting the lives of the people in modern Zimbabwe. In this case Mugodhi Apostolic Church and its umbrella body, the Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe (ACCZ) are in solidarity with the ZANU-PF politicians on the critical issues of the land reform and indigenous economic empowerment programmes (see the chapters by Matikiti and Manyonganise in this volume). In fact, ZANU-PF politicians and its supporters are on record that the “land is the economy and the economy is land” (New African 2007). This stand point is succinctly put across by

Bakare (1993:71) who observes that land as a sacred resource constitutes an identity for the survival of a people. In part this is the basis of a theology of land for Zimbabwe.

The fact that land gives identity, it proffers some enduring human rights implications traced from the Bible. Like ancient Israelites who yearned for their promised land in Canaan, the disadvantaged Zimbabweans on account of colonialism, are justified in their quest to repossess land. Thus, from a moralist perspective, land must be allocated to the landless (Maposa, Gamira and Hlongwana 2010:193). It must be noted that as a justice and peace issue, the land reform programme has seen some AICs participating in the recovery of land. This participation is the fountain of the gospel of self-reliance which is based on the effective use of the indigenous resources for the reconstruction of societies and thereby ensuring the salvation of people in their existential "situatedness". The conviction of these AICs is that the indigenes should become masters of their own destiny. Therefore, when deployed in the socio-economic and political spheres of human life, religion cannot be underestimated as an instrument of liberation.

### ***Hama Maoko? (Using Hands as a Source of Livelihood): Some Critical Reflections***

The vocational ethic within the AIC labour practices is indispensable. Whilst this ethic of work is engaged as part and parcel of economic activities, it is also a manifest extension of mission. In fact, it is their theology of mission which thrives on self-reliance. This is why some use the phrase '*hama maoko*' (using hands as a source of livelihood). When a person uses his or her own hands effectively, one becomes empowered and empowerment is an all-round process. When empowerment is engaged economically it becomes a source of liberation and spiritual gratification.

It should also be realised that the concept of *hama maoko* in AICs is based on a clear division of labour. Whereas men are involved in the primary production of goods, women are engaged in merchandising. This division of labour reflects the traditional gender relations in society. This insight is helpful in showing that AICs in general emerged from within the patriarchal structures of society in Africa. Furthermore, one wonders if this economic work ethic is ideologically neutral or whether it liberates or oppresses. It requires another study to interrogate the

gender implications of the existing division of labour among AICs in post-colonial Zimbabwe.

## Conclusion

AICs represent a form of Christianity from the margins, given that they emerged and operated from what Gutierrez (1971) describes as the ‘underside of history’. This means that the AICs have largely been perceived as under-dogs vis-a-vis the mainline Christianity in Africa. Nevertheless, the chapter has highlighted that AICs are havens of stability in terms of economic empowerment given that they continue to multiply in spirit due to their numerical strength in post-colonial Zimbabwe. In this way, the study explored and exemplified the economic work ethic of AICs through cross-border activities, informal business ventures, land reform programme and Operation Murambatsvina. The study concludes that AICs thrive on economic resilience and tenacity in order to mitigate poverty. This theology of mission is meant to liberate both individuals and groups through self-reliance.

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*Tapiwa Praise Mapuranga*

## **Surviving the Urban Jungle: AICs and Women's Socio-Economic Coping Strategies in Harare (2000-2010)**

### **Introduction**

The period 2000-2010 in Zimbabwe was marked by severe challenges in all spheres of the society, which include the social, the political and the economic. A lot has been documented with regards to this era, beginning from the late 1990's where life in the country as a whole basically plunged into bitter struggle, and in particular, how people managed to survive through these economic challenges (see for example, Muzvidziwa 2000, Mupedziswa and Gumbo 2001). In this period of economic instability, to eke a living and gather enough financial security for the sustenance of the family became a challenge, particularly for women. This chapter specifically focuses on the economic upheavals faced by such women in Harare. A selected group of church women belonging to African Independent Churches (AICs) in Harare are amongst the various women who never ceased to toil and provide for their families. This chapter, thus argues for the place of religion in building resilience amongst women (Heinfelaar 2001) in the face economic turmoil. However, it should be noted that not all women emerged as victors in their attempt to curtail a devastating economy; some became victims of the devastating situation. Muzvidziwa (2000:127) in his study of women surviving under the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) of the 1990s identified four categories of women who emerged out of the crisis. These are;

- The burnt out group – those who could hardly support their urban existence

- The hanging on group – those who experienced difficult conditions but strived on to the bitter end
- The coping group – those who could meet ends meet but no savings
- The climbing out of poverty group – those who operated above board with both savings and investments.

