

# **Lettres de Byblos**

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## **Letters from Byblos**

No. 23

HELGA DICKOW AND ANDREAS HEUSER (Eds)

**Religion on the Move**  
Exploring Passages in South African Christianity



**Centre International des Sciences de l'Homme**  
**International Centre for Human Sciences**  
المركز الدولي لعلوم الإنسان

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# Lettres de Byblos / Letters from Byblos

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## Introduction

Portraying "religions on the move", a notion brought up by Klaus Hock, this volume presents different studies on the religious topography especially in South Africa. The emphasis is on changes in the perception and public representation of diverse religious movements and certain traditions within contemporary African Christianity. In an interdisciplinary approach the authors enter the playing ground of definitions of religious movements exploring the interaction between media and religion, they document processes of internal adaptations to changing socio-political contexts, they discuss conversion experiences in a transcultural dimension, or relate to the transnational influence of African churches in the European Diaspora.

The first two articles deal with the persistent importance of African Independent Churches (AIC) in South Africa. In an analysis of South African literature Erhard Kamphausen explores the cross-cultural dimension in the initial growth of Ethiopianism in South Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century. The discursive adoption of its African-American heritage in the South African political context shows the transition of liberational theologies into "white" myths of terror. Andreas Heuser's article on the reggae star Lucky Dube demonstrates the fusion especially in the media public of African Independent Churches with new religious movements in present-day South Africa. In his survey of media reports Dube is portrayed as a Rastafarian prophet whereas his membership of a prominent AIC is almost treated in a secretive way. Although a strong pillar in the religious landscape AICs, it seems, are still suffering from the historical formation of categories of denial - that have entered the general public consciousness meanwhile.

Three contributions focus on the relevance of charismatic and Pentecostal churches in the new South Africa, present results of empirical research and compare them with the socio-political and theological self-understanding of those churches. Lutz Meyer discusses the conversion experience of the founding father of a charismatic church. His biographical approach testifies the evolution of theological convictions that find an echo in born-again experiences elsewhere. The author approaches the question whether the conversion narrative may be still understood as a genuine African experience of faith. Ezekiel Mokwele Katiso Mathole looks into the theological changes and achievements of Pentecostal and charismatic churches in the new South Africa. His inside perspective on the societal profile of this spectre of churches emphasises their concern for social and developmental matters. Helga Dickow and Valerie Møller compare the results of a statistical survey of members of a charismatic church and other inhabitants in Gauteng on aspects of religiosity as well as socio-political issues and political attitudes. The comparative method has a time-component too and includes some data of earlier empirical research by the authors. Against a common stereotype the findings present a surprisingly modern type of religious life sensitive for the socio-political agenda of the day.

The contribution by Roswith Gerloff concludes the volume with an outlook of the growing importance of religion in the African Diaspora. Dealing with categories of



transnational religious interchange and mutual influences in the transmigratory move of religions, she highlights the concept of "Diaspora" as one of the most inspiring research topics at present.

The drafts of the articles presented in this volume were first given at a panel of the joint conference on "Frontiers and Passages", co-organised by the African Studies Association in Germany (VAD) and the Swiss Society for African Studies (SGAS) in Freiburg and Basel in May 2008. This panel was the only one which dealt with aspects of religion. With this publication we invite a wider public to take note of some of the passages in the religious sphere in Africa.

We would like to thank the contributors to our panel for their participation and willingness to contribute to this volume, the Arnold Bergstrasser Institute in Freiburg, the Association of Churches and Missions in South Western Germany, and the Research Centre *RES GERENDAE* for covering its printing costs. Angela Herrmann accurately provided the layout and supported us in all the stages of the completion.

Helga Dickow, Andreas Heuser  
Freiburg and Limburg, September 2008

## **"The Snake in the Grass"** **Black Emancipation and White Anxieties.**

**The reaction of the white community to the growth of Ethiopianism  
in South Africa<sup>1</sup>**

ERHARD KAMPHAUSEN

### **Fiction: The Snake strikes. The Successful Ethiopian Insurrection**

A Cape Town night in the first decades of the 20th century: "A few spots of rain fell from the dense black clouds which blanketed the kranzes of Table Mountain. On the slopes of Prospect Hill, which commanded a view of the myriads lights of the town, could be heard the ceaseless patter of bare feet. A large concourse of Kaffirs was assembling, each carrying a rifle and a full bandolier.

In response to whispered commands, the black mass slowly arranged itself into groups under their respective commanders and stood waiting and eager to perform their allotted tasks in the coming drama. The clock in the distant tower of the City Hall chimed out its quarters, heedless of the flying minutes, while five thousand natives were looking for the signal of their birth as a nation.

All unconscious, down below, slept Cape Town: dwelling pitiably in the security of its self-complacency, in absolute belief in its own infallibility."<sup>2</sup>

But his was only the beginning of the nightmare: "Then from Lion Battery ... a rocket shot up high into the sky, dragging a trail of fire. It paused for an instant ... then, giving up the ghost, it burst into a fan of blue flame, which separated into drops and fell

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<sup>1</sup> For a full historical analysis of Ethiopianism see Kamphausen 1976. In this study the detailed sources used in the present paper and their locations are presented.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholls 1923: 356.

like the tears of a god. A low murmur of joy broke from the natives, which was immediately hushed by the leaders. So the Lion Battery was theirs! And Lion Battery dominated Cape Town.

A minute later a rocket shot up from Wynyard. Amsterdam Battery signalled its message of success. Fort Knockle and Craig Tower gave the sign almost simultaneously. To the right, and three redoubts had changed masters. Cape Town had a surprise awaiting it when it awoke. ... Down the slope hurried a regiment of bare-footed Kaffirs, its destination being the Castle, the oldest building in South Africa."<sup>3</sup>

With the vision of the total annihilation of white civilization on the African continent and White South Africa drowning in a sea of blood ends the popular novel "Bayete! 'Hail to the King'" which was published by G. Heaton Nicholls 1923. The author "has had long practical experience of administration both in British Colonies and in South Africa, where he was recognized as one of the principal architects of the prevailing liberalism in Government policy"<sup>4</sup>. To understand the apocalyptic events of the fall of white power it is necessary to observe closely the way the author characterises Nelson Balumbata, the charismatic leader of the black uprising. In the prologue of Bayete! the stage for the unfolding of the historical panorama is set: In 1894 Chief Lobenguela, the last king of the Matabele nation was mortally wounded in his last battle against the British colonial troops. He died in a remote region in Zambia where he was secretly buried in a cave. The tribe elected as his successor Balumbata a refugee who due to his outstanding physical and intellectual qualities had won the respect of the king and the chiefs. Heaton draws the attention of the reader to the fact that because of his Arab blood Balumbata was racially superior to the rest of the "tribal Kaffirs" among which he lived. Even from a white perspective Balumbata was an extraordinary personality: "he was a man with the face and bearing of an ancient Pharaoh. He was over six feet in height, with sharp clear-cut features and a bronzed skin, and he walked with the swinging gait of an athlete."<sup>5</sup>

In a solemn ceremony Balumbata promised his people that he would sacrifice his life to restore the power of the African empire and put an end to colonial subjugation. As he knew that white military power was far superior to traditional African arms he made it very clear that he intended to reach his goals not by war and means of violence.

In a farewell speech he told his followers that he was prepared to leave the country and acquire skills outside of Africa. "Warriors, I tell you that I, too, will learn from the

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<sup>3</sup> Nicholls 1923: 357.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholls 1945: 73.

<sup>5</sup> Nicholls 1923: 32.

It is interesting that a missionary reported that Christian groups belonging to the Ethiopian movement in Natal maintained that they descended from Egypt and that "the Egyptians will be given a Nkosi who is vicious and fearful." Their leader, Amon Khumalo, believed that "this land will be given back to the Egyptians and that he himself is an Egyptian. ... the land will be changed by God and given to the Egyptians." Letter dated December 1, 1905, SNAC 54/05.

white all the knowledge, which has made them powerful.... I will leave you. When I come back I shall call every warrior to learn from me, and we shall then shout a war cry that will strike terror into every heart."<sup>6</sup>

The next chapter leads the reader to the Southern States of the USA, where Sir Garth, a member of the South African Cabinet happens to visit a large black training school – possibly Tuskegee Institute founded and directed by the famous Afro-American leader Booker T. Washington.<sup>7</sup> The South African politician was accompanied by his daughter Olive, an intellectual and sensitive young woman who was actively involved in philanthropic activities to ameliorate the social and political situation of native South Africans. Olive – possibly identical with the famous novelist Olive Schreiner<sup>8</sup> – is the white heroine of the novel. Olive Schreiner was a radical liberal and a pacifist, she opposed racism and struggled for women's rights. One of her brothers, William Philip Schreiner became prime minister of the Cape Colony.

During their stay in Tuskegee Garth and Olive were introduced to Bishop Nelson a most impressive and fascinating clergyman from South Africa. They were informed that Nelson represented the Ethiopian Church, i.e. the first African Independent Church from which emanated the pan-African socio-religious movement of Ethiopianism. When questioned by the white delegation about his vision to solve of the race problem Nelson answered: "I can conceive only one solution, a solution which will come by the faith in God and the Ethiopian Church. A negro church to which every negro belonged would soon put a stop to all injustice ... I think that I am doing God's work in organising the Ethiopian Church."<sup>9</sup>

Of course whites were unaware of the fact that many black Christians in America and Africa shared the firm belief that Bishop Nelson was a God ordained prophet and messiah. It was said that he communicated with God and that God had trusted the mission of redeeming the African continent to him. One day he had a vision in which God told him: "Listen to my commands and faithfully follow them. The Whites have forgotten me. Into their charge I committed the heathen of Africa and I gave them dominion over the land. But they have oppressed those whom they should have loved and taught, and used them as slaves to be exploited. To thee, Balumbata, I assign the guidance of the church of Africa where millions of my people have never heard of me. Work on and be not afraid, for from thy efforts a new nation shall arise and Africans shall rule Africa."<sup>10</sup> He told a black audience: "Since that day God has guided me in all I have done, and the result is the establishment of the Ethiopian Church under the banner bearing the words – 'Africa for the Africans'. ... In all your work you must remember that it is the faith in Jesus Christ that can bind the people together; it is

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<sup>6</sup> Nicholls 1923: 27

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Franklin/Moss 1988: 244.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Olive Schreiner's famous novel "The Story of an African Farm".

<sup>9</sup> Nicholls 1923: 36.

<sup>10</sup> Nicholls 1923: 51.

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religion alone which will loosen the ties of custom and break down the barriers of language; it is religion alone which can inspire the people to strike for freedom. For the present our political object must be kept hidden until Christ has strengthened us for the task; but ... but though hidden, it must never be lost sight of. I am God's prophet amongst you, for to me he has spoken ..."<sup>11</sup>

Some years later we find Bishop Nelson, who had finished his studies travelling all over the Southern African regions, establishing churches and organising networks of religious groups in the "native territories".

One day Collingwood, a close friend of the Garth family, who had served in the colonial army for many years reported that he had discovered a growing unrest among Africans and that large numbers of them were secretly meeting in hidden places. He even was able to overhear a seditious sermon preached by Nelson's Assistant Bishop Jacob.

Disobeying Nelson's principle to apply non-violent means only the traitor gave the order to start an armed rising: "My friends, this is a war of God", he said. "We do not trust to our weapons against the guns of the Whites. We trust to the God above Who can spread ruin amongst them in a night. Years ago God gave the Whites the right of governing, but by their lack of faith in Him, and by their oppression of us who love Him, they have forfeited their right. God now hands the Government over to us, ... we, the people of this country, shall rule."<sup>12</sup>

With the approval of Nelson the rebellion was crushed by the military in a short time. He was nevertheless arrested and taken to court under the charge of treason. Due to the support of white friends he was later released from prison. Nelson could give ample evidence that he had never ordered the violent rebellion and he convinced his judges that his assistant had betrayed him and the cause of Ethiopianism. After his release from prison the Bishop moved to Pretoria where he established the Ethiopian Church as his headquarters.<sup>13</sup>

Not before 1912 when the Native Land Act was passed Nelson planned a first action of non-violent resistance, which had to be fully in harmony with British law. Together with other tribal and Ethiopian leaders he organized a general strike; he declared: "Without us every industry in South Africa ceases. No ships can unload their cargoes, no mines can work, no railways can be run, and no farmer can sow or gather his crops. We hold the Whites at our mercy and we can bring down with a crush the whole fabric of Government and plunge the country into financial ruin. ... We shall return to work when we receive the franchise. The franchise is the first step. We

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<sup>11</sup> Nicholls 1923: 52.

<sup>12</sup> Nicholls 1923: 151.

<sup>13</sup> In the Government Archives of Natal I found the statement of a secret police officer who reported "... gradually committees have formed in the Independent Church throughout South Africa, having its headquarters in Pretoria, with the object of inciting all Aboriginal Races in Africa south of the Equator to rise and blot out the white man from the country." SNA C55/1903, Re the Native Independent Movement and Sitopia Church, 11.4.1903.

demand that we shall have the same rights of voting as the whites, and once that power is gained we shall rule the country."<sup>14</sup>

The general strike was a full success: the liberal Government was forced to abolish all discriminating laws and grant the franchise to all British subjects regardless of their colour or racial affiliation. Africans were given seats in the Parliament of Cape Town. Bowden who was elected the first Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa reluctantly took Nelson into his Cabinet. The Bishop saw to it that a law was passed which put the African reserves totally under African control and guaranteed that Whites were forbidden to enter African tribal territories. Some years later the secret service discovered that in Pambalaland - the Chief of which was the right hand of Nelson - a huge native army was trained and equipped with modern weaponry provided by black Americans. White reaction was too late. Bowden's secret plans to start a coup d'état; to arrest and shoot Nelson was betrayed by Olive and failed. The African attack on Cape Town could not be stopped. The snake struck and South Africa drowned in blood.

At the end of the novel the truth of Ethiopianism was revealed to the dying Olive by Collingwood; it was the truth that white colonialists and settler society had always feared: "Olive, you have never quite understood Nelson. You have seen him only as a native leader in agreement with your views, seeking merely to build up a separate individuality for his own race alongside the separate individuality of the white race. You have always believed that Nelson considers that the two races could live side by side, each developing along its own lines, territorially and socially separated but politically equal, mixing only for industrial purposes, each race realising that the one was necessary to the development of the other. That is the orthodox view. It is the Booker Washington view. ... But it never was Nelson's view. ... It is a comfortable faith - for the whites, this orthodox view. It would save such a lot of trouble for us all if we could keep black and white in separate compartments. But Nelson's idea of a separate compartment is a Black Africa. It is an American idea. ... And so, back-to-Africa has always had its advocates and the appeal of an African nation has always inspired response among all sections of the American Negroes. It is they who have furnished the money for Nelson's work. Nelson, therefore, represents not only the aspirations of the race-conscious Bantu, but also the black movement in America. ... Nelson has never had the orthodox view. He believes that there is no room in Africa for black and white together. He believes that the fifty million Bantu organised can rid the country of white dominance."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Nicholls 1923: 223.

<sup>15</sup> Nicholls 1923: 365f.



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## Fiction: The Snake Recoils. The failure of an Ethiopian Insurrection in South Africa

Whereas G.H. Nicholls' book addressed itself to an enlightened and politically aware audience the novel "Prester John" (1910) expressed the fears of the white settler community in a popular adventure story. Its author was John Buchan, a Scottish novelist who had engaged himself in South African politics during the reconstruction period after the Boer war.

The hero of Buchan's novel is David Crawford, a young Scotsman - son of a minister of the Free Church of Scotland who immigrates to South Africa where he was offered the position of a shopkeeper in the remote village Blaauwildebeestfontein in the Transvaal.

As a young boy David had a traumatic experience in his hometown in Scotland. One Sunday a black clergyman from the South African mission field preached a powerful sermon in his father's congregation: "A black man ... had been preaching. ... He had preached about the heathen in Africa, and how the black man was as good as a white man in the sight of God, and that he had forecast a day when the Negroes would have something to teach the British in the way of civilization."<sup>16</sup>

In the evening Crawford and a group of youngsters went for a walk in the cliffs near the sea. They were shocked when they suddenly discovered the black priest on the beach: "It was indeed a black man, as we saw when the moon came out of a cloud. His head was on the breast, and he walked round the fire with measured, regular steps. At intervals he would stop and raise both hands to the sky, and bend his body in the direction of the moon. ... There was something desperately uncanny about this great Negro, who had shed his clerical garments, and was now practicing some strange magic alone by the sea."<sup>17</sup> Like Nicholls John Buchan mentions that the black preacher looked different from the normal African: His face "was black, black as ebony but it was different from the ordinary Negro. There were no thick lips and flat nostrils; rather ... the nose was high bridged, and the lines of the mouth sharp and firm. But it was distorted into an expression of such terror and devilish fury and amazement that my heart became like water."<sup>18</sup> For white eyes it was evident that the African's clerical appearance and attire was mere camouflage and a disguise of the brute pagan magician to deceive his benevolent white sponsors.

Years later the reader finds David Crawford on his voyage to South Africa. To his shock he realised that the ship's chaplain, a black clergyman by the name of John Laputa, was the very African pastor whom he had encountered in Scotland long ago.

Again the pastor's outer appearance struck him: "The man's face was as commanding as his figure, and his voice was the most wonderful thing that ever came out of human mouth. It was full and rich, and gentle, with the tones of a great organ. He

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<sup>16</sup> Buchan 1927: 15.

<sup>17</sup> Buchan 1927: 18f.

<sup>18</sup> Buchan 1927: 20.

had none of the squat and preposterous Negro lineaments, but a hawk nose like an Arab, dark flashing eyes, and a cruel and resolute mouth. He was black as my hat, but for the rest he might have sat for a figure of a Crusader"<sup>19</sup> Crawford finally arrived at his destination Blaauwildebeestefontein, where he became a close friend to the local schoolmaster Wardlaw. By this experienced man he was introduced to his new environment and to all prejudices and anxieties that prevailed in the white settler community. For him it was self evident that the surrounding Africans, whose intelligence and dangerousness were often underrated, planned a rebellion: "There were five or six of them to every white man; they were all, roughly speaking, of the same stock, with the same tribal beliefs; they had only just ceased being a warrior race, with a powerful military discipline: and, most important, they lived round the rim of the high-veld plateau, and if combined would cut off the white man from the sea."<sup>20</sup> Wardlaw who "had been reading a lot about Ethiopianism which educated American Negroes had been trying to preach in South Africa." He had come to the conclusion that this "kind of bastard Christianity" would provide a motive for a general rising.<sup>21</sup> Like many white South Africans Wardlaw believed that once in a century an African genius like King Chaka would rise and change the turns of history.<sup>22</sup> John Laputa possibly was that genius.

From Arcoll, an officer of the secret police, Crawford learned that the hidden activities of Ethiopianism were somehow linked to the mythological story of Prester John. According to this legend, which had fascinated the minds of medieval Christianity Prester John, was a powerful African king who had conquered large parts of the African continent south of the Muslim belt.<sup>23</sup> Under him and his successors the legendary empire of Ethiopia extended more and more to the south. When the empire finally broke off, some tribes moved further south even to Natal and the Cape. The Zulus "brought with them the story of Prester John, but this time it ceased to be a historical memory, and had become a religious cult. ... Some fetish had descended by

<sup>19</sup> Buchan 1927: 29.

<sup>20</sup> Buchan 1927: 59.

<sup>21</sup> Buchan 1927: 60.

<sup>22</sup> For the Legend of Prester John see Yule 1910-1911: 304-307.

In the Government Archives of Pietermaritzburg I found an interesting report on the Ethiopian Movement in Bechuanaland: "The native of the Protectorate is at heart a slave, and a slave is the same thing as a despot. ... As yet this very quality is a safeguard against any serious attempt to establish a black republic unless they get hold of one of those native leaders who were born among the tribes every century or so."

<sup>23</sup> In an affidavit the secret police assistant George Mashwa reported treasonable statements by one of the founding fathers of the Ethiopian Church: "I heard Gabashane say that the Blacks were going to set up a new Kingdom and that the white people would be driven out of Africa. ... He also told me that a King descended from Solomon through the Queen of Sheba and was about to set up his Kingdom and to become the King of the Blacks and that the white people would be driven out of Africa." NA No.1/154/B 96 Native Office Cape Town 1.8.1906 Abel Gabashane: Treasonable Statements.



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way of the Zulus brought it down with them. They called it *Ndhondlo*, which means the Great Snake. ... The snake was their totem."<sup>24</sup> The famous Zulu conqueror Chaka was in possession of the sacred Snake but with him the fetish disappeared. During his investigations Arcoll had found out that a black bishop by the name of Laputa moved secretly among the tribes from Durban to the Zambezi preaching the seditious anti-white slogan "Africa for the Africans". He made use of the story of Prester John.

The secret police further discovered that Laputa was of royal Zulu blood and was educated in Black American institutions of higher learning in the USA.

During his travels Laputa preached to many African audiences: "At full moon when the black was blooded, the Reverend John forgot his Christianity. He was back four centuries among the Mazimba sweeping down the Zambezi. He told them, and they believed him that he was the Unkulunkulu, the incarnated spirit of Prester John. He told them that he was there to lead the African race to conquest and empire. Ay, and he told them more: for he has, or says he has, the Great Snake itself, the necklet of Prester John."<sup>25</sup> In a secret meeting that Laputa held in the premises of his shop Crawford was able to overhear a conversation in which it was revealed that a general rising of all African tribes south of the Zambesi was planned and organised. But before the attack Laputa had to receive the fetish, which would guarantee victory of his troops over the white colonialists: "'The keeper of the Snake' will open the holy place and bring forth the *Isetembiso sami* (*very sacred thing*). As a leader of my people, I will assume the collar of Unkulunkulu in the name of our God and the spirits of the great dead. ... When I am acclaimed king, I restore the Snake to its Keeper and swear never to clasp it on my neck till I have led my people to victory."<sup>26</sup>

The enthronisation of Laputa as Prester John incarnated took place in a secret cave on the rim of the high-veld plateau. When Laputa left the cave to join his army he was assassinated by a Portuguese traitor who took the Sacred Snake from him. His death caused the collapse of the Ethiopian rebellion. The efforts of Ethiopianism to crush white domination failed. John Buchan finishes his story: "It is not my task to write the history of the great rising. ... There was no leader when Laputa was gone. There were months of guerrilla fighting, and then months of reprisals when chief after chief was hunted down and brought to trial. Then the amnesty came and a clean sheet, and white South Africa drew breath again with certain grave reflections left in her head."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Buchan 1927: 78.

<sup>25</sup> Buchan 1927: 81.

<sup>26</sup> Buchan 1927: 96.

<sup>27</sup> Buchan 1927: 195.

## Historical evidence from a white perspective: Government and Mission sources documenting the threat of Ethiopianism

By telling the stories of Balumbata and Laputa, G. Heaton Nicholls and John Buchan have made ample use of rumours and different written materials, which were spread in South Africa.

By the turn of the century the Ethiopian movement had become a reality, which deeply concerned religious and political circles in the white community. During my researches in various government and mission archives I discovered a number of yet unpublished source materials, which might have been known and used by both novelists.

Right from the beginning the South African public was deeply disturbed by the manifestations of the African strife for independence in social and ecclesiastical matters. Ethiopianism struggling for church independency was regarded as a great danger to the mission churches and to the peace of the land in general. In fact it were the missionaries who first raised their voices against church independency. Here are some representative original statements, which I like to quote: "The missionaries, who know the natives as a father knows his children, are well aware of the mental and moral disintegration at work in many native minds, of social and religious causes and of the probable political effects."<sup>28</sup> The Scottish missionary Stormont stated in a confidential report: "... the missionary has taught liberty, freedom, equality, against the ruling class here; and the results of his teachings have not been mixed with love either for man or for God but with hatred of those, who enjoy by their frugality or education, worldly advantages. This is the explanation of the race-hatred of the day - that rushes to the Bible for its defence and support."<sup>29</sup> "The Ethiopian question or movement rather", said a witness before a Government Commission, "is a revolt on the part of native ministers of various mission denominations against white control ... The effect of this movement generally called Ethiopianism is to break up all the work that has been done for the last fifty years ... and to prevent a healthy organisation of missions."<sup>30</sup> "Of all evils which have befallen missionary work," stated a missionary, "I do not think there is any so serious as Ethiopianism. Wherever the agents of this movement go, they sow the seeds of discontent and distrust. ... It is certain that the taproot of this movement is opposition to the whites, and such being the case, it is to be deprecated by all who have the welfare of the natives at heart. ... Not only does this spirit cut at the foundation of all successful mission but if persisted in, may eventually lead to serious

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<sup>28</sup> Christian Express 34, 1899: 35.

<sup>29</sup> Report Stormont, 15.8.1899, in: MS 75 12c - Stormont, Davis Duncan. Cony Library, Grahamstown.

<sup>30</sup> Minutes of Evidence of the South African Native Affairs Commission, 1903-1905, vol. 2, p. 174.

political troubles in which the natives will be the chief sufferers."<sup>31</sup> In the Methodist Archive Collection I found a scrapbook; one text was marked: "The only danger in the future is the false impression which some native teachers are endeavouring to instil into the minds of the ordinary native, to the effect that that the white men are foreigners and should therefore take a minor seat in the affairs of the country. I hope the Government ... will prevent any recognition of the American Mission ideas into the Territories, as they are a foreboding of a great and fierce struggle in South Africa which can now be prevented, but if allowed will spread into unquenchable flame far worse than can ever be imagined at present."<sup>32</sup> The Presbyterian minister J.J. McClure told a Government commission: "I have been informed by missionaries that the movement is due only to the operation of American opinion and the work of American Missionaries ... their main object is to establish a South African Native state, or a country purely to South African Natives. ... The idea which certainly gave rise to the movement in this country, was that the native should own land; and that the land belonged to him by right; and that those of us, white people, who are living in the country had no right or title to our position. And the movement was to give the native back his land, and in fact, turn South Africa into a negro state."<sup>33</sup> "We seem to have arrived at a critical stage in the history of our Native Churches in South Africa", remarked a missionary. "The evidence of an inflowing tide-wave of revolutionary tendency is everywhere apparent. It is not limited to the congregations of one denomination but it is more or less manifestly affecting all of them."<sup>34</sup> The famous Scottish missionary James Stewart, who suffered from the secession of his student Rev. Pambani Mzimba<sup>35</sup> wrote to the Government: "The Ethiopian movement ... might be described ... in one word, anti-white or anti-European. It began as a religious movement ... seeking to create separate churches ... wholly under native control ... It was social, seeking for equality and freedom from white direction and though not intentionally political, sooner or later it must come into collision with English or imperial views."<sup>36</sup> On another occasion he stated: "The name Ethiopian Church was admirably conceived as an appeal to race and religion, though probably race more than religion has to do with the whole movement. ... 'Africa for the Africans' is the motto of the Ethiopian movement ... and through it the African strikes at the missionaries, the one class of foreigners upon whom he can depend for fair treatment and highest service. It is believed to be to some extent responsible for the uprisings of the natives in German

<sup>31</sup> Report on the Proceedings of the First General Missionary Conference held at Johannesburg, July 13-20, 1904, p. 40.

<sup>32</sup> Meth. Arch. Coll. MS 15, 180 Scrapbook containing press cuttings, 23.3.1904.

<sup>33</sup> Archives of the Department of Native Affairs Natal, Confidential Papers, SNAC 54/05.

<sup>34</sup> Christian Express 28, 1898: 134.

<sup>35</sup> Mzimba is most probably identical with Buchan's Rev. Nelson Laputa, who seceded from the Free Church of Scotland.

<sup>36</sup> Letter dated August 10, 1901.

South Africa, and ensuing bloodsheds."<sup>37</sup> In his book *The New Era in South Africa*<sup>38</sup> T.V. Markham summarises: "A strange leaven is at present working among the educated Kaffirs throughout the country, a leaven to which the affairs of the Ethiopian Church bear emphatic testimony. ... A new ideal is taking possession of the black man's mind. Africa for the Africans ... the aim of the educated native is freedom ... in all matters political and social ... The result has been the creation of much discontent and restlessness throughout the country." About the time when Nicholls published his novel *W.J.W. Roome* uttered a serious warning: Ethiopianism "has sent agents throughout Africa. Residents in Africa know the insidious working of the cult, which preaches the 'complete deliverance of Ethiopians', advocates 'union and strength to the black races', and prophesizes that 'the temporal rule' of the Europeans is nearly at an end."<sup>39</sup>

The colonial governments and the white settler community took the missionary reports seriously and interpreted them in the context of race prejudice. Government officials felt uneasy about the church movement but there was no direct evidence that Ethiopianism constituted a danger to law and order. The archive materials show that there were only rumours and vague assumptions based on anxieties. For example the inspector of Native Locations in the Cape reported: "The Natives have been agitated by a Church movement on professedly racial lines. The leading idea is to cast off the white man (umlungu) altogether in Church matters. ... The name of the Church conveys the leading and master thought of the organisation. In the designation 'Ethiopian Church' is contained the very pith of the movement. She lays claim to being the native national church, into which all tribes shall come; prophecies the birth of a great nation out of herself - viz. 'the Ethiopian people'; seeks to be entirely independent of all European control in church matters."<sup>40</sup> The statement of a magistrate from the Transkei resembles certain quotes in Buchan's and Nicholls' novels: "I have come to the conclusion that the object of that body is to oust the white man from Africa and to carry out, as they say, the idea of having Africa for the Africans. Hitherto large tribes have tried individually to throw off the British yoke, but they have not succeeded. These people are working more carefully and more craftily, and they certainly will not strike before the time has arrived, but that it is their aim and object to strike, whenever they feel ready ... there is no slightest doubt. ... Bye and bye the Native people will drive the British out of South Africa and make an African Republic."<sup>41</sup> In an official "Table showing particulars in regard to the Ethiopian movement in some districts" which I discovered in the Government Archives in Cape Town, the colonial administrator summarizes his findings: "Their aims are simple - to get rid of European control and

<sup>37</sup> Wells 1908: 292.

<sup>38</sup> Markham 1904: 117.

<sup>39</sup> Roome 1927: 62.

<sup>40</sup> Cape of Good Hope Blue Book on Native Affairs, 1899, G. 31-39, Cape Town 1899. Report F.P. Gladwin, Inspector of Native Locations, Bedford, 13.1.1899.

<sup>41</sup> Wirgman 1907: 27.

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free themselves from their alleged yoke. To establish a great National Church controlled by men of colour."<sup>42</sup>

Both the national and the international press became alarmist. "The Ethiopian propaganda has for its cry equal rights for the native Africans and its object is the securing possession of the whole of South Africa for the aboriginal natives on the ground that it is a black man's country and that the whites have no right here."<sup>43</sup> Even the well renowned New York Times reported on Ethiopianism "that the Kafirs are deeply stirred by the preaching of a gospel of 'Ethiopianism'. A sort of a barbarian Monroe Doctrine of 'Africa for the Africans', which, if it once takes root in the mysterious minds of the blacks, may make a good deal of trouble. ... It seems the original natives ... have been visited by Africans from the United States, who are preaching to them the notions of inherent right absorbed in our land of democratic emotions. ... And it well may happen that the whites, whether British or Boer, may have some difficulty to repress the aspirations bred of this notion. Ethiopianism ... may give rise to considerable discontent and to disturbance. ... It is confessed by the most acute English observers that the operations of the Kafir mind are almost impenetrable and that the whites have made serious errors in seeing to control them. If the new proselytism arouses a hitherto unfelt and strong impulse in them the situation will certainly be a trying one."<sup>44</sup>

Most white critics of Ethiopianism condemned strongly the black American influence on the African movement. Many whites were convinced that not indigenous Africans but Afro-Americans were the true "wire-pullers" of Ethiopianism and they believed "that the movement is due only to the operation of (black) American missionaries, who have come over and are endeavouring to teach the people their own ideas of political rights and freedom."<sup>45</sup> The Anglican Canon Wirgman argues what most South Africans think: "We want to keep our natives apart from the emancipated American negroes. ... It is virtual necessary to the peace and progress of our native people to prevent them assimilating the false ideals of the semi-educated descendants of the negro slaves. ... The influence of the American Negro must be resisted in every way by the true friends of our native people. We must point out to them that the ideals are essentially wrong and impossible. ... Our own natives are racially capable of higher things than the American Negroes. Their East Coast blood with its Arab strain is superior to that of the West Coast people. Why should our natives ... look for political inspiration to an inferior race?"<sup>46</sup> A resident Magistrate points

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<sup>42</sup> NA 96, 498, Government Archives Cape Town.

<sup>43</sup> Rand Daily Mail, June 6, 1904.

<sup>44</sup> Ethiopianism, New York Times, 22.5.1904.

<sup>45</sup> South African Native Affairs Commission vol. 2: 174.

<sup>46</sup> Wirgman 1907: 30. K. Axenfeld stresses the historical necessity of the link: "(D)er Aethiopismus mußte kommen. Es war auf die Dauer unausweichlich, daß zwischen der großen amerikanischen Negerwelt und der afrikanischen Negerbevölkerung sich wirksame Verbindung herstellte. Wenn aber in Amerika die Negeremanzipation eingetreten und dort



to the need of taking action against the false teachings among the "natives": "Democracy ... is the worst possible teaching for our natives. As being only children they are not fit to govern themselves either in church or in state."<sup>47</sup>

Studying the sources of white observers it is interesting to note that they are unable to prove that members of independent churches are in fact involved in seditious political activities. Typical is the following statement of a Cape Magistrate: "the object is to oust the white man from Africa and to carry out ... the idea of having Africa for the Africans. ... At present, of course, their actions have to be very secret, very hidden, so that they do not come to notice of the authorities. They have not that freedom because they are living under the Government where they are being carefully watched, not only by the whites but also by the agents of the whites in their own locations. They must have perfect freedom of action. They must have a certain extent of ground where they can have their rulers, their own Bishops, and everything to start with: and, like an octopus, district by district, location by location and Colony by Colony, draw it to their views and their thoughts."<sup>48</sup> It is that "secrecy" with which the Ethiopians operate which is the cause of much anxiety in the white public: "the secrecy of all these meetings lays the way for a charge of disloyalty ... with regard to those attending the so-called religious meetings of this movement, you can get no information from them whatever. All is kept secret. ... It is a movement that calls for speedily dealing on the part of the government and all concerned with the welfare of the native. The native is deluded and ignorant, and we know that power in the hands of ignorance is extremely dangerous. The evil done now is sufficiently wide spread in the land to prove that the native cannot yet be trusted. ... Let steps be taken to keep this power well out of reach. United action is needed by all - no matter what creed or denomination - if the evil is to be eradicated."<sup>49</sup> Statements like these explain why the Ethiopian movement was called by alarmed whites the "snake in the grass"<sup>50</sup>; you cannot see it but from its secret hide it strikes out and kills its victim. The Ethiopian snake was a symbol representation in the nightmares of many Whites.

What the white colonialists in South Africa, settlers and missionaries alike, feared right from the beginning was a "native rising" or a "war of races". "The next step would be to get rid of the white magistrates, and then would come a war of races."<sup>51</sup> The final

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ein großer Kampf der schwarzen Rasse um Gleichberechtigung mit der weißen im Gange war, dann mußten schließlich die Wellen dieses Kampfes auch einmal in die Heimat der schwarzen Rasse, in den schwarzen Erdteil hinüberschlagen, und an dem Tage, an dem es den Neger Amerikas gelang, ihre Gedanken, Empfindungen und Stimmungen nach ihrer Heimat zu übertragen, war der Aethiopismus da." Axenfeld 1907: 5.

<sup>47</sup> Resident Magistrate of Bedford, Government Archives Cape Town, NA 96: 498.

<sup>48</sup> South African Native Affairs Commission, Liefeldt, Magistrate of Willowvale, 15.3.1904: 961.

<sup>49</sup> Natal Witness, August 5, 1901.

<sup>50</sup> Axenfeld 1905: 56-62.

<sup>51</sup> Farmer 1900: 98.

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aim of the Ethiopians, it was believed, was "the foundation of a great African Republic."<sup>52</sup>

The actions suggested to be taken against the movement were clearly articulated in an article published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of July 1902: "South African opinion is unanimous that the Kaffir understands no sanction but that of force. ... The European's power has no sanction but the edge of his sword, the point of his bayonet and the muzzle of his rifle."

## **Ethiopianism beyond white myths of terror. The struggle of African Christians for justice and liberty: A historical evaluation**

### **The Ethiopian movement as manifestation of religious independency**

When in November 1892 a small congregation of African Christians assembled in a little hut in a "Native" location near Pretoria nobody could foresee that this meeting was to spark off a movement which was to bring about a fundamental change in the development of South African Christianity and a new spirit of emancipation from white domination practiced in the mission churches. And nobody could have guessed that this black church movement created among the white population of South Africa anxieties and fear of terror, which were expressed in frightening myths and apocalyptic fiction as the novels by Buchan and Nicholls show.

The leader of this black congregation, Rev. Mangena Maake Mokone, declared in his inaugural sermon that a Church run by Black leadership was to be understood as the fulfilment of biblical prophecy concerning the Black peoples of African descent. Referring to the words of Psalm 68, 31 - "Princes shall come out of Egypt, Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God" - Mokone and his followers decided to name the new religious body "Ethiopian Mission". One year later when Black-led congregations had spread all over the Transvaal the founding fathers gave the independent body the official name "Ethiopian Church."

"Ethiopia" has a deep theological meaning expressing the hope for the emancipation and liberation of black peoples all over the world in a religious language: "Mokone founded the Ethiopian Church as an Altar of the Bantu people of this land. As Moses for the slave children of Israel so Moses Mokone founded and built an Altar upon which the Bantu must find himself, his spirit, his presence, and that he, too, should proceed to enjoy the fruits of the greatest of wonders - the Holy Cross of Christ the Saviour" (quote by C-Nontshinga-Citashe). Who was "Moses Mokone"? Fleeing from the 1830 clashes with the Boers in Swaziland he stranded in Durban where he found employment as a servant in the household of a pious widow, who took keen

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<sup>52</sup> Wells 1908: 291.

interest in the religious training of her "Kaffir boy". He experienced a conversion and in 1847 he was baptized in the Methodist Church of which he became an active member.

Later Mokone moved to Pietermaritzburg where he had the rare opportunity of attending an evening school. In 1882 he was called as one of the first "Native Preachers" to the Transvaal, where the Methodists had opened a new mission field. According to his superiors Mokone seems to have been very successful in establishing new congregations. He even founded a school for African converts near Pretoria. It is obvious that Mokone suffered from the harsh racial discrimination he was exposed to in the Boer Republic, but it was the many disappointments with his own church that finally led him to the decision to break with his mission society. In particular it was the introduction of racial segregation in the Methodist Church that caused a trauma in the hearts of many African Christians. In the words of D.D.T. Jabavu: "We believe that the spirit of the New Testament gives us the justification to expect from the missionaries at least, if not from the rest, an acknowledgement of the principle that in the eyes of God all men are equally precious and are by inference entitled equality of treatment in the ordinary affairs of life even where local prejudice forbids social admixture and inter-marriage. We claim equality of opportunity, nothing more or less."<sup>53</sup> Preachers of black congregations, therefore, encouraged their followers: "... let our men cease to stretch out an imploring hand for pity and for help, and begin to claim as a right which is your heaven given inheritance, declaring unorthodox all churches and all Christians who refuse to adopt and put into the fullest possible practice the teaching of Universal Brotherhood."<sup>54</sup> Racist Whites interpreted the black call for justice and brotherhood as seditious teaching; the hidden agenda of the independent Africans was thought to be the planning of a violent rebellion.

I will mention a few arguments which we find in the most important document, the so-called "Founder's Declaration of Independence" that Mokone sent to his superiors when he left the Methodist Church:

- Racial segregation, which was introduced into the church in 1886.
- Overt discrimination of indigenous clergy by white missionaries.
- Africans are excluded from decision-making processes.
- White missionaries never speak up or take sides when African brothers suffer repression and humiliation by white persons.

It is important to add that Mokone was not the only African minister who worked toward ecclesiastical independence. There is ample evidence that he joined forces with the leaders of several congregations that split from the Anglican Church. Rev. Samuel Brander and Rev. Joseph Khanyane Napo are names that belong to the founding fathers of the Ethiopian Church movement. "They ... considered as their bounden duty to devise a plan, through the help of the Almighty God to build a Church Ethiopic, and

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<sup>53</sup> Jabavu 1928: 129.

<sup>54</sup> The South African Spectator, 1902: 33.