Such categories fit well within the context of the economic crisis in Zimbabwe between 2000- 2010. As will be described in this write up, some women, particularly from AICs, who found means of negotiating their financial security during this period of economic meltdown in Zimbabwe, with a particular focus on Harare, belong to such categories as proposed by Muzvidziwa.

## **Methodology**

This study utilises cultural hermeneutics, interviews and selected literature review to locate contesting interpretations of survival strategies by women in AICs in Harare.

Using interviews, this study selects particularly female traders from AICs. This is referred to as, ‘purposeful sampling’ (Patton 1990:106). From the selected interviews, the study can conclude that what affects these selected women can also affect any other woman in the same trade, particularly those in the same situation of eking a living against all odds. Their stories are representative of those many women who are in the same situations (Vambe 2008:75). These interviews from women are quite informative because women’s own voices need to be heard (Staunton 1990).

In as much as this study utilises interviews, it co-opts ‘cultural hermeneutics.’ This, according to M.R.A Kanyoro, this is “...an analysis and interpretation of how culture conditions people’s understanding of reality at a particular time and location” (Kanyoro 2002: 9). She also defines this method as “the choice of combining an affirmation of culture and a critique of it that will have the potential to sustain the modern Africa” (2002: 26). With this method, the study is able to critically analyse whether belonging to AICs has always benefited women, or it has contributed to the marginalisation of women in Harare. This part of cultural hermeneutics is known as the hermeneutics of suspicion (Pui-Lan 2004: 15).

## **Locating AICs in Harare: Deconstructing the Phenomenon**

Zimbabwe's Christian landscape is widely diversified, as argued by Frans J. Verstraelen (1998). Taringa and Mapuranga (2010: 137) mention the plurality of regions that characterises Harare. One finds the Catholic Church, Protestants, African Instituted/Independent/Initiated Churches (AICs) and Pentecostal churches (See also Hayes, 2011:9-15). This chapter concentrates on one brand of Christianity in Zimbabwe: AICs. This is because, as Mabhunu argues, with particular reference to prophetesses in AICs, "The study of women...in African initiated churches (AICs) has remained a second thought, if not a peripheral issue both to seasoned and budding scholars" (Mabhunu 2010:63). This study thus highlights the importance of the gendered dimension of entrepreneurship within AICs in Harare.

'AICs' is a term used to refer to African Instituted/ Initiated/ Independent/ Indigenous/ Innovated or International churches. Scholars have generally differed on how they describe these churches. According to I. Daneel (1987:3), AICs "are a new movement that arose as a result of an interaction between a tribal community and its religion on one hand and a heterogeneous foreign culture intruding with its religion on the other". In simpler terms, scholars have converged on the argument that AICs are churches which "broke away from churches established by European missionaries" (Mukonyora 2007:1).

AICs themselves are largely diverse. This chapter will examine the strategies of survival by women through economic challenges with a particular focus of the Johanne Marange Apostles, and the Johani Masowe Apostles of Harare. These are the particular brands of AIC followers who have become renowned for their high entrepreneurial skills, especially in the informal sector.

## **Overview of the Economic Crisis in Harare (Zimbabwe)**

Zimbabwe's economic deterioration started to be felt out with the effects of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in the 1990s. It was through this programme that Zimbabwe's economic deterioration was heavily felt by the majority of citizens. Through these economic reforms, according to MacPherson (1998:51), "Zimbabwe's economy has undergone tremendous change over the decade of the 1990s". Though this programme was meant to better the economy, according to Mupedziswa and Gumbo (2001:18), this programme

[M]eant that people's lives had not been improved at all by the economic reform programme and in fact, they were worse off than they had been in 1992. This was mainly because of the poor performance of the country's economy.