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one which would stand on its own, and to be purely self-supporting and self-governing.”<sup>55</sup>

In the following years representatives of the Ethiopian Church travelled all over South Africa and were greatly successful in persuading discontented African Christians to join their movement. By 1896 the Ethiopian Church had a clear structure and liturgy, which followed basically the pattern of Wesleyan Methodism; Mokone took the office of a supervisor. As rather modest and simple persons Mokone and the other leaders of the Ethiopian Church were by no means the savage and snakelike characters, which existed in white fears and fantasies.

The beginning of the Ethiopian Movement in the Cape Colony is connected with the name of James Mata Dwane who became the best-known representatives of Ethiopianism in South Africa. It is important to point out that Dwane unlike Mokone and other “detrimentalized” members of the early Ethiopian Church was very much attached to the life of his tribe, the Amagunukwebe, who settled in the Eastern Cape. Dwane was deeply influenced by the Xhosa collective memories and traditions, which had been formed during centuries of resistance and defeat in the so-called Kaffir Wars. It is possible that G. Heaton Nicholls had James Mata Dwane in mind when he created Rev. Nelson Balumbata, the “hero” of his novel *Bayete!*

Dwane was baptized in 1867 by the Methodist missionary Lamplough who accepted him almost as a member of his family. When attending as public school in Fort Beaufort the young Dwane had a traumatic experience: The white citizens objected to the presence of a “Kaffir” in the school and enforced his dismissal. “The experience was so shockingly painful that he naturally judged the white people as a hostile force”, remarks his biographer Burns-Ncamashe. Due to his exceptional intellectual qualities the Methodists sent Dwane to the renowned Healdtown Training Institution where he passed his theological examination with honours. Having worked successfully in several circuits he was ordained in 1881. In 1890 he was elected supervisor of the African district of Seplan. Like all leaders of the Ethiopian movement Dwane saw a great need for the improvement of (Western) education for Africans. In 1892 he went on a fund raising tour to Great Britain to collect money for a school project he was planning to establish in the Eastern Cape. His experience of being respectfully accepted as a Christian brother in English Methodist congregations had a tremendous impact on him. He became painfully aware of the racial discrimination and humiliating paternalism white missionaries practiced in the South African mission field.

And so it was more than a shock when after his return to Africa his superiors forced him to hand over the money he had collected because they were convinced that a black person was unable to handle large amounts of money. James Mata Dwane left the Methodist Church immediately. About the same time a similar event occurred in the mission of the Free Church when Rev. Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba (born 1859) founded the Independent Presbyterian Church of Africa. Mzimba was educated in the renowned Lovedale Institution and became closely associated with the famous Scot-

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<sup>55</sup> Constitution of the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion.

tish pioneer James Stewart. Ordained in 1879 he had since then, in the words of his superiors "full responsible charge of the oldest congregation of the mission. ... He has proved himself a modest and successful evangelist, ... He has won and wears the hearty confidence of his European colleagues and of all who knew him well."<sup>56</sup> Because of his good standing Mzimba was sent to Scotland to represent the South African Mission Church at a jubilee celebration. Like Dwane Pambani Mzimba used his stay in Scotland to visit Presbyterian congregations and to raise funds which he planned to use for constructing a stone church building in his circuit. And as in the case of James Mata Dwane the South African mission authorities took the money from him when he returned home. He left the mission church and established a new independent church in the line of Ethiopianism. Mzimba gave the following explanation for his decision to secede from the white church: "...to me it is clear that the Black man in Africa must stand on his feet in matters of worship like people in other countries, and not always expect to be carried by the White man on his back. He has long learnt to walk by leaning on the White man, but today he must stand without leaning on anybody except his God so that the work of the Gospel should flourish."<sup>57</sup>

Unlike Mzimba James Mata Dwane did not found a new church but he decided to join Mokone's Ethiopian Church. At a synod, which took place in Pretoria in 1896 he was ordained. At the same meeting the leaders of the Ethiopian Church decided to send Dwane to America to unite the young African Independent Church with the oldest and largest Afro-American church, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church the roots of which go far back to the times of slavery.

## The African movement and its relation with Black America

It was the relation of African and American black Christians, which caused fear among the Whites of South Africa. The American connection was seen as the driving force of Ethiopianism and detrimental "to the welfare of the Natives." In the novels by Nicholls and Buchan the destructive influence of "American negroes" was stressed. According to Nicholls John Balumbata was trained in Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute before he returned to South Africa in order to plan and organise the uprising. It was believed that American blacks financed and provided modern weapons for the black warriors.

Of course it was important for the early development of black led churches in Africa that they got support from Afro-American Christians. The link between South Africa and America was a young woman, Charlotte Makhomo Manye, a relative of Mokone from Kimberley. She was the member of an African choir, which stranded in the USA when the tour proved to be a failure. In America she got in contact with black Christians who helped her in her misery, even providing a scholarship for higher

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<sup>56</sup> Christian Express 22, 1893: 65.

<sup>57</sup> Mpambani Mzimba, in: T.D.M. Skota 1929: 72.

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studies at the famous Wilberforce University. It was this woman who brought Mokone and the AME-Bishop Henry McNeal Turner together. Turner had played an important role in the struggle for civil rights for the former slaves. He belonged to those Afro-American circles that looked to Africa as the home of the Black Race and therefore supported with enthusiasm the evangelisation of the African people. In 1898 Bishop Turner visited South Africa finalising the merger of the Ethiopian Church into the AME-Church.

The most important result of this connection with black American Christianity was the emergence of black consciousness among the colonised Africans and the improvement of education. Quite a substantial number of members of black-led churches went to the USA for advanced studies in Afro-American universities and training institutions. The South African white public was alarmed and there was a growing fear that black Africans acquired knowledge and skills to abolish white imperialism and establish an African Republic.

## Conclusion

The colonial situation is by its very essence antagonistic. It is based on violence and racial oppression on part of the dominant actors, which at the same time produce fantasies of terror and apocalyptic images of a brutal race war. When blacks in South Africa started to create their own churches, which functioned as shelters of independence and emancipation in the midst of colonial oppression images of terror emerged in the white community. The novels of John Buchan and G. Heaton Nicholls are manifestations of white fears of terror.

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## **"A Lion Went Home" - Media Imaginations about an Alleged Rasta "Prophet of Truth"**

(in memoriam Lucky Dube, † 18 October 2007)

ANDREAS HEUSER

On the evening of 18 October 2007, the South African reggae legend Lucky (Philip) Dube was murdered in Rosettenville, a suburb south of Johannesburg. While dropping off his teenaged son and daughter at a family friend's house the 43-years-aged Dube was gunned down by four hijackers who were after his grey coloured Chrysler. His eye-witnessing children stayed unharmed. Dube was married for the third time and left a family of seven children. The drama of his death provoked widespread condemnation world-wide and a discussion in the national and international media about the state of political transition in South Africa. The tributes echoed the personality of a reggae artist whose music was soaked with questions of political responsibility and urged for social sensitivity. This discourse also traced the religious roots of the internationally acclaimed reggae star. Reggae is a generic term for West Indian style popular music since the late 1960s. With reggae protagonists like Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, who yielded a major influence on Lucky Dube, it is anchored in the Jamaican Rastafarian community.<sup>1</sup> Rastafarianism<sup>2</sup> dates back to the 1930's and inspired the descendants of former slaves with a return-message to a *heterotopy* often designed as "Mother Africa" and infused with strong biblical connotations. Almost by saying Dube had been

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<sup>1</sup> The story of reggae is masterly told by O'Brian/Cheng 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Rastafarianism is an academic term to describe it as a New Religious Movement. Rastafari circles reject the word because they want to transcend the wide range of "-isms" in modern society. This disapproval has created some conflict between Rastas and members of the scientific community studying the Rastafari phenomenon. For an introduction into Rastafarian thinking, cf. Barsch 2003.

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described as an authentic representative of the Rastafarian movement in the first instance. Applying Rastafarian metaphoric language, a mourner dedicated a poem to Dube: "A lion went home". Some of the lines say:

A lion went home. Yes, there is a loss ... Nobody cry, please don't, Rastas won't die, oh no. So, what a shame it is ... He was killed by his own, I can't believe. That should not happen, oh no. People need to wake up, you know. We are carrying Babylon's work ... Babylon forever will be in our face. So, the lion went home as Zion waits for his sons.<sup>3</sup>

Without going more into detail at this point, this poem applies three major symbolic references in Rastafarian theology: "Babylon" stands for the adversary powers against the liberation of black people worldwide, whereas "Zion" means a return to the promised paradise. In Rastafarian thinking this motive is further linked to Ethiopia, representing the continent of Africa in biblical narratives and the only African state to resist colonial oppression. Its former emperor Haile Selassie I whose civil name was Ras Tafari Makonnen became a messianic figure in the Rastafarian hope of a return to Africa. Bearing official titles like "King of Kings" and "Conquering Lion of Judah" (Revelation 5:5), for some Rastafarians he even was God incarnate. For the writer of this poem Dube formed a very definite part of the Rastafarian movement. However, the ritual passages following a few days after Dube's death unveiled a most surprising religious heritage. Reviewing a public ceremony of commemoration and a consequent funeral of a more private character, Dube became identified as a born "Nazarete", or a member of the *amaNazareth*a (Nazareth Baptist Church, NBC), one of the most prominent African Independent Churches in South Africa commonly known as Shembe church.

### "Rastas never die"

Lucky Dube (1964-2007) played a pivotal role in shaping South Africa's music history. Alongside Alpha Blondy and Tiken Jah Fakoly from the Ivory Coast he achieved an international status as the genuine African voice of reggae. However many considered Dube, who was filling huge halls and national stadiums across the continent, to be the sole "King of African Reggae"<sup>4</sup>. In his career as a musician that lasted from 1981 to 2007, Dube recorded 22 albums, mostly in English but also in Zulu and even Afrikaans. Before he became South Africa's biggest selling reggae artist, he started his career as a *mbaqanga* musician. *Mbaqanga* was a most popular Zulu music style in

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<sup>3</sup> This poem by "Glenn" from Puerto Rico is one of the numerous responses on a tribute article by Arthur Goldstock in "Mail and Guardian online", dating from 24 October 2007, cf. <http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/amablogoblog/2007/10/19/lucky-dube-a-complete-human-being> (10 June 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Lucius 2007.



the South African townships from the late 1950s to the 1970s. In the mid-1980s, Dube turned to reggae music with its many references to Africa. His first reggae album "Rastas never die" (1984), although poorly sold, was banned in 1985 by the Apartheid regime. Notwithstanding, Dube continued performing live, fusing Caribbean with African rhythms, but adding elements of American Blues, Gospel, Soul, and Rock too. He released a second reggae album ("Think about the children", 1985) that soon earned platinum sales status. Since then, his reputation as an acclaimed reggae artist had been firmly established in South Africa; moreover "Think about the children" pushed him on the international scene.

In his habitus and his use of Rastafarian emblems, Dube resembled well the Jamaican proto-types of reggae music. His songs include Rastafarian hymns on "Jah", the Rasta name for God (from a shortened form of Jehovah/Jahwe). The covers of his reggae albums show rich connotations to the triadic Rastafarian colour symbolism of green, yellow and red (the colours of the Ethiopian flag and later-on of pan-Africanism). Dube adhered to certain ritual laws on purity essentially living by the dietary decrees of Leviticus and Deuteronomy in the Old Testament. And with every new release Dube's immense dreadlocks, a symbolic reference to both the Nazarite Vow (Numbers 6:5) and to the "Lion of Judah", are shown in greater majesty.

However, the style Dube had created was not just a copy of the Caribbean scene. His own style of African reggae was sending out messages of religious difference as well as political autonomy. In 1991 he became the first reggae star ever to perform at the Sun Splash Festival in Montego Bay, Jamaica, to be asked for more than one hour for additional tracks. Endangered of being hereticised at this most important festival of reggae music, he claimed that reggae was rooted in Africa, and not in Jamaica. This declaration caused stern debates in the global reggae community about the history and the ideological program of reggae. A point of dissent was his strict denial of racial terms. "Unity", he explained, should embrace all humankind and not be reduced to the "black" community alone, and God should neither be considered black nor white. "Never try to separate the people. They were created in the image of God", Dube reminded in his song "Different colours/One people" (1996). "Look at me you see BLACK. I look at you I see WHITE. Now is the time to kick that away." This character as an independent authority of reggae was crafted in the context and in the aftermath of South African Apartheid.

Dube remained a critical and unbiased observer of the transition process from Apartheid to the Rainbow Nation which made him a role-model in South African civil society. The release of "Prisoner" in 1989 coincided with the release from jail of eight of South Africa's longest-serving political prisoners! With commercially very successful productions like "House of Exile" (1991), or "Free at Last" (1994), and "Respect" (2006), he commented the political transformation in South Africa. Yet, he denied his songs intervening in political matters. "They are all dealing with true and real-life experiences in our day-to-day lives. That's what they deal with: social issues, even

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though some people see them as political things.”<sup>5</sup> In actual fact, his lyrics circled around critical issues in societal life ranging from drug addiction to divorce, from imprisonment to hope, from oppression to what he termed a “Mickey-Mouse-freedom” (1991). In his song on “Crime and Corruption”, a 1999 release, Lucky Dube accused the social and political reality in post-Apartheid South Africa. In retrospect, his bitterness about some developments in society can almost be read as a self-fulfilling prophecy. In a few lines he described the event in the streets of Johannesburg that would take his life so tragically in a couple of years to come:

Do you ever worry about your car being taken away from you in broad daylight down highway 54? Do you ever worry about your wife becoming the woman in black? Do you ever worry about leaving home and coming back in a coffin with a bullet through your head? So join us and fight this.<sup>6</sup>

The murder of reggae super star Lucky Dube in a car hijack attempt caused a wide controversy over the present state of political transformation. South African politics was again under international spotlight and national pressure to curb the escalating levels of violence. Messages of outrage poured into the media and the internet to voice an outcry against the statistical record of a horrendous average of 50 killings per day in the year 2007, making South Africa one of the most dangerous places in global terms (only to be followed by Iraq and Afghanistan). Subsequently, institutions of civil society and political parties engaged in a vivid discussion of juridical and administrative tools to cope with the rocketing crime rate. Unions diagnosed the fate of the working poor and mass unemployment as root causes of crime in South Africa. Churches underlined the gravity of the problem and raised their concern about the ever growing hiatus in social and economic life. They were blaming the 60%-rate of citizens living in poverty as arguably the most destabilising social tendency in Post-Apartheid society. Despite daily statistics and controversial discourses in civil society, the death of Lucky Dube left space to pay tribute to the most renowned music star of the country. The bulk of reactions in the national and international media portrayed him as part of the reggae world. Many comments pointed out the ideological and religious heritage he represented. They gave impression that Dube formed an integral part of Rastafarianism and stood for the true Rasta life style.

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<sup>5</sup> Dube perceived this view on the nature of his lyrics with regard to the song “Prisoner”, cf. [www.thoughtleader.co.za/amablogoblogo/2007/10/19/lucky-dube-a-complete-human-being](http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/amablogoblogo/2007/10/19/lucky-dube-a-complete-human-being). We will reconsider the connection of reggae and politics in the discussion of Dube’s ideological imports from Rastafarian theology into his lyrics.

<sup>6</sup> “Crime and Corruption”, from the album: Lucky Dube, “The Way it is,” Gallo Music Publishers, 1999. All his reggae albums are releases by Gallo Music.



## "I'm reggae"

This is illustrated in a survey of newspaper articles on the memorial service for Dube at Newtown Hall in Johannesburg, held on 24 October 2007, just one week after the failed car hijack attempt. A major source, the South African daily newspaper "The Sowetan", gave an accurate report on the proceedings. Under the heading "Rastaman vibrations positive", the article left the impression that the event to pay respect to Lucky Dube was basically attended by members of the Rastafarian community in South Africa. It states that "Rastafarians turned out in droves" to gather outside the hall watching the memorial service on a big screen. "The Rastas came in their brightly-coloured turbans and floor-sweeping robes to celebrate the life of an icon they called a prophet of truth." Consequently, in public eyes Dube had to be identified as a devout Rasta. This impression is even more substantiated by the author of the article indicating specific ritual happenings. "While the proceedings were going on inside", the report continues, "hundreds of Rastafarians smoked dagga (i.e. referring to the Rastafarian sacramental use of cannabis, A.H.) and said prayers quietly." Furthermore, the reader obtains some information about the Rastafarian community in South Africa. The article quotes a number of spokespersons from different Rastafarian branches or "mansions", as the diverse traditions are referred to in Rastafarian nomenclature. A certain representative of the "Bobo Ashanti sect" commented the Rastafarian community "had not only lost a music icon, but a prophet. Lucky was Jah's prophet." Another Rasta of the "Nyabinghi Tribe" claimed that Dube like "every black man is a Rasta man."<sup>7</sup>

It is quite evident that South African Rastafarians received a distinguished public attention in the context of the death of one of their prophets of truth. They found themselves on a public platform that communicated not only the intimate relationship between Lucky Dube and Rastafarianism but shed some light on a religious movement with its internal factions that usually does not play a prominent role in the South African religious landscape.

The growth of Rastafarianism in South Africa has never been phenomenal. Although statistical records are hardly to obtain, the membership of the Rastafarian movement does not exceed more than a few thousand. Even the historical roots as to when the Rastafarian movement entered South Africa are uncertain. Only from the late 1970's the presence of Rastafarianism became known to a wider public in the country.

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted in the article "Rastaman vibrations positive" by Zenoyise Madikwa, *The Sowetan*, 25 October 2007. The Rastafarian "mansions" differ in organisational and eschatological terms. Nyabinghi and Bobo Ashanti are considered the strictest mansion of the Rastafari movement. Nyabinghi proclaim Haile Selassie I to be the promised Messiah and incarnation of God, and aimed originally at establishing a global theocracy to be headed by him (who is believed to be living eternally). Bobo Ashanti believe in a Black Messiah called Prince Emmanuel (Charles Edwards) next to "Jah Rastafari" Haile Selassie. Bobo Ashanti are rigid in their interpretation of Rastafarianism, hiding their dreadlocks under a turban-like cover to save them from the eyes of non-believers.

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It was part of a youth movement and the messages of Rastafarianism were intensely spread by the heroes of reggae music who were then touring Southern Africa. Especially Bob Marley's presence at the Independence Celebrations of Zimbabwe and a concert by Peter Tosh in Swaziland during Christmas 1983 contributed much towards drawing the attention of mainly black youth in Southern Africa to the Rastafarian "ways". The majority of those who joined the movement between the late 1970's until the mid 1980's were aged around 20 years. Thus, in South Africa the knowledge of, and contact with Rastafarianism was closely attached to reggae music. Those who were drawn into this youth movement proved their adherence by sharing reggae musical cassettes and records, as well as books on reggae music.<sup>8</sup> Lucky Dube's life was influenced by this spirit of belonging to an alternative culture too.

The recent history of Rastafarianism in South Africa is mirrored almost exactly in the biographical account of Lucky Dube. It was exactly at this time when Dube who had just turned 20 years of age, decided to change his music style from *mbaqanga* to reggae. In an interview conducted in 1996, he gave an explanation about this most decisive move in his career. He commented his song "Back to my roots", dedicated to memorise his identity as reggae artist:

Reggae music is what I wanted to do before I started doing mbaqanga music, but at that time I could not get a contract from a record company as a reggae singer, because reggae was not happening in South Africa. I had to start as a mbaqanga singer and then move on. So when I recorded reggae music for the first time, I was saying yes, I'm back to what I originally wanted to do, I'm back to my roots. I'm reggae.<sup>9</sup>

In South Africa as elsewhere in the world, Reggae became the soul of the Rastafarian movement. As mentioned earlier, Dube cultivated his image as *the* representative of Rasta lifestyle in South Africa. In his case, Reggae and Rasta were so closely intertwined that they were seen in the consciousness of his audiences almost synonymously.

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<sup>8</sup> On the history of Rastafarianism in South Africa, cf. Oosthuizen 1990: 33-49. Applying empirical research methods this case study is a valuable source on the roots of Rastafarianism in South Africa. It provides first hand information on different political and social milieus of the movement in South Africa. However, at certain points the analysis remains on the surface. On the cultural significance of Rastafarianism the author gives the following summary (p. 47): "Since the movement has only recently started in South Africa, there is hardly any sign of spontaneous indigenous expressions of art and music as yet." Only that Lucky Dube was about to becoming the best selling African musician!