This was just the beginning of the financial woes. By the late 1990s, the status quo was deteriorating, until around 2000, when things really got worse. Even those women who had vowed to remain as subsistence farmers in the rural areas were pushed to the urban areas because of incessant droughts. This was compounded by the fact that most women remained landless (Goebel 2005). As such, some women were pushed to resettle in the urban areas where they hoped they could improvise and eke other means of survival for themselves and their families. Without access to land and lacking formal employment, many women were forced into the informal sector such as cross border trading, and vegetable and fruit vending. It is women in the informal trade who suffered and struggled for survival in an environment of economic reforms (Mupedziswa and Gumbo 2001). As Musimbi Kanyoro argues, women are usually the ones who have to deal with daily survival issues which include; keeping the house clean, feeding families and nursing the sores of children's skin. She further argues that women really ensure that their families function and children survive, more often than not in very difficult conditions (Kanyoro 2008:219). As noted by Sophie Chirongoma,

[B]y 1994, many activities such as hairdressing, tailoring, bookbinding and wood or stone carving were deregulated...Besides flea markets and vending stalls, cities and towns throughout Zimbabwe witnessed the mushrooming of street hawkers and makeshift stands, many of which were supplying the some range of goods sold by the stores in front of which they plied business, clearly violating the rights of the formal sector which continued to pay taxes (Chirongoma 2009:78).

However, this form of informal trade was only to last until 2005 before the launch of Operation Murambatsvina. This was the apex of the financial woes, especially for people who had managed to eke a living through the informal sector. The period emerging from the 25th of May – June 2005 remains in the memories of most Zimbabweans, particularly the urbanites, most of who lived in Harare. The lives of the civilians were deplorable, especially under Operation Murambatsvina (Operation Restore Order, Clearing the Dirt'). It was as a period of terror, anarchy and gross injustice. Operation Murambatsvina was one of the merciless ways in which the government of Zimbabwe sought to

bring ‘sanity’ or restore order in the suburbs of Harare and the rest of the country. Some remained without dignified accommodation, and for some, they are completely homeless (at the time of writing). Essentially, the government declared war on its citizens and this led to untold suffering (Chitando and Manyonganise 2011:10). Despite the claims by government that its motives were to rid the city of the growing informal urban dwelling, independent observers have alleged that there were ulterior motives behind the campaign (Tibaijuka, 2005:20).

### **The Gendered Effects of a Struggling Economy: The pains of Women**

The economic challenges that Zimbabwe faced, especially in the period under study were highly gendered to a greater extent. As argued by Omoigui (2001: 113), '[w]omen in Africa are characterised by poverty, oppression and violation of human rights'. In the preceding discussion, this chapter has highlighted the general deplorable state that the Zimbabwean economy had plunged into in the period from 2000-2010, stemming even from the earlier decade. As will be highlighted in the forthcoming section, it has been mostly women who have been (and still are) struggling for abundant life in the crisis of poverty.

Similar to most cases in Sub-Saharan Africa, the struggles of the woman in Harare are twice that of the man. According to E. Chauke,

Complicated by poverty, a girl-child has to suffer...all people feel the economical burden, but the burden is doubled on girls and women. The reason for this dilemma is that the society has placed women at the lowest step of the human ladder' (Chauke 2003:135).

With particular reference to Operation Murambatsvina, women were amongst those grossly affected. Chirongoma notes that, ‘women were the majority of those who endured this trauma’ (2009:84). She also argues that,

...they [women] watched helplessly as the bulldozers crushed their homes or, worse still, many were forced to demolish their homes with their own hands, knowing full well that they had absolutely nothing to fall back on. Women with children on their backs were forced to demolish the places they called home...women returning to their ancestral lands were accused of being sex workers (Chirongoma 2009: 73 & 86).