<sup>9</sup> Although this interview by Arthur Goldstock dates back to 1996, it was published for the first time in full length by "Mail and Guardian online", as a tribute to Lucky Dube, cf. [www.Thoughtleader.co.za/amablogoblog/2007/10/19/lucky-dube-a-complete-human-being](http://www.Thoughtleader.co.za/amablogoblog/2007/10/19/lucky-dube-a-complete-human-being) (10 June 2008). Only part of the interview appeared in the liner notes of Dube's 10th-anniversary album "Serious Reggae Business".

## "Let Jah be praised"

Dube's music expressed Rasta doctrine. Throughout his musical career after his "conversion" to reggae, Dube incorporated Rastafarian themes and symbols in his lyrics and album covers. Some of them are music-only compositions, deeply longing for spiritual inspiration by addressing "Jah". In Rastafarian religious language "Jah" stands for the Jewish tetra gram Yahweh/Jehovah. In songs like "I have got Jehovah" (1985, from the album "Think about the children"), "Let Jah be praised" (from the 1987 album "Slave"), or "Jah save us" (from the album "Together as one", 1988), Dube explores one specific way of communication with Jah: he seems to agree that Rastafarians communicate with "Jah" not only by prayer but also through music. Many of his lyrics tell about Rastafarian belief. In "Take it to Jah" (from the 1997 album "Taxman"), for instance, Dube praises the power of the "most-high-omnipotent one" to relieve the suffering world from all pain. "Even when Satan comes, with him demons", "Jah" will protect those who are "crying in this world". In this song Dube very clearly connected the belief in "Jah" with his understanding of suffering. The suffering in this world is put into an eschatological perspective. It is a sign of the end time battle between the forces of evil and the divine with "Jah" staying victorious. In another song about Rastafarian expressions of God called "Jah live" (on "Prisoner", 1989), Dube explores a theology of religions. The divine, he claims, is essentially the same in each religion; only the paths to access God are different. Therefore, as he maintains in typical Rasta idiom, the Rasta way is as reliable a spiritual source as any other of the major religions:

The Rastaman call him Jah. Some people call him Allah. English man call him God.  
But he is one. We may have different names to call him, but he cares for everyone.  
That's why I wrote this song.

"False Prophets" (from the same album) tells about the hypocrisy of Christians who declare themselves as the only true representatives of biblical truth. By consequence, others who refer to the same Bible but read it differently, just like Rastafarians, are being looked upon as spiritually deficient.<sup>10</sup> In Rasta-like manner Dube qualifies this attitude of an antagonising religious rhetoric as the "Babylon style". For him, this is not a shining model of religious tolerance at all. Angrily he replies in Rasta jargon: "I and I no like da Babylon style. I and I no like da Babylon style."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Vice versa the use of the Bible in Rastafarian milieus is also often under debate. Rastafarians quote biblical passages in a rather eclectic manner, taking Biblical quotes out of context and adding elements that do not appear in the Bible. Some are convinced that the original version of the Holy Scriptures had been falsified in the history of Christianity, others are of the opinion that one part of the Bible has been written, and that the other part is written in a man's heart.

<sup>11</sup> Rasta language tries to avoid expressions of a distancing character like "you"/"me and you". The idiom "I and I" (standing for me and us/I and we) is a typical example in order to show the unity amongst Rastafarians and the unity of each and everybody with "Jah".

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"Rasta Man's Prayer", an outspoken song about Rasta identity on the worldwide successful album "Trinity" (1995), entangles in a debate that comes up almost automatically wherever Rastafarians demand their full right of religious expression. It turns around the ambivalent relation between the freedom of religion and the Rastafarian vision of the legalised use of marijuana in spiritual and ritual contexts:<sup>12</sup>

Those that smoke marijuana wanna thank you father for making it grow internationally, they wanna thank you lord even though the police cut it down, sometimes they burn it down but it grows again, thank you father.

"House of Exile" (1991) expresses the fate of a "freedom fighter standing on a mountain in a foreign country, trying to send a message to his people". This song is dedicated to political prisoners in apartheid society and to the exiles that began returning home after the political ban on the African National Congress (ANC) had been lifted. Dube already invited for an open discourse on the politics of liberation in his "Together as one" (1990), where he mentioned the term "apartheid": "Too many people hate apartheid ... what is wrong with us, all those years of fighting each other, but no solution." It became the first anti-apartheid song to be spread in the public media in South Africa. Dube who denied political intentions, as stated earlier on, nonetheless circles around related topics in a number of other songs. In "Different colours/ One people" (1996) he dismisses the concept of ethnicity as a political category to separate people and to promote racism. Instead, he opts for a culture of justice, equality, and dignity of all human beings. The humanism he proclaims is grounded in the creation of all humankind by God: "Breaking those barriers all over the world was not an easy thing ... Hey you government, never separate the people, hey you politician, never separate the people." The title song of his 1993 album "Victims" that soon appeared in the Billboard world music charts, deals with the wounds - political, physical and mental - the struggle for liberation had left. South Africa was not yet a united nation, and in some areas even signals of a civil war were heard. With lines such as "still licking wounds from brutality, still licking wounds from humiliation", Dube interfered with a cry for reconciliation, and sent out a message to deal actively with the collective memory of oppression.

It is hard to reject the idea that Dube had no political vision for the future of South Africa! In "Peace, perfect peace" from 1996, Dube shouted out repeatedly a desperate peace cry: "Let me tell you, we cry for peace in South Africa. Let me tell you, no water can put out this fire. Only the lord can save us." For him reggae music was the right channel to spread his critical voice into civil society. In connection with the release of "Victims", he explained how he saw the advantage of music in comparison with the political realm:

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<sup>12</sup> The ritual consumption of ganja (cannabis) does not belong to the religious commandments of Rastafarian belief. Many Rastafarians but not all use it in specific liturgical settings called "reasoning" and in meditation.

I wanted to be a politician myself one time, but I just didn't know much about corruption. Maybe that's why I'm a musician, because I can just do what I do and just tell the truth. But if you tell the truth, they say you're a politician.<sup>13</sup>

With his political attitude Dube seems to be a Southern African Rasta of his generation. The impact of the Rastafarian movement on the young generation in South Africa in the 1980's became stronger just because of its firm stand against racial oppression. Respondents in a survey about the reasons why they joined the Rastafarians evoked replies that remind on Lucky Dube's lyrics: For many the movement became relevant because "we are all oppressed and suffering and thus we should be united in order to fight our oppression."<sup>14</sup> Those who joined were "convinced that the Rastafarians are effective in confronting the forces of oppression because they manage to unite those in South Africa who have the same experience, namely suffering."<sup>15</sup> The recurring theme was the Rastafarian movement's involvement in the struggle for liberation from "the slavery of the Boers", equated in Rastafarian analysis with "Babylon".<sup>16</sup> One Rastafarian summarised Dube's socio-political thinking at the memorial service in Johannesburg: "He communicated the message of freedom from Babylon and its system."<sup>17</sup> The following lines from Dube's record "Rasta man's prayer" (1995) support this summary of responses of people who joined the Rastafarian movement in South Africa: "We wanna thank you father, for everything you've given us. Nations that oppress other nations wanna thank you father, even though it's painful to be oppressed, but they thank you for making them strong."

Coming back to the "freedom fighter" as described in the song "House of Exile": He is "standing on a mountain in a foreign country, trying to send a message to his people". The symbolic value of this expression touches more than political cords. The theme of being encapsulated in a house of exile and the image of the mountain indicate the central concept of "Zion" in the Rastafarian movement. Whereas the freedom fighter points to the situation of oppression, racism, the loss of human dignity, "Zion" symbolises the condition of being liberated. It stands for the biblical city on the mount that overlooks free horizons, with its light shining into the world as a fire of hope and restoration. In Rastafarian belief, the emphasis is on eschatology. "Zion" will come through the intervention of "Jah", who will restore the lost paradise after many centuries in the wilderness of Babylon. In "Zion" the lost tribes of Israel will resemble again, it is the projection of the Promised Land for all people of African origin who are dispersed in the Diaspora. Symbolised by the biblical "Babylon", Diaspora and exile

<sup>13</sup> Cf. [www.thoughtleader.co.za/amablogoblog/2007/10/19/lucky-dube-a-complete-human-being](http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/amablogoblog/2007/10/19/lucky-dube-a-complete-human-being) (10 June 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Oosthuizen 1990: 37.

<sup>15</sup> Oosthuizen 1990: 38. According to Oosthuizen, this motive to fight oppression was upmost with the Sowetan Rastafarians.

<sup>16</sup> Statement by Zakhele Matebese from Bobo Ashanti, in Zenoyise Madikwa: "Rastaman vibrations positive", The Sowetan, 25 October 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Matebese, quoted in "Rastaman vibrations positive", The Sowetan, 25 October 2007.



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stand for all injustice and life-destroying forces. They are synonymous terms to denote a life in dependency, exploitation, slavery. In a way, "Zion" - the holy city on the mountain-, subverts the power of "Babylon", the "city of sin". "Zion" is the symbol of hope in the corresponding return-home ideology which is prevalent in the history of the Rastafarian movement.<sup>18</sup>

This facet of a return to "Zion" is historically inspired by the pan-African movement founded by the Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey. In the 1920's Garvey appealed to many descendants of former slaves in the USA and the Caribbean with the slogan "Africa for Africans!" African Americans should trace their roots back to Africa and he envisaged a mass emigration to the home continent. In his vision Garvey fused a political identity-project with religious connotations to direct West Indians and Americans spiritually towards "Ethiopia", the biblical code for Africa. When he prophesied that "a black king shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is near",<sup>19</sup> Garvey became a visionary for what became to be called the Rastafarian movement. This prophecy was linked in 1930 to Ras Tafari's crowning as emperor of Ethiopia, after which he took the name Haile Selassie. He became the *spiritus rector* of the Rastafarian movement that did not have an organisational structure initially. Common was only a universal acceptance of Haile Selassie as the divine liberator of Africa and the African Diaspora. From now on, the hope of a return-to-Africa was magnetised by the charisma of the Ethiopian emperor.

The theme of exile and the intense hope of returning to Africa can be traced in one of the most challenging songs Lucky Dube has ever written. The lyrics of the title song of his album "The other side" (2003) is about a Jamaican who is longing for Africa as his continent of hope.

Every morning he comes down to the docks to watch the ships come and go. He's been here too long. Mental slavery has not touched him one bit, he still knows his history, he knows where he comes from. That is why he believes the ocean can give him answers about the very far home that he's never been to. All his life he says I wish I was home, I wish I was in Africa.

But Dube does not join in this trope of an imagined African paradise. African history does not allow for a cultural memory that is purified from the heritage of slavery or the violation of human rights. The Africa he knows does not qualify for heterotopias dreams. South Africans do no longer wait for a place they feel at home, impatiently in their minds they want to migrate to another distant land:

His name is Themba (i.e. Hope, in Zulu, A.H.), he lives in Soweto. Every morning he goes to the airport to watch the planes come and go. He has changed his African name to a western one... He hopes that one day one of these birds of the sky can

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<sup>18</sup> For a detailed analysis of the symbolic meaning of "Ethiopia" and "Zion" in religious and political contexts cf. Kamphausen 2002: 293-313.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Oosthuizen 1990: 4.

take him away to a very far land, running away from the very roots that so many black people in the world are wanting to come back. A place they call home.<sup>20</sup>

With regard to this short trip into the reggae universe he lived in, Lucky Dube's self-conscious identity as a Rasta becomes more than evident. It renders plausibility to the fact that Dube has been stylised in the media as a proto-type of genuine Rastafarian lifestyle. This comes to light again in a survey of internet blogs and forums that were established at the occasion of his death. Dube's fate found a spontaneous and broad international echo in these internet spaces of communication. In one site, anchored in the US-Rasta milieu and mostly visited by American Rastas, one writer mourned: "Now, he's truly 'I and I' ... JAH's child!!!". Presumably inspired by Dube's intervention for the right of free religious expression in his "Rasta Man's Prayer", in the same forum you find a link to so-called "Cannabis Churches", a platform of organisations and individuals who claim to be persecuted in the USA for using cannabis as a sacrament in their ritual praxis.<sup>21</sup> Also, the African reggae community hailed Dube not just as a reggae superstar. In one statement in the online discussion of the newspaper "The Namibian", he was portrayed as "God's messenger to humankind, a friend, a hero".<sup>22</sup> Amongst the comments on the music website of "South Africa Rocks", one finds various entries related to Dube using Rastafarian imagery and symbolism. In typical Rasta diction one tribute interprets Dube's destiny in the dualistic fight between "Babylon" and "Zion": "Babylon will always try to bring Jah people down but ... reggae can never die. Nobody can stop reggae. Dube is gone to ZION CITY. See you all one day. Down Babylon, Jah lives on."<sup>23</sup>

This cursory examination of websites underlines Dube's status as prime reggae musician and his public recognition as part of the international Rastafarian movement. The tribute article "Lucky Dube: A Complete Human Being" by South African music journalist Arthur Goldstock received more than a million hits in 24 hours and hundreds of responses from all over the globe, including contributions throughout Africa, from several European and Caribbean countries, and as far away as Fiji and Samoan Islands.<sup>24</sup> Many addressed Dube's inclination to raise his voice on issues concerning the political sphere. Dube's reggae style found its almost natural way into the aura of pan-

<sup>20</sup> There are several, mostly small, Rastafarian communities in African countries whose members are from the Caribbean and the USA. For a study of West African Rasta communities and their connection with African youth culture, cf. Savishinsky 1993.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. <http://hightimes.com/news/dan/3827> (10 June 2008). The religious body participating in this forum on Dube was a certain Ethiopian Zion Coptic Church that is known for years for legal disputes with American law about the use of marijuana.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. <http://www.namibian.com.na/2007/October/letters/07C3D3E5DC.html> (20 June 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. <http://sarocks.co.za/2007/10/25/lucky-dube-comments-the-most-moving/> (20 June 2008).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. <http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/amablogoblog/2007/10/19/lucky-dube-a-complete-human-being> (10 June 2008).

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Africanist ideas. In this vein, letters of condolences from the presidents of Senegal and The Gambia were read at the Johannesburg memorial service on 24 October 2007.<sup>25</sup>

### **"Shembe is the way"**

A disturbing commentary interrupts the safe knowledge on Lucky Dube's Rastafarian identity. The journalist who observed the memorial service in Johannesburg was wondering about the incorporation of Dube into the religious field of the Rastafarian movement. Against the public demonstration of Rastafarian ritual practises at the service, he shows his open surprise: "Ironically, Dube was not a practising Rasta, but a committed member of the Shembe church." In order to appease his confused readers, he continues by explaining: "The religion shares many beliefs with Rastafarians."<sup>26</sup> However, we are left alone with the question, at which points exactly the beliefs of Rastafarians and followers of Shembe dovetail.

The Shembe church was started by Isaiah Shembe (c. 1870-1935) in 1910. In almost one hundred years of church history, the NBC spread from its main centre of activity in KwaZulu-Natal to other provinces in South Africa and neighbouring countries. The NBC is part of the movement of African Independent Churches that aims at harmonising Christian belief with African cultural and religious values. Shembe composed an impressing corpus of church hymns in his own Zulu language. A huge part of the hymns deal with topics related to African history.<sup>27</sup> His adherents were allowed to address God in their African language and to wear traditional Zulu attire. In some controversial issues that were dismissed in mainline Christianity as heretic at that time, Shembe urged for religious tolerance. Under certain circumstances he allowed polygamy and he introduced religious dances in church life. He realised that passages in the Old Testament on ritual purity were quite close to African perceptions and propagated certain food taboos. The NBC became prominent for its land policy; it owns a good number of farms spread all over several South African provinces, mainly KwaZulu-Natal. Shembe established his own "Zion City" in Inanda, close to Durban. The holy ground of *Ekuphakameni* ("The Elevated Place"), as he named it, should only be entered barefooted and adorned with the white "garment of heaven". The extraordinary ritual calendar of the NBC includes dance festivals and an annual pilgrimage to a holy mountain. Dube's lyrics has many connotations also to Shembe's reputation as a charismatic healer and a messenger of peace. Shembe's biography and a theological interpretation of hymns and oral history point - in summary - at a quite

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. "Living in the last days", article by Zenoyise Madikwa and Zinhle Mapumulo, in: *The Sowetan*, 25 October 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Zenoyise Madikwa, in his article on "Rastaman vibrations positive", *The Sowetan*, 25 October 2007.

<sup>27</sup> This extraordinary NBC-hymnbook is now available in a commented English version, cf. Heuser/Hexham 2005.



concise political ethics of non-violence. It is therefore no more surprising that Shembe founded his sacred village *Ekuphakameni* in direct neighbourhood to Mahatma Gandhi's Phoenix Ashram.<sup>28</sup> Reverend Enoch Mthembu who officiated at Dube's funeral at Ngogo made mention of this heritage of non-violent conflict-solving in the NBC. In the 1990's the church leaders acted as mediators in the no-go-areas of Kwa-Zulu-Natal that were ridden by politically motivated violence. Now he called on the country's leaders to work together to put an end to crime in South Africa. And in the tradition of Dube's self-understanding as politically interested artist, he asked musicians to interfere with politics to achieve this goal.<sup>29</sup>

Looking closer, the hint on Dube's adherence to the Shembe church appears also in other statements on his death. But: this trace to Shembe is an almost secretive path in the public commemoration of Lucky Dube's heritage!<sup>30</sup> This is very evident in the internet presentation by "South Africa rocks". Whereas it allows for comments that strengthen Dube's profile as Rasta, the SA rocks-webmaster thinned out any hints at Dube's belonging to the Shembe church. A contributor from Nigeria who knew about this link to Shembe wrote on 25 October 2007:

Lucky Dube ... is been given a heroic welcome as the angels usher him to the presence of Shembe, the ever living and the ever faithful. The day Shembe created Lucky no any other person was created. That day Shembe took his time on Philip so that he was extraordinary. Shembe's wrath will take its toll on the killers.<sup>31</sup>

The blogger describes Dube's creation by the supposed divine nature of Shembe. This might have caused the webmaster to delete this comment from later versions of the same website. Indeed "Shembe" stands for the historical person but in the eyes of many NBC-followers he symbolises messianic qualities at the same time. For some Shembe replaces Jesus Christ in their belief. This debate has led to harsh controversies in mission studies over orthodoxy and heresy or whether the NBC might still be called a Christian church or rather be named a post-Christian new religious movement. This almost classic discourse in the study of African Christianity has led to the conviction that in the belief of amaNazaretha "Shembe" is best understood as an

<sup>28</sup> The NBC attracted a wide academic interest. Most interpreters used an ethnic approach and underlined the so-called "Zuluness" of the church and its theology. Only recently the cross-cultural roots of the NBC have been studied in more detail. It brought to light for instance the inter-relatedness of Isaiah Shembe and Gandhi and his Ashram, cf. Heuser 2003a.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Thabo Mkhize: "Lucky Dube laid to rest in humble ceremony", The Times, 29 October 2007; Mhlaba Memela: "Lucky Dube laid to rest", in: The Sowetan, 29 October 2007. – For the NBC's role to negotiate peace in the situation of a low key civil war in South Africa in the 1990's, cf. Heuser 2003b.

<sup>30</sup> Neither Dube's official website (<http://www.luckydubemusic.com/>) nor the wikipedia entry for Dube ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucky\\_Dube](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucky_Dube)) disclose his NBC-membership.

<sup>31</sup> Blog by Henry Ameh, Abuja/Nigeria, on: <http://sarocks.co.za/2007/10/25/lucky-dube-comments-the-most-moving/> (20 January 2008).