Madzimai Elsie Dingana (Interview, February 2012) recalled how much trauma she still had since her business went down because of operation

Murambatsvina. “Ndakarasikirwa ne mari yose yandaiita kuenda South. Zvekutotengesa mavegetables izvi ndakatangisa patsva”. Literally, “I lost all the capital I had in Operation Murambatsvina. I had to start afresh with this vegetable vending business”.

The suffering of women has been clear, not only in the Murambatsvina Operation, but in all other aspects of life. Mapuranga notes how the status of the woman “...is still a status of struggle, a struggle to survive collectively and individually against the cultural and traditional realities in their society” (Mapuranga 2011:54). Women in Zimbabwe have faced a lot of socio-political and economic challenges due to socio-traditional attitudes that continue to be reinforced by socialisation which brands women as second class citizens.

### **Struggling for Abundant life: Surviving the Urban Jungle**

This study argues that AICs continue to place women at the bottom of the heap, by displacing them to the periphery of the urban setting. According to I. Mukonyora (2007:xvii),

In the Sacred and the Profane, Mircea Eliade says that the human quest for transcendence leads people to create sacred spaces away from the humdrum of daily life. According to Eliade, “the threshold is the limit, the boundary, the frontier that distinguishes and opposes two worlds so that one world is profane and the other is sacred...within the sacred precincts the profane world is transcended”. Eliade’s point about the “boundary” is worth noting, because Zimbabwe’s main streets were filled with European- style church buildings, marking the center, not the margins, as official sacred sites.

This study concurs with Mukonyora’s argument about AICs being at the periphery of the urban setting. Women (being the majority of members in the AICs) are thus placed at the margins of the city of Harare because this is where they gather for their services, and never in the central business district. They are placed at the “outer limits of prayer” (Mukonyora 2007:107) by both the city fathers, and the patriarchal setting of their traditions and churches.

According to A. Chitando,

...throughout history, women have faced serious challenges. Patriarchal ideologies have left many women at the bottom of the heap. The history of women in Zimbabwe shows the multiple struggles that women have endured. Society should reflect critically on the silent and undeclared war between women and men and review its negative attitude towards women (Chitando 2008:17).

As such, this chapter argues that women have been placed at the outer limits of prayer, and patriarchy still pushes them to remain at the bottom of the heap. However, on the other hand, AICs have always availed an opportunity for women to survive the economic hardships that are brought about by the urban setting of Harare.

Consequently, despite the socio-economic challenges that women encountered, they vowed to trudge on. Unless women struggled for themselves, no-one else was equipped to destroy the structures that oppressed her. No male has the experiences of what it means to be a woman. Men will continue to fight the structures that oppress, only from a male perspective. This is articulated by Chauke when she says,

Women need to know who they are. This awareness is the beginning of women's empowerment. A correct knowledge of oneself is good news to those women who are made to feel that their lives are of no value. Women need not compromise on who they are. Rather, they should affirm themselves and each other. God wanted women to be, and therefore, should live their lives to the fullest. Women themselves need to resist all forms of oppression and dehumanization (Chauke 2003:144).

This is particularly true of women in AICs in Harare. In the face of their challenges, women in AICs took up a stance and struggled for abundant life in a devastating economy. AICs have greatly helped women to create coping mechanisms by creating a space for income generation projects for these women. As Chirongoma (2006:61) stipulates, "Shona Religion and Christianity can be partners in inspiring hope". As illustrated in this chapter, AICs, as institutions which combine Shona (cultural) religion and Christianity, are giving women some means to trudge on against the prevailing economic constraints. Madzimai Chipo Charake (Interview, March 2012) agrees with this idea. She says, "*Mati dai kusiri kuchurch munofunga kuti support yekutengesa taiiwana kupi?*" ("Had it not been for the support we get from church, where would we be by now?")

This hope for women's struggle is also noted by A. Gnanadason et al (2005:xi) when they say,

As women confronted with domestic, economic, political or military, social or cultural, ethnic or religious violence respond, in ways as adverse as their settings and resources, their strength comes from their commitment to life rather than death, to peace rather than war, to the future for their children, their families, their communities.