"icon". He points at Jesus Christ but he does not replace Him.<sup>32</sup> The academic result however does not reproduce in public life. Until today rumours about Shembe's divine self-understanding are being spread that date back to the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A newspaper report from 2007 about the annual pilgrimage to the holy mountain recalls a "legend" that has no backing at all by oral NBC church history:

Shembe felt he was the chosen one, the son of God who could do anything and there was no better place to show his powers than the holy mountain where "God spoke to him". Wanting to resemble Heavenly Angels, he attached bird wings to his arms and tried to fly off the mountain. It was his last act, a fatal leap from the mountain's edge.<sup>33</sup>

The author does not distance himself from this story but uses it to demonstrate the simple-minded faith of amaNazaretha. Those rumours originated in the ideological arsenal of mission Christianity in cooperation with the political administration to slow down the expansion of African Independent Christianity. For outsiders being a member of the NBC was not something to be proud of. However, a very strong link at Lucky Dube's connection with the NBC is provided by newspaper reports on his funeral service. The funeral took place on Sunday, 28 October 2007, in iNgogo near Newcastle in northern KwaZulu-Natal, Dube's home province. The service was conducted by pastors from the NBC with Shembe followers making up an overwhelming majority of worshippers. His body clad in cow skin, Dube was laid to rest in accordance with the ritual arrangement of his church. Compared to the Johannesburg memorial service some days earlier, the funeral took on the character of a private ceremony. The most reliable and most extensive report of the funeral appeared in the newspaper "The Times" (29 October 2007), even accompanied by a video of the procession in the on-line edition of the newspaper. Entitled "Lucky Dube laid to rest in humble ceremony", the video shows hundreds of NBC-followers barefoot and clad in their white gowns. According to "The Times", the ceremony "was free of glamour and showed no sign of the cosmopolitan world Dube lived in. ... Dube's family were inconsolable throughout the service and the tears flowed as Dube's voice sang Shembe is the Way."<sup>34</sup>

Lucky Dube composed the song "Shembe is the Way" for his last album "Respect" (2006). In daily life NBC-members are visible with emblems like "Shembe is the Way" on their jackets, cars and taxis. Nowadays some are enjoying Lucky Dube's song as a tribute to the founder of the NBC:

<sup>32</sup> This "iconic" theological frame has been suggested by Bengt Sundkler in order to revise his own former perspective on African Independent Churches, cf. Sundkler 1976.

<sup>33</sup> Thabo Mkhize: Looking for the way, article in: The Times, 4 January 2007. Shembe died on 2 May 1935 of illness on the northern coast of KwaZulu-Natal.

<sup>34</sup> Report and video by Thabo Mkhize, cf. <http://www.thetimes.co.za/PrintArticle.aspx?ID=599058> (4 January 2008). This report found a wide distribution and was also published in Kenya. See also the informative article by Mhlaba Memela: "Lucky Dube laid to rest", in: The Sowetan, 29 October 2007; and further "Media barred from burial", in: The Sowetan, 23 October 2007.

It wasn't the valley of death, I was walking in  
It was the valley of confusion for many years  
Different religions different beliefs  
Undermining my culture  
Looking down upon my tradition  
Making fun of my language  
Telling my children, they have no God.  
Finally I can tell them about,  
Shembe is the way

*Chorus*

Oh SHEMA thank you for showing us the way.  
Shembe nobunazaretha,  
Oh SHEMA thank you for healing my people.  
Shembe nobunazaretha.

Shembe is the way.  
I hear them shouting Amen,  
At the top of that mountain  
I hear them shouting Uyingwele  
At the top of that mountain.<sup>35</sup>  
No one will undermine my religion  
No one will undermine my culture anymore,  
Cause God sent him from above, to be with the people.  
Bring them back to what is their own  
Take them back to the ways  
Of our forefathers.  
Finally I can tell generations and generations  
That Shembe is the way

*Chorus*

Oh Shembe THANK YOU FOR WHOWING US THE WAY.  
Shembe Nobunazaretha.

In these lines that show an intimate knowledge of NBC spiritual life, Lucky Dube made his connection with "Shembe" public to everybody. He broke his silence about his membership of a church that was despised by Christian orthodoxy for many decades as a sectarian movement. This "outing", so to speak, broke a principle in his attitude towards religion. In the title song of the same album, "Respect", we find the line: "You don't even have to know my religious affiliation." He thus claims that religious practice is a private affair and should be tolerated by every body. In an interview he gave to the weekly "Mail and Guardian" in the year 1999, Dube still denied any particular religious affiliation. He answered to the question about his religion: "I don't have a particular religion but I do believe that there is a God. To me religion is like politics, it divides people."<sup>36</sup> At that time the NBC was still suffering from severe internal splits about the right interpretation of the religious heritage of the founder generations of the church. Rival factions had caused a schism in the late 1970s that lasts until today. And again in the mid-1990s, when a long-time-serving bishop had passed away without naming a successor, the majority faction was hit by the ambitions of several candidates for leadership.<sup>37</sup> The "valley of confusion" Dube was roaming "for many years", surrounded by "different beliefs", can be well projected onto his own church, torn into parts by church policy!

<sup>35</sup> During the annual pilgrimage to the Nhlankhazhi Mountain in Ndwedwe (KwaZulu-Natal), the leader of the church is greeted by the assembled amaNazaretha with the loud praise: "He is holy".

<sup>36</sup> [http://www.chico.mweb.co.za/art/q\\_n\\_a/990826-dube.html](http://www.chico.mweb.co.za/art/q_n_a/990826-dube.html) (4 January 2008).

<sup>37</sup> Since then, the NBC is divided into five factions, two main branches and three branches with relatively very small membership. For an overview about the recent NBC-history, cf. Heuser 2008.

Dube's reluctant approach to the question about his religion might be also due to the fact that the interview was pushing him into a Rastafarian corner. Large parts dealt with his attitude towards the legalisation and the use of marijuana, or whether he adhered to certain food taboos. Already at this occasion he distanced himself from smoking marijuana as a religious rule for Rastafarians. If he had left any ambiguity on this issue in his songs, now he clarified his opinion with no doubts left: "I don't care if it is legalised or not. I don't smoke it. ... You don't have to smoke to be a Rasta. Rastafarianism is a way of life." Dube's answer is a sort of hidden reference to his NBC-membership. The NBC strictly prohibits smoking to proclaim ritual purity. But there are commonalities with Rastafarian belief, too. As mentioned already, with the founding of a holy village the NBC has fulfilled the Rastafarian longing for an African "Zion". The NBC has pushed forward the idea of a contextualised Christianity with an African face. It has pushed forward an African theology that is different from mission Christianity in its spiritual and ritual praxis. The NBC paved the way for new expressive modes in church life and opted for music and dance innovations: NBC-members and Rastafarians share some ritual demands as described in Old Testament passages, like adhering to certain food taboos or to the Nazarite vow not to cut men's hair and beard.

Notwithstanding such common grounds, Lucky Dube's church affiliation might have been come as a surprise to many who saw him in the rows of South African Rastafarians. In a WikiAnswers forum the question has been raised: "What is the meaning of Shembe as used in Lucky Dube's song Shembe is the way?" This question has not been answered yet.<sup>38</sup> Another internet forum reviewing Dube's lyrics, however, ended up in an open discussion about "Who is Shembe?" Lucky Dube fans, amongst them many NBC-members, tackle the question in a long list of comments. This makes it by far the most intense debate on the lyrics of Lucky Dube, I came across.<sup>39</sup> The entries differ according to three categories of argumentation. One group of discussants deals with the status of the NBC as a Christian church. Coming from an orthodox viewpoint, they accuse Shembe followers of dogmatic heresy. Shembe's centrality in the spiritual life of his church had made him a Messiah, if not divine-like figure. Some entries do not exempt Lucky Dube from reproaches of spiritual deviation. With this song "Shembe is the way", one reviewer claims, Dube had only mixed "religion into Christianity". The song, expressed another reviewer, would demonstrate his own state of "confusion" about "his existence and success". A second group of discussants categorises Dube's Shembe-song as a positive signal of African identity and self-consciousness. They raise issues that are common language also within the Rastafarian movement. Out of his pride in an African past and the African civilisation, "Rastaman Dube" would pro-

<sup>38</sup> The question was asked and categorised into the section on music and lyrics but not into the section on religion or churches in Africa! Cf. [http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What\\_is\\_the\\_meaning\\_of\\_Shembe\\_as\\_used\\_in\\_Lucky\\_Dube%27s\\_song\\_Shembe\\_is\\_the\\_way](http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_the_meaning_of_Shembe_as_used_in_Lucky_Dube%27s_song_Shembe_is_the_way) (10 June 2008).

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.sing365.com/music/lyric.nsf/Shembe-Is-The-Way-lyrics-Lucky-Dube/555AB66D8E75745B4825717F0080DA2F> (8 January 2008). All further quotes in this section are from this source.

claim a black saviour in the song. Dube's belief in Shembe's message would speak for everyone who wanted a strong "black nation". Referring implicitly to the ideological project initiated by outgoing President Thabo Mbeki in the second half of the 1990's, one review supported Dube's vital concern for an "African renaissance".<sup>40</sup> One entry from the Solomon Islands generalises this argument by interpreting Dube's lyrics in more global terms. In his opinion, "Shembe" stands for all nations in the world that have been "destroyed by modern political, social, and cultural systems". A third group of reviewers represents advocates of Dube who belong to the NBC themselves. They insist on the right of free religious expression in South Africa. Some postulate their belief in the divine nature of Shembe. They state that Lucky Dube was not confused at all when he composed the Shembe-song, and that he did never mix Rastafarian beliefs with principles of the Shembe church. On the contrary, Dube made in their summary a "valuable input" into church life.

Indeed, Dube's lyrics treat issues on religion and ethics that reveal important theological concepts for NBC-followers. Titles in Dube's discography such as "Respect", "Peace, perfect peace", "Sins of the flesh", "Touch your dreams", only to enumerate some songs from recent albums, are his references to popular themes in NBC-services. His intimate affiliation to Shembe-theology is to be found in his family background. Dube was born into a NBC-family and the story of his birth fits well into the archive of oral testimonies by generations of Shembe-followers. Many women joined the NBC because they expected healing by "Shembe", mostly related to family matters, marriage conflicts, or birth problems. Dube's mother named him "Lucky" because his birth happened after a number of failed pregnancies. The boy Lucky, whose parents separated before his birth, had been raised by his grandmother while his mother relocated to work. In an interview from 1999 Lucky Dube described his grandmother as his "greatest love", because "she multiplied many things to bring up this responsible individual that I am today."<sup>41</sup> The song "God bless the women" (1995) recalls his family story and praises the responsibility of all mothers to educate and protect their children. Thus, from early on he became familiar with the mindset of Shembe followers and the ethical standards required from NBC-members. A moving description of Dube's burial, published in "The Sowetan" (2 November 2007), deletes any doubts about his religious belonging. The lengthy article entitled "Let's revere our prophets in our own villages", advocates a definite "change" in the way "we view our icons". It does not claim any Rastafarian heritage by tracing down Caribbean roots but unveils Dube's identity as a member of a church of genuine African style:

Walking barefoot on a cold, frosty morning with their white church regalia, members of the Shembe church descended on the scenic Dube farm in Ngogo, Newcastle, with as much as dignity as they could master. A hero within the church had fallen. Paying their last respects was not an option. Lucky was considered as essential

<sup>40</sup> On this vibrant discourse in South Africa and the place "Shembe" plays in it, cf. Heuser 2005.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Mail and Guardian online, 26 August 1999, [http://www.chico.mweb.co.za/art/q\\_n\\_a/990826-dube.html](http://www.chico.mweb.co.za/art/q_n_a/990826-dube.html) (4 January 2008).



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congregant and a pillar of the church. From screaming at the top of their lungs in order to be heard, he had introduced them to the finest sound system money could buy. When the congregation almost crawled at his feet in gratitude, he would tell them that he would only settle for blessings.

For any observing participant from "all the media", the author comments, the funeral ceremony respected African culture and dignified African burial rites. "The culturally-influenced hymns made you aware that you were in Africa. The traditional way of using leather for the coffin and the stretch-like carrier was moving. ... Lucky was a rich man, yet the simple burial highlights his sticking to his truth right to the end."<sup>42</sup>

Dube's far too early tragic death in crime-ridden South Africa had triggered a controversial debate in the national and international media about the message the "King of African Reggae" had left. His profile as a musician who had constantly interfered with the social and political development of his country and the continent he lived in was first linked to his alleged Rastafarian spiritual roots. The ensuing ritual passages had caused a turn in the public recognition of his religious heritage. In the course of the commemoration ceremony held in Johannesburg and finally the funeral at his rural homestead in KwaZulu-Natal, the "Rastaman" had slowly changed to a respected "Nazarite" - or member of Shembe's amaNazarethas. Dube's public fame as a staunch member of the NBC will be lifted in even higher heights in the near future. South African movie producers intend to realise a film on "Shembe - Story of an African Prophet", key cast: Lucky Dube.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> The article in "The Sowetan" is authored by "The Swazi Princess" whose identity is not quite clear to me.

<sup>43</sup> The documentary in development is being produced by V. Sitaram from East Coast Media in Durban. Script writer M.P. Mpanza is the most prominent NBC- intellectual who has published a number of articles and booklets, mostly in Zulu, on Shembe already.

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# **Hilton Toohey - a South African Apostle's Narrative on his Encounter with the Divine**

LUTZ MEYER

This paper deals with the story of Hilton Toohey who became the founding figure of Breakthrough International, a charismatic indigenous church in South Africa. The beginnings of Breakthrough International can be traced back to an intense spiritual experience of its founder members and particularly its founding "Apostle" Hilton Toohey. His experience will be narrated here. Furthermore we will discuss how the experience of the divine, of the Spiritual or however you might call it, can become a category accessed by academic theology which traditionally pays allegiance to a modern, enlightened paradigm of truth.

## **An African encounter with the divine under the veil of a charismatic experience**

As we narrate the story of Hilton Toohey and his encounter with the divine one might ask if that experience can be called an African experience. Because Hilton Toohey and his followers, though they are Africans, come along as charismatic Christians one might find all over the world. Their narrative might therefore be questioned in its authenticity as an example for a so-called 'genuine' African Spiritual experience. But it has been pointed out that the intense experience of the world of the Spiritual has a reality on its own within the African world view.<sup>1</sup> Hilton Toohey's experience of the divine might be influenced in its outlook by the modern Pentecostal and Charismatic movement. But the knowledge of and the experience in the divine reality is a very

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<sup>1</sup> Kalu 1998: 7.

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normal and real characteristic of the African worldview. In Africa, as Godwin Sogolo stresses in his "Foundations of African Philosophy", the *Cosmos*, the order of things, is inclusive of the spiritual world.<sup>2</sup> This inclusiveness of religion within the African world view has been well pointed out by Ambrose Moyo, the Lutheran Bishop of Zimbabwe:

The African experience is first and foremost a religious experience. Religion is seen as an integral part of daily life and inseparable from culture. It expresses itself in the social, economic, and political life of any given community, and determines the individual's and the community's activities and relationships. ... Religion is a communal affair, and being an integral part of culture, there can be no separation of the sacred and the profane, our approach to life is holistic. *According to African thought, God is and has always been very real.*<sup>3</sup>

What we are about to relate here must therefore primarily be viewed as an African experience of the divine. Our assumption is that the Spirit 'bobbed up' and did manifest itself in Hilton Toohey. This was "an experiential thing", a "supernatural intervention" to say it in the words of Russell Toohey, Hilton Toohey's son. It is not an imported experience from charismatics in America. But rather a tangible and real divine experience rooted within the African world view of Hilton Toohey. It represents a world view in which the divine is perceived as reality and not as one possible concept within a theistic understanding of God and his dealings with the world.

## The reality of the Spiritual shaping the personal reality of Hilton and Rhoda Toohey

The date which changed the life of Hilton and Rhoda Toohey is the day when they both "got saved" and the Spirit 'bobbed up' in their life. This happened in 1975 at a rally held by Michael Cassidy, a South African Evangelist and the founder of African Enterprise, an evangelical, though ecumenical, para-church organization. The rally took place in Woodlands, Pietermaritzburg, at the community hall. In those days Woodlands was declared a Coloured township by the Apartheid regime.

This is how Rhoda and Hilton Toohey talk about what happened at that rally:

R: Marie was about?, oh shame! She was about seven months. Our baby, she was seven months old at April, then we attended a mission to Woodlands and Michael Cassidy was preaching and that's when we responded to an altar call and we committed our lives to Jesus and we experienced Him and that was a life-changing experience.

H: It was very interesting in my life, because I used to go to church, while I was never really involved in church activities and, but my wife was. ... I used to drink a lot and

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<sup>2</sup> Sogolo 1993: 59-60.

<sup>3</sup> Moyo 1988: 81 (italics are mine).

that began to frighten me. Because I was going to church, I used to leave liquor for Lent and all that, and then Easter Sunday, go back again. And I was desperate for something to happen in my life, and then on this particular Monday, I tell my wife, you're always going out every night. This Monday, I'm going to go out. So I leave her, and I go to this meeting where Michael Cassidy's preaching and it was the first time I'd ever been to a meeting like that. The people are clapping hands and all that and after the sermon he makes an alter call. He says those who want to commit your lives to the Lord can come up. And I went up. And I ran home that night, because I was so excited.

L: Why did you go up?

H: Because I was desperate for something to happen. I'd been in church for thirty-five years, and there was nothing that I ever experienced that could help me overcome my problems which were getting bigger and bigger, and I went up that night, and I ran home and I told my wife I found something that's going to help our marriage, and we knelt down, and we prayed. And that's how it happened.

L: Do you [Rhoda Toohey] remember that day?

R: Very, very well, because I was already having an awakening in the idea of what salvation was all about. So I was eager to go to the meeting with him on the following evening. And Michael was preaching about the forgiving father, and that's what I needed to hear that night, because I just felt that I was such a terrible sinner, that I was going to hell and so I responded to the alter call and asked Jesus not just to be my Saviour but to come into our lives as Lord.

And it was just an absolutely life-change. The God that seemed to be a million miles away from me was so suddenly so personal. I knew that he was in me and that life would never be the same again. (H04:61-62)<sup>4</sup>

This experience of salvation in 1975 marks a change within the spiritual journey of Hilton and Rhoda Toohey. Their relationship with God became very personal, based on experiences which made them feel that 'he was in them and that life would never be the same'.

Viewed from the outside one might see this experience as another example of Pentecostal escapism, where people avoid to face their real problems in favor of some kind of spiritualism which let's them forget their personal misery.

This is a rather common rationalization of the salvation experience as an individualistic, escape - or flight mechanism helping to cope with the often cruel reality<sup>5</sup> and sees faith as a kind of 'faith for the fearful'<sup>6</sup>. But to apply this kind of explanation to Rhoda and Hilton Toohey is problematic. Because their experience of the Spirit didn't make them escape from their problems. It rather enabled them to face and work at

<sup>4</sup> All the interview material used is taken from: Meyer 2004, vol. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Wietzke 1995: 15. Cf. Poewe 1989: 371-374; Roelofs 1994: 220-221.

<sup>6</sup> Schlemmer 1985; Poewe 1994: 53-58.



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their marital as well as family troubles. By being enabled to pray together and thereby placing their tribulations before God, they also found a way of dealing with their problems.

This becomes even more obvious as the Spiritual journey of Rhoda and Hilton Toohey proceeds. Another life changing encounter with the Spirit, commonly referred to as the 'baptism in the Spirit', took place. This experience, just a few months after their salvation, intensified their personal and experiential relationship with God, and helped them to address their personal problems. They themselves recount what happened:

- R: It was a few months later that we were introduced to the baptism in the Holy Spirit and we didn't hesitate we just asked: "Jesus just come and baptize us and fill and immerse us and saturate us with your Holy Spirit." And that again we just felt we had entered into another realm another reality which gave us a whole new being.
- H: One day we were in a meeting and there was a priest from Belgium and he was talking about the infilling of the Holy Spirit and all that, and we asked him how do we get that? So he said you can come to a seminar at St Joseph's seminary, and we used to go up there, every Friday night, a group of us, and they took us through a series of teachings and then we came to the night they spoke about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And they prayed for us, and we received it.
- R: With the evidence of speaking in tongues! ... Well, we were just so desperate for God and all we said, "God if it comes with that, we accept whatever you do. We don't understand but we are just desperate and we want whatever you have for us". So it was immaterial you know, that we were not used to all this.
- ... I felt like when Jesus said: "Anyone who is thirsty, let him come. And the Spirit it will be in you." John 7: 36, 37 that it says "it will be like a well bubbling up from your innermost being." And ja, and I just felt the tongues were like that, bubbling up and over. Whether I understood it or not, I was just so, I just wanted everything that he had for me that night. Basically, no I didn't really fully understand. I think it was just by faith. They told us, lay hands on us, and we will be filled. And we believed that we will be filled, and so we were filled. ... [I felt] Peace and the joy that I've never experienced before and an assurance that God was with me, with us. Hilton had another experience...
- H: I had a different experience on that night. I felt the surge of power coming over me, I just experienced a tremendous love for Rhoda and I used to...
- R: He immediately knelt down, there by me, and was just holding me, he was just filled with love....
- H: She wasn't accustomed to this anymore, because over the years, you know what I mean, we had drawn apart from each other. So there the Holy Spirit fills me and he restores all this love for my wife, she couldn't handle it.