There were many projects that were embarked by women in AICs to counter the effects of an ailing economy in Harare between 2000- 2010. According to M.F.C Bourdillon (1977:203), "[T]he Vapostori believe that

God is the source of their practical skills". This idea is reinforced by F. Sibanda et al (2008: 73), who argue that "the kernel of the economic activities of Vapostori of Marange is vocationalism". They argue that,

Each family is renowned for a wide range of one or more of technical skills like carpentry, basketry, metal working, building and leather working. Women and children are mostly involved in the trading of homemade artifacts of their respective families (Sibanda et al 2008: 73).

Such enterprising and entrepreneurial skills within the AICs, especially amongst women, have also been noted by Mabhunu (2010:81). She argues that economic empowerment is one of the key focus areas within AICs. As such, self employment is highly encouraged amongst the followers of these spirit-type African innovated Churches. As postulated by Mabhunu,

Prophetesses encourage the economic empowerment for women. During gatherings senior female adherents encourage novices to work. Today, we see apostolic women selling fish, clothes, proactive in black market affairs (buying and selling foreign currency) etcetera. Mrs Chinouya of Mbare who belongs to Johanne Masowe Church said (Interview, 2005): "We are allowed to work or even to cross borders to South Africa, Botswana and Namibia for buying and selling". Apostolic women are well known in Harare as dealers in foreign currency at the Road Port near Fourth Street and the infamous "World Bank", a place in Bulawayo famous for illicit foreign currency dealing (Mabhunu 2010:81).

Apart from the survival strategies already mentioned earlier on, Chirairo reiterates the fact that the informal sector activities by such women as in AICs are "characterised by labour intensity." She further outlines that these survival strategies of self employment "in urban areas include crocheting, knitting, dressmaking, vegetable and fruit selling..." (Chirairo 2005:21). These and other forms of informal work embarked by women in Harare to cushion them against the devastating effects of the troubled economy as coping strategies are analyzed by Mupedziswa and Gumbo (2001:30). This informal trading has also been identified by Chirongoma (2009:78) as mentioned earlier, and this includes flea markets, tailoring, amongst other forms of income generation projects.

According to an analysis by Mupedziswa and Gumbo (2001:30), cross border trading, vegetable and fruit vending and craft selling (African artifacts like beads and necklaces) have in most cases been the most vibrant forms of income generation. However, it is important to reiterate the fact that the trade that really topped the list in bringing income depended on the financial season. This was clarified by Madzimai

Chengetai Murwisi (Interview 2012) who sells tomatoes along Chinhoyi Street in Harare. She confirmed that;

Zvatinotengesa zvinofambirana nekuti zvirikufamba mazuva iwayo ndezvipi. Iko zvino matomatoes nemuriwo ndizvo zvirikufamba. Kana iri nguva yechibagewo tinongoitawo zvechibage. Mazuva aya akanyanya kufamba marandi, ndaingoita zvekuchinje mari. Asi kana nanhasi, ndikambowanawo pekutandira ndinopota ndichichinje. Asi basa rose rakangooma nekuti tinongomhanyisana nemapurisaose: ehurumende neemenisparati.

Translated, this is to say;

What we sell depends on what is vibrant at any given moment. In this season I am selling vegetables. When it is the season for green mealies that is what I sell as well. Those days when foreign currency dealing was at its peak, that is what I was involved in too. Even if forex dealing was to be lucrative today, I would still go back to it. However, we face so many challenges in this informal sector. Police are after us: both from government and from the city council (municipality).

This interview reveals how most women in AICs struggle against all odds to support themselves and their families. This alternation of goods depending on demand “shows innovativeness on the part of the traders in observing the laws of demand and trading accordingly” (Mupedziswa and Gumbo 2001:31). However, their trade in most cases is risky business as most are not licensed, and they risk losing both what they would have earned for the day, and the unsold wares. As such, their business remains an illegal activity. This continuation of criminalising women’s informal sector when that is what they can do to survive the economic challenges of an urban setting such as Harare complicates further the struggles of the formally unemployed woman. According to Mupedziswa and Gumbo (2001:114),

Ventures, including those of women, can, if well envisaged, promote national development. And yet the work of these women has increasingly not been recognised.