But that was my first experience. Later on, I experienced speaking in tongues and all. But on that particular night, I didn't experience speaking in tongues. I experienced the overflowing love for my wife. (H04:62-63)

The experience of the Spirit enabled Hilton Toohey, for whom the family was the most important thing in life (H04: 68), to rekindle his love for his wife. As he says himself, for him it was not so much the speaking in tongues but the fact that the Spirit worked on an area in his life which needed urgent attention, what made the Spirit experience real, tangible and relevant.

H: I also think a significant change in my life was that soon after my conversion, I could gather my family every night.

R: Which I had done every night before.

H: Rhoda used to do that before. And I could take the bible and I would begin to read it to them, I would begin to share with them Christian principles and all that, whereas we used to pray the rosary before that, and she used to lead it. (H04:72)

The experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit made a slightly different impression on Rhoda Toohey. She summons up what happened:

R: But I want to say this very significant thing also happened that night. I saw a lady crying across the room, and it was just like the most natural thing for me to get up and go and lay hands on her. And I had such boldness and such faith, and I knew that if I began something, I just knew that as I laid hands on her whatever I'd asked for, you know like for God to bring healing to her emotionally, and peace, I just knew God would do it. I was just confident.

...that was surprising because whatever I had prayed before, I had never see results. Never! But this night I knew that as I laid hands on her, something was going to happen, she was going to get healing and she was going to get the peace she was longing for - I was feeling so sure about that.

H: The whole life changed after that. We felt like we could we were able to touch people after that. (H04:63)

For both, Hilton as well as Rhoda Toohey the personal encounter with the Spirit of God was a life changing event which shaped the character of their future ministry. The experience of the Spirit had restored Hilton Toohey's love for his wife and his role within family. It had given Rhoda Toohey a fundamental confidence that her prayer and laying hands on people would actually make a difference.

In addition to that experience another encounter with the divine or the Spirit, as the Toohey would call it, led to them to move into a communal life style which marks the starting point of Breakthrough International as a spiritual revival movement. Rhoda and Hilton Toohey talk about what happened:

H: I was at work one day just before lunch break because I was a builder, and I must have been on about the third floor and all of a sudden, it was like I heard the voice of God saying "Leave all things, and come follow me".

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And at that instant I went into a little closet because I began to cry, and for the whole lunch break. I was in that closet just weeping - because I knew that that God had called me into the ministry now. That I must leave everything and come follow him.

And when I got home that afternoon and I was relating that story to Rhoda, and she asked me, what time did it happen, I told her just on 12 o'clock, and she said: "Exactly the same thing happened to me." So we knew that God was calling us into ministry.

R: And so when the call came, I was busy, and all of a sudden, it was like I was arrested by the Holy Spirit and I heard this a voice say to me to leave all and to come, to sell and to lead a new life and you know, to follow and so what came to my mind was to leave, and to go into a community. (H04:64)

Russell Toohey, the son of Hilton and Rhoda recollects as well:

T: My dad was reading his bible at work, on a construction side, and the Lord touched him supernaturally. He broke down in tears, went into a tool shed he was so overwhelmed. At that precise moment my mother was polishing the floor at home and had the same experience. And so with that they connected with a Catholic priest who was running a community of reconciliation. Sold up everything at give away price. Gave away lots of stuff and we shifted down there and lived very simply, very humble vegetarian lifestyle. (H01:3)

The practicalities of 'moving into community' were much more complex than the recollections of a Spirit encounter like the above might indicate. The Toohey's sold their belongings which had been prophesized over their lives before by a pastor from Durban/South Africa (H01:4). After that "they lived by faith", as they call it (H04:66-67), which basically means living off donations. They moved into a community which had been envisioned by a Catholic priest and was called "Zion Community of Reconciliation" (H04:67). This is how the "Zion Community of Reconciliation", later to be called "Breakthrough International" was born. Hilton Toohey explains:

H: Well, the community was actually started when we went down there, because it was an old derelict Catholic Church, it was in a terrible state. And so we sold our house, and all the money that we got from our house we used to build a community up then, then I left work to work on the community. We built rooms, where people could come and stay, and all that. (H04:66)

The ministry developed over the years (H01:2-4) and people gathered together for charismatic and interdenominational meetings. Hilton Toohey describes it as follows:

H: We used to have meetings once a month, where all the different denominations came. We used to fill the church in Ohrtman Rd. and we used to invite ministers from the different denominations to come and minister to us and then we began to do various works in the communities. And I remember one day because then in our meetings, Whites will come in and Blacks and Indians and Coloureds, and we got a special visit from the special branch. And they started to question us. What are the

Whites doing in our church? But I eventually began to minister to the - I invited him to also come. So it was OK - they never came back again! (H04:68-69)

... there was a real revival that began to happen there. We used to have meetings there, at 12 o'clock, and on a Friday 12 - 2pm between an hour or two, and eventually there were about 3 or 400 people used to come there during the lunch break. (H04:67)

The 'living in community' opened a new chapter within the Spiritual journey of Hilton and Rhoda Toohey. They felt and responded to the call of going into ministry, received in different kinds of encounters with the divine. As far as Hilton and Rhoda Toohey are concerned, it was the Spirit leading them, and not just their own ego. Hilton Toohey says it like this:

H: Oh no, I don't just move because it's from my mind. Its always in prayer, then the Holy Spirit impresses certain things on me then I've learned that whatever the Spirit of God says you must do, don't hesitate, because if you hesitate, then you begin to doubt (H04:77).

The Tooheys were 'sold out to the Lord' willing to follow wherever the experience of the Spirit might lead them. They were living a theology where "events precede ideas". Their experience of the Spirit superseded theory and shaped the construction of their reality or belief system. This experience was constitutive for Hilton and Rhoda Toohey's story because "people's experiences form the basis of what they believe and the way that they talk about their experiences and tell their stories".<sup>7</sup>

## The problem of academic discourse to engage the African experience of the divine

Our assumption is that that Hilton and Rhoda Toohey's narrative relates a tangible African experience of the divine which is real in as much as anything within the tangible world can be called real. Their encounter with the divine is not just a psychological condition within a not yet enlightened world view. It is an experience of the divine which superseded any theory and shaped the construction of their reality or belief system.

In short we suggest taking what Hilton and Rhoda talk about at face value. We grant that it is exactly what it appears to be, an intervention of the world of divine, of transcendence imposing itself upon immanence.

Western academic theology must of course concede that it can neither accept this assumption nor is able to engage in a fruitful dialogue with the experience of the divine. This is due to its understanding of truth which does not allow for the experience of the divine, which African spirituality is so well acquainted with. While the African

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<sup>7</sup> Both quotes are from Balcomb 1998: 12.

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world view integrates the 'Spiritual' into its view of the world the modern academic world view disassociates the 'Spiritual' from the 'real world' of objective concepts and natural laws. This 'objective world', as it is being perceived by the thinking mind (Descartes), leaves little or no room for the experience of God.

The problem one has to deal with whilst engaging with the African divine experience from a western "enlightened" point of view is the following: While the 'Spiritual world' is "real and tangible" to the African world view it is an impossibility to the modern Western world view. As Jürgen Moltmann writes: "Is God an object of possible experience? According to the pattern of the modern constitution of experience, this is out of the question: God can be objectively neither known nor experienced."<sup>8</sup>

This does not mean that it is impossible to talk about the experience of the 'Divine' or 'Spiritual', the experience of God in a Western world view. It just says *that in an objective sense* it is impossible to talk about the experience of God. According to Moltmann it is:

...still possible to talk about the experience of God. We can do so in the non objective context of human experience itself. ... Even if God is not an object of the general experience of the world and life, the experience of God can still be present as transcendental constitution of the human self-consciousness.<sup>9</sup>

In other words it is possible for modern man to still feel the relevance of God to his or her life, but this feeling is a purely subjective experience. The Western modern world view would separate this 'world of human self-consciousness' from a 'world of facts and knowledge', from the world of 'objective truth'. While the objective truth is being verifiable through experiment and reason, the subjective experience of the spiritual belongs within the realm of psychology and sociology.

This rather complicated argument might be confusing but it has an important consequence for any attempt to engage with Hilton and Rhoda Toohey's experience of the divine from a view point of academic theology. Their experience can only be viewed as a subjective experience with little meaning to our "objective science" we call theology. In other words modern theology is open to all kinds of arguments and reasoning but incapable of dealing with what is the ultimate concern of religion - the divine experience. In European tradition this is left to mystics or to Africans like Hilton and Rhoda Toohey and their "subjectivity".

It seems as if African and Western thinking operates in two different world views. The former perceives the spiritual world as real bearing tangible consequences. The latter would rather restrain the spiritual world to the subjective side of the human existence. It does not deny that a spiritual world might exist within the subjective self-consciousness of the human being but this is not real in an objective sense as being understood according to the Cartesian subject-object dichotomy.

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<sup>8</sup> Moltmann 1992: 31.

<sup>9</sup> Moltmann 1992: 32-33.



This difference in world views leads to a different ways in which spiritual experiences are being incorporated into the life of the believer. The African world view seems to a certain degree spiritually literate. This can not be said about a Western academic and enlightened world view of which modern theology is a child. Spiritual illiteracy is an intrinsic trait of academic theology.

At the center of this different reading of the signs of "the Spiritual" is the way in which spiritual experiences are dealt with. The African world view relates a spiritual experience directly to the life of the believer. But the Western world view screens any spiritual experience through its rationalistic understanding of religion. The African world view is rather intimately perceptive to the 'experience of the Spiritual'. Enlightened academic theology on the contrary approaches God through the detour of conceptual discourse and thereby making it impossible to be impinged upon by God.

### **African experience of the divine in dialogue with enlightened academic discourse**

The encounter of the divine with Hilton and Rhoda Toohey, who are one example of many other Africans with deep spiritual experiences, is usually dismissed by theology as subjective experience. This is as far as academic theology can go according to its parameters of truth. Dialogue is not possible on account of its own epistemological assumptions. Yet we believe that another route toward a fruitful dialogue must be found so that the spiritually illiterate academic theology can connect with the African experience of the divine.

We therefore suggest a paradigm shift from a "scientist to a rhetorical genre"<sup>10</sup> when trying to engage with the experience of the divine. Theology as 'science' might not be able to integrate the experience of the supernatural into its discourse. But theology as interpretation, as rhetorical exercise of defining and redefining truth might be able to collaborate with those who claim to have had the experience of the Spirit.

This new understanding of course involves a shift of the modern academic concept of truth. The academic concept of theological truth needs to move towards the realm of art than of science. The experience of the divine, as 'real' as it has been to those who have experienced it, can be accessed in a hermeneutical way or not at all. In doing theology we need to acknowledge that theological truth is not compatible with true statements of sciences and even philosophy. There is an irreconcilable divide between scientific and philosophical language on the one hand and religious language on the other hand. This divide is based on the fact that faith presupposes revelation as a given fact. Eberhard Jüngel captures it:

The language of faith presupposes revelation. So not the least demonstration of the truth of what faith has to say is the fact that the language of faith does not simply

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<sup>10</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza 1995: 274.

accord with actuality. Because Christian faith has to talk about God if it wishes to speak the truth, it has to say more than the actuality of the world is able to say. This means, however, that faith is inevitably involved in a dispute about truth, for in the Western intellectual tradition, truth is conceived as the correspondence of the judgments of the mind (*intellectus*) with actuality (*res*), as *adaequatio intellectus et rei* (correspondence of mind and thing) in the sense of *adaequatio intellectus [humani] ad rem* (correspondence of the human mind to the thing). Seen from the standpoint of this understanding of truth, religious language seems to be the exact opposite of true language; it seems to be a kind of error, not a lie. If in order to be true according to the criteria of religion and faith, a text has to say more than what is actual, it does not correspond to actuality.<sup>11</sup>

Jüngel's point about the "disputable truth of faith" can be applied to the experience of the Spirit. In its revelatory experience something more is happening than what is understood as 'actual' in a Western view of truth. God is indeed speaking through the experience of the Spirit and this is more than human thinking can grasp as 'actuality'.

A modern, theological, "enlightened" and religious, language of 'theology as science' would not be able to adequately grasp this self-revelation of God since it is bound to its modern understanding of truth. Religious language therefore must go beyond the modern paradigm of the enlightenment and try to capture religious truth which per definition exceeds the modern understanding of reality. Or, to use Jüngel's terminology, our religious language must try to describe what, from a modern point of view, is not seen as actuality and could even be perceived as a lie. It must do so because of the character of the revelation which is per definition non-actual, meaning not real in a modern sense of the word.

In short and a little simplified: Speaking the truth in respect to the reality of the divine is something which might not necessarily make sense in terms of conventional logic. It is rather a rhetorical process which tries to express what the inexpressible actuality of God's reality is.

In this rhetorical and rather inadequate process of striving to speak the truth about the divine an element of speech becomes relevant, which is usually neglected as a mere decoration of speech. This element is the 'metaphor', which is the "fundamental characteristic of religious language"<sup>12</sup>.

The writer of Psalm 119:105 for instance can refer to the law of God as 'a light to his feet and a lamp to his path'. Or it is Jesus himself who calls us to "enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). There is no road which leads to life and another which leads to destruction, but behind this metaphorical speech lays a truth which if not expressed in this kind of language could not be expressed at all. Without metaphors we would be at a loss of words to describe the truth of the divine. The writer

<sup>11</sup> Jüngel 1989: 17.

<sup>12</sup> Jüngel 1989: 19.

of Psalm 119 as well as Jesus used metaphors in bringing across a truth which is beyond 'actuality' in a modern sense, but which has a truth to it which transcends the modern "enlightened" paradigm.

It is through metaphor that the experience of the divine impinges upon the thinking mind which becomes the object of an experience exceeding its cognitive abilities. Therefore the language of faith is through and through metaphorical, because the context of it transcends the worldly reality in which the thinking mind can operate. In short: If theology wants to speak the truth, it needs to speak in metaphors.

With regard to the divine impinging upon Hilton and Rhoda Toohey theology can engage in a dialogue by acknowledging that talking about God needs a different language - the language of metaphor. A rhetorical approach to theology values the language of metaphor as the adequate way to capture the truth of the divine revelation which is exceeding worldly realities ('actuality' as Jüngel calls it) and therefore fundamentally critiques the modern understanding of truth as insufficient in matters of the divine.

In conclusion this essay calls for a reorientation of traditional academic epistemology in order to interact with the experience of the divine gaining more and more relevance in post-modern religious landscape. At its core we suggest to explore theology as rhetorical rather than academic process of understanding. This enables theology to engage with those people who have experienced the divine and should be of vital interest to modern enlightened theology. So far we have not found a way of interacting with people like Rhoda and Hilton Toohey beyond psychologically rationalising their narrative. Therefore we narrow down the scope of our thinking and deprive theology of one of its main objective which is to make sense of God. By remaining in an enlightened, modern and academic understanding of truth theology will eventually neither help those people who experience a divine intervention. Nor will it help those who try to make sense of God's divinity in a rational and conceptual living in a post modern world.

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# **Beyond Common Stereotypes about the Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals in South Africa**

EZEKIEL MOKWELE KATISO MATHOLE

Out of the development of Evangelicalism the Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals emerged in South Africa as a Church that is also contributing to the faith commonly shared with other Christians within the nation. There are lessons which can be drawn from their evangelism fervour, pneumatic spirituality and awakening social consciousness. In mapping a way forward for their continued transformation reflect on issues such as the consolidation of their social mandate, reconciliation, transcending a survival mode to aspects of holism.

## **Lessons Learnt: Their Evangelism Fervour**

The Pentecostal-Charismatics are renowned for their evangelistic fervour as a church. They have consistently shown unwavering commitment to the great commission. Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals are passionate about evangelism. This to a great extent has been understood as winning the lost for Christ. Initially, it was seen in a narrow sense of preaching the gospel to the unsaved with the sole purpose of converting them to Christ. Christians have a role in extending the Kingdom of God in society. David S. Apple said,

To spread the Kingdom of God is more than simply winning people to Christ. It is also working for the healing of persons, families, and relationships. It is doing the deeds of mercy and seeking justice. It is ordering lives and relationships and institutions and communities according to God's authority to bring in the blessedness of



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the kingdom. The presence of the kingdom of God is the means of renewal of the entire world and all dimensions of life.<sup>1</sup>

The church in its witness in society has a task to evangelise. Evangelism was almost neglected by the Church globally in its pursuit of its social mandate in its witness. But the Pentecostal-Charismatics always had a focus on evangelism even when they had approached it in a narrow way. Therefore, according to David Bosch:

Mission includes evangelism as one of its essential dimensions. Evangelism is the proclamation of salvation in Christ to those who do not believe in him, calling them to repentance and conversion, announcing forgiveness of sin, and inviting them to become living members of Christ's earthly community and to begin a life of service to others in the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

The Church must always remain faithful and diligent to fulfil its evangelistic mandate in its community. Evangelism is the testimony of the Church to the world about God's redemptive acts of grace that have been and are being accomplished for the benefit of the world. According to David Bosch:

Evangelism involves witnessing to what God has done, is doing, and will do.... Evangelism is announcing that God, Creator and Lord of the universe, has personally intervened in human history and has done so supremely through the person and ministry of Jesus Christ of Nazareth who is the Lord of history, Saviour, and Liberator. In this Jesus, incarnate, crucified and risen, the reign of God has been inaugurated.<sup>3</sup>

As Christians we tell a story about the incredible love of God that has been shown through the entirety of Jesus' life, that God has made provision for us to live a new life through him, enjoying Christ's freedom, forgiveness, love and our service to him. Therefore through witnessing, we extend an invitation to others who have not as yet received this new life that Christ has given to us.

Within Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelical circles the term evangelism is sometimes understood in a narrow and stereotypical way as just punting the message of the Bible to people without necessarily incarnating that gospel. There is a tendency to emphasize preaching to convert souls, without the accompanying actions that model that message to those who are being reached. The gospel is both proclamation and deeds. These two should go together; otherwise we cease to have an authentic Christian witness.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in: Sider/ Olson/ Unruh 2002: 45.

<sup>2</sup> Bosch 1996: 11-12.

<sup>3</sup> Bosch 1996: 412.

## Pneumatic Spirituality

The Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals are known to be a church that also has an emphasis of the Holy Spirit in their theology. They seek to revive a kind of spirituality and ministry that characterized the early Church; to practice those charismatic gifts, worship, signs and wonders that it assumed had subsided in the church. John Driver says,

The church's participation in God's mission must also be pneumatic and charismatic, in the power of the Spirit and dependent on the gifts of his grace... A people willing to live and survive by the grace of God, whose character bears the stamp of God's Spirit, will by the very nature of things be an effective witness.<sup>4</sup>

It seems that secularisation had dampened the Church's beliefs and practices of the evangelical element of *Charismata*. Therefore, they sought renewal, so that the Church should return to the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit.

This, in the New Testament, is linked to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that is described in the book of Acts, when the Church was empowered for its global witness and received the gift of tongues. Coleman describes the development of Pentecostalism in this manner:

At such time, according to Acts 2:1 - 4, the representatives of the early Christian Church in the first century were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in other tongues. By invoking the possibility of deploying glossolalia in the present (as well as other spiritual gifts such as healing), the Pentecostals of the early twentieth century saw themselves as traversing (indeed, bypassing) history in order to embody the beliefs and practices of an original, authentic Christianity. They drew distinction between tongues as a sign of initial baptism in the Spirit and later manifestations of the gift. Tongues were an important indication of the reception of the grace of the Spirit but also a form of subsequent empowerment.<sup>5</sup>

Thus it was believed to have ushered in a new dispensation, that of the supernatural, in the Church. They interpreted their baptism with the Holy Spirit to be an experience *that enhanced their Christian life, enabled them to experience the phenomenon of signs and wonders and strengthened in their faith.*

The baptism of the Holy Spirit has missiological significance to the Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals. Douglas Petersen says, "Pentecostals believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit will uniquely empower them to witness to others the reality of the saving grace".<sup>6</sup> Here one can note the influence of Acts 1:8 and Lk 24:49. Thus they have demonstrated fervour for missions globally, although some criticize their strategies. Baptism with the Spirit empowers Christians with spiritual gifts that should

<sup>4</sup> Driver 1997: 222.

<sup>5</sup> Coleman 2000: 20-21.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in: Samuel/ Sugden 1999: 86-87.

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be expressed in their witness. Indeed, all the spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:8 - 10 are seen as basic to God's equipping of the local church for service. It is through these spiritual gifts that laity was mobilized to be of service to Christ in their communities and that they were able to deal with the forces of wickedness that beleaguered their communities. "Charismatics realize that believers are engaged in a spiritual battle with powers of evil. As a result, many Charismatics are involved in ministries of spiritual healing, exorcism, and deliverance."<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, baptism in the Spirit deepens people's conviction of the nearness of God to them. They testify about having experienced a sense of having been in the presence of God. "The most radical effect can only be called simply the knowledge of God. For those who have been touched by the Holy Spirit in the Pentecostal experience, God is no longer a vague, distant figure, but a reality encountered. He has demonstrated his reality to them."<sup>8</sup> It is a phenomenon that assures them of God's care and love for them as they continue with their challenging earthly existence. Thus for many it is expressed in their devotion to prayer arising from this experience of Spirit baptism. They have a growing new spontaneity and intensity in prayer.

Pentecostal-Charismatics are more inclined to privatise the power of the Holy Spirit to personal aspects of human spirituality. The phenomenon of the work of the Holy Spirit, which is portrayed in striking examples for personal and group therapy and should be balanced by the Spirit's ministry in acts of structural liberation. Furthermore, Charismatic Christians sometimes use a language that seems overly enthusiastic when talking about their experience of Charismatic renewal. This creates an impression that theirs is a movement of quick fixes. No transformation brought through Charismatic renewal, no matter how overwhelming it may be is an instant occurrence. Yet, this does not mean we should dismiss accounts of these experiences of the power of the Holy Spirit, unless they are obviously distorted. "Pentecostals are guilty of many exaggerations, oversimplifications and personal quirks that do not come from authentic Pentecostal spirit, but from the human subjects that embody it."<sup>9</sup> Thus we must have an openness to embrace Charismatic renewal but maintain our discernment to reject anything that is not *kosher*.

## Awakening of their Social Consciousness

A remarkable change has taken place in our nation amongst Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals. Many of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelical churches that were once considered socially irrelevant and politically naïve have now transformed. In the post-apartheid South Africa they have begun to play a significant role in nation building. Some have shifted from their apolitical stance in their witness. They are now faced

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<sup>7</sup> Smith 1992: 129.

<sup>8</sup> O'Connor 1974: 141-142.

<sup>9</sup> O'Connor 1974: 219.



with Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals faced with contextual realities characterised by issues such as poverty, HIV/Aids, and moral degeneration. These are the serious and complex issues that they have to deal with if they are to authentic heralds of the gospel. When faced with such serious social problems they cannot have the luxury of being apathetic like before during period of apartheid. Poverty for the majority of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals is not just a theoretical problem. Many of them are personally experiencing real destitution in their churches. There are many who are poor within the ranks of their hierarchy and constituency. Although deprivation is a theological problem for them, yet they are facing and feeling its existential realities themselves. They have not had the luxury of romanticizing it, since it was affecting them negatively.

They have made significant progress in shedding their culture of non-involvement. The Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals on their journey of faith have ultimately emerged from their often-lamented reactive stance and dualistic theological tendencies, to pursue mission in society. It has become a reality that Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals do not want to be bystanders when it comes to issues of social development and transformation. Therefore, in the context of South Africa, they have to face the reality of widespread impoverishment in the country. They are re-appropriating their mission mandate to be witnesses who are to make a difference to a situation of deprivation. This is true of both South African Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals and of the worldwide Evangelical community. Ron Sider describes this trend as follows:

The twentieth century saw a divisive argument between the social gospel churches that focused one-sidedly on social action, and evangelistic churches that insisted that leading people to Christ was the only truly important mission of the church. The tragic results of that long argument have not entirely disappeared, but we have made great progress. Evangelical leaders today widely agree that biblical churches must combine word and deed, doing evangelism and social ministry. Scores of historic evangelical congregations that focused almost exclusively on evangelism twenty years ago are now immersed in social engagement - without losing their evangelistic passion. Thousands of holistic grassroots ministries have emerged.<sup>10</sup>

They have the challenging task to be witnesses of Christ's love and care to the majority of the previously disadvantaged people of this nation, who are still lingering in deprivation even after a decade of political emancipation. According to Wilbert Shenk, "Evangelicals have come a long way, both practically and theologically, in their affirmation of a whole gospel ministry. To this extent they have re-appropriated their Evangelical heritage."<sup>11</sup> They regard themselves to be heralds of the God's saving grace that has been made possible through Christ's death and resurrection. They also attest to God's redemptive power, which breaks the power of sin, oppression, injustice,

<sup>10</sup> Sider/ Olson/ Unruh 2002: 13.

<sup>11</sup> Shenk 1993: 73.

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poverty and all other manifestations of evil and corruption perpetuated by evil forces, both human and demonic.

## Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Society

In SA they have grown by 55 % in the past between 1996 and 2001. Whilst in other societies of the North religious interest continues to diminish under the pressures of socialization, modernization and rationality. *Both the old and new Pentecostal movements are growing far more rapidly than the Christian community as a whole, which in turn is growing more rapidly than the population.*<sup>12</sup> Pentecostal-Charismatics are continuing to make their contribution in the landscape of South Africa. Their ministries are continuing to grow within the present democratic dispensation within the country; making contribution to the well-being of people in society. In a sense they have shown concern about the current state of nations. Meanwhile there is a minority of others who are not having an inclination towards that direction, especially amongst some Independent Charismatic-Pentecostal circles.

## Personal Impact

They continue to make the personal well being of people in society. They make a positive impact in the psychological, emotional and spiritual well being of people. Especially in enabling people to have a healthy self-esteem, outlook about life, confidence and aspiration for personal development. It instilled certain life skills in people like personal financial management. Their members when *asked how their lives have been changed by their church, the spiritual rewards of their faith tend to dominate. They seem to live in constant spiritual arousal...It is almost as if their spiritual lives release their energy and performance in the material realm because the latter means so little.*<sup>13</sup> Also, it fosters values that encourage people to have good moral lives although on some with concealed tendencies to be very judgemental attitudes towards others seem to be having their moral challenges. Another thing is that it revitalized people's commitment to their families and strengthens their desires to have good family life.

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<sup>12</sup> Centre for Development and Enterprise 2008: 15.

<sup>13</sup> Centre for Development and Enterprise 2008: 22.



## Socioeconomic Impact

In a society that has been characterized by discrimination, injustice and division the New Pentecostals are contributing in a way to societal integration. Within the circles of New Pentecostals one find congregation that are multicultural especially in the suburban areas. *A vital function of Pentecostalism is that it has provided an avenue for the recognition and the integration of the marginalized people.*<sup>14</sup> Their ecclesiastical structures are not hieratical like that of established religion. They are very simple and encouraging lay participation in terms of their services and application of doctrine. People feel empowered to participate in church life without being prejudiced by their socioeconomic background. Furthermore, New Pentecostalism encourages people to improve their economic well being. Their teachings encourage people to aspire for success in their lives economically. *As regards the criteria they adopt in judging progress and a better life for all in SA, the new Pentecostals are progressive in that they endorse better education, more generous welfare provision, anti-poverty strategies and affirmative action for the previously disadvantaged people. They are also inclined to support welfare.*<sup>15</sup> This is a very controversial aspect of their since some of their detractors accuse them of being only concerned about wealth creation than spiritual things that should characterized faith people in a traditional sense.

## Non-Involvement versus Personal Empowerment of Founding Leaders

In the latter it is those churches and ministries that have been started by individual entrepreneurs whose view of church work is self-enrichment. In these churches socio-political transformation takes the back seat. But the whole agenda of the church becomes derailed from the noble course self-less courses of the gospel. Rather the church ceases to exist as a church for others except the few elitist members of its leadership. Therefore, the churches are structured in such a way its leading leaders amass a huge portion of the resources for personal use. Thus, you seem to see its pioneering leader's live lavish lifestyles that are like our contemporary executives in the business world. This is one of the generalized scathing attacks level against a few of the leading Charismatic-Pentecostal Churches. Such practices are unlawful in South Africa in terms of the statutes. In terms of the present legal dispensation churches should be registered with the revenue office as PBO's (Public Benefit Organization). The requirement of the legislation is that the should be proper governance in the resources of the church in terms of its founding constitution that should indicate that controls for the financial resources of any local church should not be solely under the authority of the clergy but a board or governing council consisting of members of the laity in the church. Also that the church should not operate as an organization for

<sup>14</sup> Centre for Development and Enterprise 2008: 25.

<sup>15</sup> Centre for Development and Enterprise 2008: 22.

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gain but as a non profit making organization involved in benevolent activities according its biblical mandate.

## **Socio-Political Participation as the Spiritual Mandate**

**Morality:** Their leaders visibly participate in ecumenical bodies like South African Council of Churches, Concerned Evangelicals and South African Christian Leadership Assembly and are continuing to make a meaningful contribution through that religious formation. Also some participate in the Religious Forums that constantly have interaction with various leaders from non-religious sectors in society. They engage also on politics at the level of their local communities as part of civil society. The dispensation of democracy has also brought concerns for them on issues of morality that goes contrary to their conservative moral principles. The current constitution has resulted with recognition of abortion, gay rights, and gambling. The liberalization of the current national constitution has challenged some of their fundamental views when it comes to ethical issues.

## **Individual Churches Initiatives**

Individual participate in their locality to address socio-political issues facing their communities. There is increased participation amongst the Pentecostal-Charismatics in civic issues. Some of them have a large cadre of volunteers amongst their faithful who engage in various social structures of society. Especially, amongst the Urban Charismatic-Pentecostals who have benefited from the economic growth of the country due to their good educational profile and high skills levels. Many of these churches also have the infrastructure that is strategically positioned to be used within their constituency by the community. Some have availed their facilities to be used for various community activities like polling stations, political rallies, and funerals, distribution centres for relief initiatives and temporary shelter for displaced people due to their adverse socio-economic situations. Therefore, in terms of communication they can interact with most of the important stakeholders in their society including government. Due to them having a massive following in their community they continue to have dialogue with political leaders at both local and regional level in their setting.

## **Corporate Initiatives**

They also participate in various Christian formation and cooperate with other Christians on common societal issues that are should be transformed. Therefore through these Ecumenical forums they exchange ideas and formulate new strategies

for ministry in their world. Sometimes they form coalitions around certain programs of action that would benefit the nation as a whole.

## Corporate Response

- Prayer for the nation. They are zealous to pray for the nation in terms of its national life with the Global Network. Through prayer they express public and spiritual solidarity with the nation around specific issues. So that people can know that the church is supporting them at the time of need. Sometimes from these prayers there are pledges that people make towards alleviating society or certain challenges by availing their resources to offer practical assistance. Like in the case of praying for refugees who have been attacked during xenophobic attacks. They joined the ecumenical movement that condemned such inhumane behaviour committed against God's children who were had initially found safety in our society.
- Coalitions. There have been few but significant consultative forums that Pentecostal-Charismatics have participated through which they have collaborated with other fellow Christians to address national challenges together. One of those recent consultations is National Initiative for Reformation of SA (NIRSA). This was held from the 22nd to the 23rd April 2008 at the Birchwood Hotel in Boksburg. The necessity of their meeting they expressed in this manner: We have come together with great urgency at a mere few weeks' notice, and sometimes a few days', out of deep concern for the grave state of South African society to seek God's way forward for us as both church and nation. Their final draft had some of these resolutions which they sought to pursue post this consultation:

*Acknowledging the foundations laid by past and present Christian initiatives, building on those foundations and committed to strengthening existing initiatives without compromise for God's standards and Word, we issue a prophetic and urgent call to Church, Government and society at large,*

- to apply themselves with all diligence to the reformation and renewal of South African society
- to commit themselves to finding effective solutions to community and national problems
- To apply themselves with intentionality to more effective nation building.

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*Accordingly, from within our various churches, organizations, associations, groupings and work places:*

- 1. We resolve to remain prayerfully committed to one another for the journey forward.*
- 2. We resolve to renew our commitment to prayer for our country and its leaders and to support both current and new prayer initiatives in our land which call on God for a revival which manifests both personal conversion and societal transformation.*
- 3. We resolve to move forward with the current and where necessary expanded NIRSA leadership, which includes the Advisory Council and the Executive, to develop and maintain the current and already established NIRSA network.*
- 4. We resolve to develop a NIRSA media desk that conveys reactions and interactions to unfolding issues and developments in our country and region that purpose to be Christian in view and biblically based.*
- 5. We resolve to celebrate freedom of the press as an essential pillar of any just society, and to encourage, support and strengthen all Christian media professionals, in whatever medium, to influence with ever greater effectiveness all programming and messages, and to publicise and communicate the good done by Christians and all South Africans.*
- 6. We resolve to support and to agree with the basic fundamentals of credible journalism that purpose to communicate truth with integrity, while exposing corruption, championing justice and communicating hope.*
- 7. We resolve to call for a rolling out all across our land of new initiatives of*
  - Evangelism which stresses the new birth in Christ,*
  - Bible reading,*
  - Bible teaching,*
  - Discipleship focused on our role and responsibility as Christians in the life of our community and nation.*
- 8. We resolve to communicate by assorted NIRSA delegations our national concerns to:*
  - a. The President and Deputy President of South Africa*
  - b. The heads of South Africa's political parties*
  - c. The leadership of the church in South Africa as well as their related associations, such as SA Council of Churches, The Evangelical Alliance of SA (TEASA), SA Christian Leadership Assembly (SACLA - (possibly NIRSA could be a sub-project of SACLA)), and others.*

*In all this we would be seeking to understand the issues and burdens all these leaders are carrying, and how we, the wider Body of Christ, may help them build this nation.*

9. *We resolve, via assorted NIRSA delegations, to visit Cabinet Ministers and relevant portfolio committees to lobby for the application of biblical principles to current and future issues in all sectors of life. For example, the Ministers of:*
- *Education (e.g. Biblical sexuality, religious education and moral instruction, as well as encouraging parents and educators to operate in partnership to give children an excellent education within a biblical framework along with adequate life skills to prepare them for responsible adulthood.)*
  - *Health (e.g. properly trained and remunerated medical staff with a respect for the dignity and welfare of those in need of health care; Infant mortality; the sanctity of life - especially the unborn and the elderly; responsible stewardship of existing medical facilities and equipment in both hospitals and clinics.)*
  - *Housing (e.g. the Biblical ideal of every family having their own home; to ensure sufficient land is available for new housing, and to hold government accountable in this regard.)*
  - *Land Affairs (e.g. responsible and just management of the land reform process.)*
  - *Safety and Security (e.g. upholding the rule of law; adequate protection of citizens.)*
  - *Justice and the Judiciary (e.g. In particular to have legal authorities register our resolve to be heard in the Constitutional Court and to endeavour to assist the court in the amicus curiae capacity whenever we believe it to be appropriate; severe sentences to be passed on public officials involved in corruption or any criminal offences; ensuring the law does not favour the criminal over the victim while acknowledging and protecting the rights of both and that the judiciary dispenses justice without prejudice or favour, ensuring adequate protection for witnesses.)*
  - *Environment Affairs (e.g. conveying the Biblical understanding of ecology, stewardship of the environment and responsible dominion over creation)*
  - *And others as may arise*
10. *We resolve to protect and advance our democracy by encouraging every citizen to engage in the affairs of this nation and to hold government and public officials accountable to the people. We therefore support any initiative that increases voter registration and voter participation in local and national elections, and urge all citizens to make their voting responsible, informed and based on an understanding of the issues and encouraging Christians in all political parties to bear faithful witness.*
11. *We resolve to call for the highest standards of integrity and biblical ethics in business practice, first within the Christian community and then in the broader society, thereby ensuring that the economy is built on a morally trustworthy*



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*foundation. And we will embrace any initiative which promotes and furthers this aim.*

- 12. We resolve to motivate and encourage entrepreneurs and business people to impact the market place by founding enterprises, creating wealth and employment, and by living with integrity and generosity. Accordingly, we urge business leaders, starting with the Christian ones, to convene a major summit and consultation on job creation and the eradication of poverty.*
- 13. We resolve to support any good governance initiatives that are true to biblical principles.*
- 14. We resolve to develop, empower and release servant-hearted leaders for all areas of society and accordingly will support and encourage all leadership development and training programmes that produce high quality leaders who will impact both this and the next generation.*
- 15. We resolve to develop NIRSA think tanks and working groups while working with similar existing groups, with the purpose of grappling with biblical positions, values and principles relating to issues arising in all sectors of society.*

*We resolve to call every citizen, Christian or not, to play their part in reducing crime and stopping violence by:*

- Responding to cries for help,*
  - Stepping forward as witnesses,*
  - Reporting crime,*
  - Participating in community self-watch programmes,*
  - Supporting and encouraging neighbourhood, local and national initiatives such as Community Policing Forums, Police Reserves, Business against Crime etc.,*
  - Supporting and serving the local police in prayer and other appropriate ways.*
- 16. We resolve to call on all South Africans to seek out and expose systemic corruption and organized crime.*
  - 17. We resolve to support all housing initiatives that will effectively move us towards everyone living in a home in South Africa.*
  - 18. We resolve to support current and new initiatives out of the church in tackling and eliminating the HIV/Aids pandemic.*
  - 19. We resolve to hold faithfulness in marriage and sexual abstinence before marriage as the only effective way to stop the HIV and AIDS genocide of the human race and sexual violence and note that the Bible holds men primarily responsible for*

*upholding these virtues. We also honour all mothers in their sacrificial roll and celebrate the increasingly significant roles generally of woman in society.*

- 20. We resolve to affirm to one and all that both the Bible and history conclude that nations without solid family units providing a safe, loving, nurturing environment are no longer sustainable and in imminent danger of demise. Therefore we affirm the sacredness of marriage and the biblical ideal of fathers and mothers in binding covenants of intimacy and faithfulness, raising children with love, security, respect, trust and understanding.*
- 21. We resolve to encourage all pastors and church leaders to challenge and teach their membership what it means in biblical terms to be good citizens in this African context.*
- 22. We resolve to continue to work within and between different sectors of the Body of Christ towards unity, thereby focusing on what unites us, while continuing to dialogue respectfully and in humble submission to God and His Word about the things on which we disagree. We believe, as Christians, that if we are not concerned for the growth and well being of all the churches in our area and beyond, we know nothing of the Spirit of God.*
- 23. We resolve to seek new and practical Christian obedience and discipleship at all levels in living out our citizenship and responsibilities positively in this land and region, with everybody "doing their bit".*
- 24. We resolve to pray for Zimbabwe and as a matter of urgent concern to send a delegation to the Zimbabwean Church leaders, to pray with them, and to urge on them a NIRSA-type gathering and if need be, help them to mount one. We also call on Christians in the other nations of Africa to do the same.*

*We determine to be a united prophetic church that is neither servant nor master of society or government but their compassionate conscience; a church that works with transparency, integrity and accountability to its own tenets and the God we proclaim; a church that is committed to discipling and releasing the body of believers to their full service of both God and society.*

*Having said all this, we want to declare that we will be persistent about our Christian role in this society, we will persevere in the face of opposition and we refuse to back down about our vision for a prosperous, safe, healthy and godly nation. To this, under our Lord Jesus Christ and with the help of His Spirit, we commit ourselves. (National Initiative for Reformation of South Africa 2008)*

From this declaration of intent express their determination to engage stakeholders both in public and private sector to form partnership that will constructively deal with national and regional challenges. It is only history that would tell if this declaration was carryout as envisaged by its creators.

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## Way Forward: Consolidation of their Social Agenda

The Pentecostals-Charismatics must vigorously consolidate their witness that also has social significance becomes fully entrenched in the life and ministry of the church broadly. It should not become a rare trait of a few prominent leaders and well-resourced Pentecostal-Charismatic congregations. Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals are progressively having a recognizable Christian witness and ministry with social relevance through their local churches in various communities across South Africa. They have been involved in relief work and some community development and poverty alleviation initiatives throughout the nation. They are coming to age in sharing the good news with the poor and becoming servants of the Kingdom of God, making their mark in the socio-political, educational and economic arena. Below are some of their contributions that vary in scope and impact from one local church, group and denomination to another within the Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelical family:

- Food distribution and temporary accommodation for the poor.
- Rehabilitation of substance abusers.
- Ministry to prisoners and rehabilitation.
- Care of those affected and infected by HIV-Aids.
- Service to abused women and children.
- Family enrichment programmes.
- Spiritual care, counselling and therapy support services.
- Care for the elderly.
- Care for people with physical and mental challenges.
- Participation in crime prevention.
- Rehabilitation of prisoners
- Youth development programmes.
- Relief in times of emergencies
- Education - literacy and skills development
- Job creation.