### **Theological Analysis**

There are six dimensions that contribute to human development. These are “spiritual capital, moral capital, aesthetic capital, human abilities, and human potential” (Adjibolosoo 2000:4). Muzvidziwa (2000) refers to women “climbing out of poverty”, and Sibanda et al (2008) suggest that Vapostori of Marange “exploited the challenges into opportunities.

Women in Harare took advantage of their AIC membership to map out strategies of survival within the harsh urban dynamics of the city within the period under study.

It is in this context that this study examines how religion, and in particular, AICs, have been appropriated by informally employed women to overcome the economic challenges they have faced within the urban setting of Harare. Women in AICs in Harare have appropriated their religion to become resilient mothers, peasants, traders and wives (Schmidt 1992).

This is justified by Muzvidziwa (2010:93) who argues that religion has often been used as a coping and survival strategy in many social settings. The case of AICs in Zimbabwe can be likened to the case of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God (ZAOGA), a church also an Initiative by an indigenous Zimbabwean, Ezekial Guti. As studied by David Maxwell,

...it enables Pentecostals to make the best of rapid social change... [F]or others, they provide a code of conduct which guards them from falling into poverty and destitution. For all, they provide a pattern for coming in terms with, and benefitting from modernities' dominant values and institutions... For many Zimbabweans it provides a framework with which to respond to the pressure of modernization...For those living on the margins of poverty pentecostalism's emphasis on renewing the family and protecting it from alcohol, drugs and sexual promiscuity at least stops them from slipping over the edge...Pentecostal practice at least offers them some realizable advance in their livelihoods. (Maxwell 1998: 351& 370).

This is similar to what M. Ojo (1997) refers to in the Nigerian case, where churches in most cases have responded to the needs and aspirations of Nigerians amidst the uncertainty of their political life and of their constant and unending economic adjustments. As such, AICs have responded to the economic needs of women in the city of Harare by allowing them self employment, though many times they have been running endless battles with the government and municipal police since they are almost always involved in 'illegal' activities such as foreign currency dealing and selling fruit and vegetables in undesignated places, thereby evading taxes.

## Conclusion

Despite the idea that women in AICs are sidelined to the periphery or the margins of their urban settings, the skills which they tap from their church have armed them with great survival skills in a harsh economic

environment. Religion has, thus, played a very important role for the survival of women within the changing dynamics of the economy of Harare, Zimbabwe. By promoting informal trade such as cross border trading, operating flea markets, foreign currency dealing, basketry, and selling metal ware among other means of livelihood, the majority of women in AICs in Harare have managed (and still manage) to pull through the economic crisis. Their entrepreneurial skills which they believe come from their belief that 'God is their source of their practical skills', to a greater extent, pushes them to soldier on.

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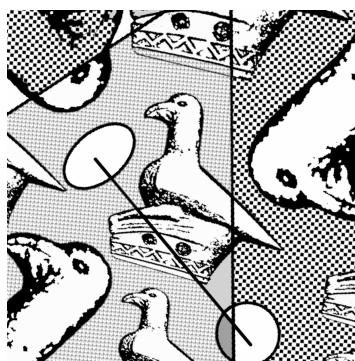
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### **Interviews (Representative)**

- Madzimai Chengetai Murwisi, Interview, March 2012, Harare.  
 Madzimai Elsie Dingana, Interview, February 2012, Harare.  
 Madzimai Chipo Charake, Interview, March 2012, Harare.



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This volume was motivated by the realisation that AICs continue to be a significant player on Zimbabwe's spiritual market. Members of predominantly Apostolic, but also Zionist, churches are highly visible in both rural and urban areas. Prophets from AICs are constantly in the news, alongside advertising their competence in urban areas. Thus it is high time to bring AICs being an important part of recent social reality in Zimbabwe back into academic focus.

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