Pentecostal-Charismatic evangelicals are also making a contribution to tackle various social problems that include poverty eradication. They are progressively extending their compassionate ministry to the poor in the church and also in the broader community. Thus in their theological response to poverty and other societal problems one notices a shift in their thinking, to adopt a theological position that has some convergence with the kind of thinking that is usually associated with Ecumenicals. Even, though they would not use the more radical expressions that are associated with Ecumenicals, in their proclamations. Their theological positions, however, need further consolidation to reflect a common ground. The perspective of an individual leaders speaking in an uncoordinated manner may not fully reflect the position of the Charis-

matic Evangelical Church. Ministering to the poor is evolving to become an essential part of the life and work of the Charismatic Evangelicals. They have begun to realize that it is an integral part of the mission of the church. For them to witness, now entails both evangelism and social action as essential and indivisible components of their ministry. It should not be either /or in terms of priority for the Charismatic Evangelical witness in society. Ideally this is what the broader Charismatic Evangelicals are seeking to accomplish in their witness. There are, however, still a few dissenters who remain preoccupied with the salvation of souls without embracing social action in that witness. Theirs, however, is just a dying voice in the dawn of change. It is an on-going challenge for them to strive to make their found perspective on social activism becomes part of their DNA as Pentecostal-Charismatics.

## Reconciliation

In post-apartheid South Africa the challenge of genuine reconciliation resulting in credible integration still linger. Many Pentecostal-Charismatic denominations have abandoned their previously segregated ecclesiastical structures that perpetuated racism. They have now structurally transcended into structures that have an ideal to be non-racial, cherishing the diversity of the South African society. This is still a work in progress since there are certain historical factors that ought to be overcome in order for Pentecostal - Charismatics to have reached the goal of integration in their fellowship. "To develop a community of mutual trust, respect and equality is not easy. It requires all the members of the community to be deeply committed to each other. And for that reconciliation to be complete, it requires a commitment to our common mission".<sup>16</sup> Just like the rest of South Africa even when apartheid is dead, this is a church characterized by miscellany in terms of wealth. Within the ranks of the Pentecostal-Charismatics there are both the haves and the have-nots. This discrepancy within the church in terms of unequal distribution of wealth is characteristic to the legacy of injustice engineered by the past unjust government of South Africa. The privileged and the poor mingle in varying degrees. There is a need to improve the way autonomous local churches, themselves, characterized by diversity, can co-operate with members and other churches to respond to the needs of community in different situations. Some local churches in affluent areas are removed from the real needs of society. They are not confronted on a frequent basis with the realities of poverty, unlike some of their local churches in poor areas. Therefore they need to conduct more exchange programmes to allow members to see how ordinary people really live in abject deprivation, despite the better constitutional era. They have to be exposed to those conditions of acute lack through these exchange programmes so that it will become a reality to them. This kind of experience would help to change people's attitudes and empower them to respond appropriately according to the injunction of the gospel. They will discover how HIV-Aids, unemployment, and drugs ruin people in

<sup>16</sup> Perkins 1982: 141.

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those disadvantaged communities while the church doesn't really seem to care. The ignorance of many members of the churches is due to lack of communication between the haves and have-nots. There should be at least some cross-communication that will promote a flow of contacts between them. This is essential because people have hearts and are caring. *Apartheid* did succeed in separating people because people can live in close proximity to one another, yet without knowing the reality of each other's way of life. People continue to live in the same country but still they have no insight into the challenges or the realities fellow citizens face. We must still create a genuinely reconciled community of believers who honestly reach out to each other without being limited by their varying backgrounds.

## Transcending the Survival Mode

The problem is that the majority of their churches are in survival mode since there are located in previously disadvantaged communities. They have limited access to all the strategic resources necessary for them to fulfil their mission effectively in their situation. The gap is enormous between them and other congregation that are situated in affluent communities. While they are doing their best to extend their ministry to the poor outside their communities, they also have to grapple with the poverty that is devastating members of their own churches. Their own support base is too marginalized to maintain their ministry activities as local churches. A significant portion of the local churches are themselves disadvantaged, by the inequality in the allocation of resources that is prevalent in society. Therefore they are prone to prioritise growth since they are still considering themselves to be small movement when compared with other denominations within the country. They are geared for channelling their resources towards expansion that is church growth.

## Holism

The Pentecostals have been widely known for their narrow theological perspective on rebirth, evangelism and renewal phenomenon of the Holy Spirit. *Firstly*, they would like to see evangelical theology on social issues being developed and made more holistic. In Reverend Moss Nthla's the words: "There is still a tendency to be concerned mainly about heaven, and urge members to merely tolerate earth. Yet, when pursuing this holism, it should be done without losing the spiritual vibrancy and power of the Evangelicals" (comment at the National Initiative for the Reformation of South Africa at the Birchwood Hotel, 22 -23 April 2008). These were approached in a manner that emphasized a kind of spirituality that focussed on the supernatural and the eternal. Meanwhile whilst such an approach inadvertently downplayed the mundane and temporal aspects of human life out of their spirituality. They had tendencies of targeting the *soulish* needs of people since they considered these to be most important spiritual aspects of human life. They are learning to address both the spiritual and



temporal needs of people. Since the gospel seeks to address the whole needs of people in their totality. Since, you cannot dichotomise human existence into unrelated pockets others being classified as being purely spiritual whilst others on the contrary are secular.

## Conclusion

Their journey into the development of a social consciousness of their witness has not been easy. It has taken them through various milestones. Thus, many of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals have started to practice ministry in a manner that avoids polarities between faith and works, evangelism and social action, the eternal and temporal, church and the world. They are beginning to balance the quest to save individual souls and the transformation society to be part of the holistic mission as a church. Yet, there is still a minority in their ranks who have stuck to their guns and resisted change. Despite, these notable improvements in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelical witness, they have not reached their journey in shaping their miss spirituality positions. They have to continue to self-critique and dialogue with other members of the universal Church and keep on renewing their witness.

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## *Let's Face The World!*

### Comparison between Members of a New Pentecostal/Charismatic Church and Other Christians in Gauteng

HELGA DICKOW AND VALERIE MØLLER

In 2007 the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute in Freiburg commissioned a representative attitude survey<sup>1</sup> of South African opinions on politics, society and religious issues. The South African survey is part of a much larger project on Charismatic Churches with special emphasis on Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, especially the mega churches which have mushroomed throughout the world in countries including South Africa since the end of apartheid. To better understand the phenomenal growth of these denominations in South Africa, we included a special survey of a typical charismatic-type mega church in our study.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper we will compare results from a sub-sample of the representative South African survey, namely black respondents in Gauteng, with the survey conducted in a Charismatic/Pentecostal church in Soweto, Grace Bible Church. For both samples we have about 400 interviewees, a sufficient number that allows us to draw statistically relevant conclusions. All interviewed members of the mega church are black. In order to exclude a statistically relevant factor such as race, we took as our comparison group the black respondents in the same region of Gauteng province.

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<sup>1</sup> The survey was conducted by MarkData. The authors are indebted to Prof. Theodor Hanf and Prof. Lawrence Schlemmer who developed the questionnaire. Lawrence Schlemmer also translated the items and allowed us to replicate items from his earlier research. Special thanks go to Petra Bauerle at the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute for data processing and statistical advice.

<sup>2</sup> We are especially grateful to the leadership of Grace Bible Church for their support and encouragement to conduct the survey in their congregation and to the members of the congregation for their readiness to answer our questions.

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Gauteng represents South Africa's industrial and commercial hub. It is the richest of the nine South African provinces attracting the greatest number of immigrants who aspire to share in its opportunities, according to the latest Statistics South Africa Community Survey.

This paper will not discuss the theological differences of Pentecostal or Charismatic churches but take a closer look at members of a particular church - one that calls itself charismatic and exhibits all the specific characteristics of the new Pentecostal churches (such as emphasis on the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, faith healing) - and compare them with other people in the same region.

Reading the data one has to bear in mind that, as is the case with most Pentecostal churches, women are slightly over-represented in the Grace Bible Church. Its members also tend to have slightly higher levels of education and income than the comparative Gauteng sample. Select characteristics of the two surveyed groups are given in the appendix.

## Grace Bible Church

Grace Bible Church in Soweto was founded in 1983, that is some 25 years ago. It is a relatively young church which currently has about 11 000 members.<sup>3</sup>

Its rapid development from a small group of worshipers to its present numbers may be typical of many Charismatic/Pentecostal-type churches in urban centres. However, it initially had to overcome many obstacles to growth, in particular during the turbulent years of the apartheid era. A pastor of Grace Bible Church<sup>4</sup> interviewed in 2006, recalled that the church started with about 35 members in September 1983. Members met in a school hall after they were evicted from the community hall where they had first met. Later they rented a church that could seat about 300. The church was free on Sundays because its regular congregation met on Saturdays. When the church building became too small for them, the congregation moved to a school which was burnt down in 1985 (at the height of apartheid). "Only the roof was still there but no walls." The following year, in 1986, the congregation moved to a former exhibition hall that was also without walls - it had space for 900. When the church again ran out of space, its congregation moved to a structure that could accommodate 3000. In October 2001 the church moved into its own building in Soweto.

Our survey sought to identify what attracts people to a Charismatic/Pentecostal church such as Grace Bible Church in the post-apartheid era that allows for "more

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<sup>3</sup> Information on Grace Bible Church is from interviews conducted with pastors in 2006 and from the church's homepage (<http://www.gbcsoweto.org.za/AboutUs/GBCHistory/tabid/64/Default.aspx>).

<sup>4</sup> The pastor, interviewed in February 2006, had joined Grace Bible Church as a student. He had witnessed its growth since inception.

opportunity to express faith without oppression and without somebody telling the churches what they have to preach".<sup>5</sup>

According to our survey, approximately a quarter of church members are under 25 years, and the average age is some 35 years. Unlike the church elder who recalled how Grace Bible Church grew in spite of many setbacks, a quarter of its contemporary congregation was not yet born at that time. This means that half will have been thirteen years or younger in 1985 when Grace Bible Church found itself in a building burnt down at the height of apartheid.

## Itineraries: Paths leading to Grace Bible Church

How did respondents in our survey come to be members of the Grace Bible Church? According to our survey results only 4% were born into their *church*. In all, 96% belonged to other churches before gravitating to Grace Bible Church. Looking at respondents who actually changed their *denomination*, the percentage is slightly *higher*.

What was their religious home before joining Grace Bible Church?

Almost a fifth of the respondents grew up in a Methodist church, approximately a sixth in either an Old Pentecostal or the Catholic Church, and a good tenth in the Anglican or an African Independent Church. When we look at the previous church membership of the respondents before they joined Grace Bible Church, the picture is similar: The transition from the Old Pentecostal and the African Independent Churches and from the three mainline churches (Methodist, Catholic and Anglican) to a new Pentecostal/Charismatic church seems to be an easy one. One can assume that the spirituality of these churches is more compatible with the new Pentecostal churches than with others. In contrast, the transition from other Protestant churches, such as the Dutch Reformed or the Lutheran Churches, is less frequent. Also astonishing is the fact that only 6% of our respondents came from a new Pentecostal-type church - which refutes the common notion that members of the new Pentecostal churches are prone to "church shopping".<sup>6</sup>

Worth noting is that a sizeable proportion of respondents (10%) grew up in or were former members of an African Independent Church (12%) before joining the Grace Bible Church congregation in Soweto. The African Independent Churches are known to have played an important role in assisting rural migrants to assimilate to urban life and to cope with its economic hardships during the 1990s.<sup>7</sup> It is possible that the

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with the same pastor, February 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Asked about their previous denominations the other respondents in Gauteng gave the following responses: African Independent/Initiated Churches (8%), Methodist (5%), Catholic (4%) and Old Pentecostal (4%).

<sup>7</sup> A point emphasised by Lawrence Schlemmer, the author of the Centre for Development and Enterprise Report, *Dormant Capital*, 2008.

newer Pentecostal-type churches may similarly be well placed in the democratic era to cater for the new needs and aspirations of an emergent black middle class. This is a point we shall return to later.

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Grace Bible Church:	
<i>In which denomination did you grow up?</i>	%
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<i>Mainline Christian churches:</i>	
Methodist	18
Catholic	14
Anglican	12
Lutheran	5
Dutch Reformed Churches	3
Presbyterian	2
<i>Pentecostal-type churches:</i>	
Old Pentecostal	16
African Independent/Initiated Churches	10
New Pentecostal	6
Grace Bible Church	3
Other charismatic	2
None	8
Other	3

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Percentages in this and the following tables are rounded.

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Grace Bible Church:	
<i>What was your previous denomination?</i>	%
<hr/>	
<i>Mainline Christian churches:</i>	
Methodist	18
Catholic	14
Anglican	12
Lutheran	5
Dutch Reformed Churches	4
Presbyterian	2
<i>Pentecostal-type churches:</i>	
Old Pentecostal	19
African Independent/Initiated Churches	12
New Pentecostal	6
Grace Bible Church	3
Other charismatic	2
None	1
Other	4

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## Reasons for Change of Denomination

Our study asked persons who were not born into the Grace Bible Church about the reasons for changing denominations. It is obvious that the majority changed their church for spiritual reasons ('the way my church explains the faith'). The style of worship and faith healing are attractive. Many join because their family or friends are members and they like the pastor of the church. Interestingly, convenience is not an important factor. It appears that mega churches do not operate as neighbourhood churches but provide a spiritual home for worshipers who are prepared to commute to church.

Grace Bible Church	%
<i>What attracted you to your church?</i>	
The way it explains the faith	53
The way the services are conducted	44
Faith healing	30
Relatives/friends are members	23
Quality of the pastor	22
Opportunity to participate actively	15
It is in my neighbourhood	4
It offers education facilities	2

Respondents gave up to two answers. Percentages are based on 382 respondents not born into the church.

Since moving to Grace Bible Church respondents have seen many improvements in their lives, even though they did not change their church membership for worldly reasons. The same applies to the Gauteng respondents who also state that many aspects of their lives improved after changing church membership. However, if we compare members of the Grace Bible Church and reborn Christians in Gauteng who changed their church membership, we find that a higher proportion of Grace Bible Church members have benefited from improvements to their health, social relations, self-assurance, and finances.

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents <sup>8</sup> %
<i>Since you have been reborn, which of the following have you experienced?</i>		
My health has improved.	99	82
I am more relaxed and friendly with colleagues.	99	82
My family life has improved.	97	91
I feel more secure and more self-assured.	95	77
I get more cooperation from others.	94	79
My financial situation, my career/business have improved.	76	56
I stopped drinking.	64	59

## More Religious than Others

There is further evidence of the importance of the spiritual needs which led to a change of church membership when we examine responses to questions concerning religious behaviour and beliefs.

Looking at religious practices, we find that members of the Grace Bible Church pray far more often than the average black person in Gauteng. Over seven in ten Grace Bible Church members attend religious services at least once a week and almost all try to live according to the teachings of their religion.

As members of a Pentecostal/Charismatic church almost all Grace Bible Church members have had charismatic experiences such as witnessing other people speaking in tongues and being healed by the Holy Spirit. Two thirds have spoken in tongues themselves and 85% were healed by the Holy Spirit.

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
Members of Charismatic Churches:		
I have witnessed people of my church speaking in tongues.	97	53
I have personally spoken in tongues.	65	47
I have seen people with serious diseases healed by the Holy Spirit.	87	82
I have myself been healed by the Holy Spirit.	85	77

<sup>8</sup> Here we compare Grace Bible Church members with those persons in the Gauteng comparative sample, some 39%, who consider themselves to be reborn.

Members of the Grace Bible Church believe in life after death. They cannot imagine living a happy life without God.

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
I believe in life after death where good people will be rewarded and bad people will be punished - agree.	95	69
I can be happy and enjoy life without believing in God - agree.	3	30

Grace Bible Church members seem to be steadfast in their faith. Some six in ten believe their religion is the only true<sup>9</sup> one. At the same time, they exhibit a higher degree of religious tolerance than the average Gauteng black person when they state that there are many different ways to lead a proper religious life and people of all religious persuasions can lead an honest life.

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
I am convinced that my own religion is the only true one - agree.	62	45
There are many acceptable, different ways of conducting a religious life - agree.	89	72
No matter what people's religious beliefs are, the most important thing is that everybody leads an honest life and is a good human being - agree.	82	67

## Have More Fundamental Beliefs than Others

Studies in other countries<sup>10</sup> have shown that members of new Pentecostal/Charismatic churches tend to be more fundamentalist. Almost all Grace Bible Church members are convinced the Bible should be taken literally. Similarly, most believe there can be no grey areas between right and wrong.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The belief that their religion is the only true one is above average among women and respondents with the highest and lowest levels of education.

<sup>10</sup> See Hofer 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Here housewives (75% agreement) are less rigid.

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
The Bible is the actual word of God and it is to be taken literally - agree.	94	74
Right is right and wrong is wrong and there are no grey areas - agree.	98	71

At first glance, a further survey response seems to confirm religious fundamentalism among members of the Grace Bible Church. Almost nine in ten Grace Bible Church members think faith and religious values must determine all aspects of society and the state.

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
Faith and religious values must determine all aspects of society and the state - agree.	89	63
We cannot respect the authority of a government that permits abortion, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and has abolished the death penalty - agree.	65	54

Consider, however, that this response may not be a true expression of fundamentalism but shows a real concern about the lack of moral values in contemporary South African society.

Two-thirds of Grace Bible Church respondents express no respect for a government that condones abortion, homosexuality, same-sex marriage and has abolished the death penalty - the strong measure that might keep crime in check. A good half of the Gauteng respondents are of the same opinion.<sup>12</sup> In a society that is plagued by crime and corruption and many other social ills, it is important to draw a definite line between good and bad behaviour. Transgressions show a lack of respect for fellow human beings.

Since coming into power in 1994, the ruling African National Congress has promoted legislation to uphold free choice and equality for all South Africans in line with the country's progressive Constitution. However, in the opinion of many ordinary South Africans, such laws promote licentiousness and loose morals. Combating crime was

<sup>12</sup> Pentecostal/Charismatic churches are known to have strong reservations about abortion, homosexuality and same-sex marriages, see Centre for Development and Enterprise 2008.

spontaneously identified as the most serious problem facing South Africa by the largest number of Grace Church Bible members (33%).<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, Grace Bible Church members are not at all conservative about other values such as women's liberation. Only 6% are of the opinion that 'women should stay at home' in contrast to 30% of the Gauteng respondents. Here our Pentecostals/Charismatics are decidedly modern!<sup>14</sup>

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
Women should stay at home and look after their children and family - agree.	6	30

### More Socially Engaged than Others

Members of the Grace Bible Church are not only more religious than their compatriots; they are also more compassionate towards the poor and needy. They are keenly aware of the social problems facing South Africa. They believe their church must lead not only in spiritual but also in worldly matters.

In the view of a pastor, the church should engage government and declare that oppression is unjust and must be condemned. The church should show the right path and not just point a finger. It should seek to rid society of oppressive trends, be a model of justice, and side with the victims of oppression. The church cannot be neutral but should be seen to stand for justice. But church leaders should not participate in party politics. That would corrupt them. Those who have a calling for politics should follow their inclination ("go for it") but leave the church.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Members of the Grace Bible Church appear to be attuned to current thinking among the general public. The 2003 South African Social Attitudes survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council found that 75% of South Africans were in favour of the death penalty for people convicted of murder, 70% disapproved of abortion even in difficult economic circumstances, and 78% disapproved of homosexual sexual relations. See Rule/Mncwango 2006: 260.

<sup>14</sup> The male-female ratio among Grace Bible Church respondents who are of this opinion is equal. But the over fifties, retired persons, housewives and respondents who work in transport, in the mines and as labourers are less in favour of women at work.

The weekly German magazine 'Der Spiegel' provides an interesting comparison: People were asked if a woman who has children should stop working. 34% of male respondents and 62% of female respondents agreed. See Der Spiegel Nr. 17/21.04.08, p. 71.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with a pastor, February 2006.



	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
The task of the church is spiritual and not worldly. It should never interfere in politics - <u>disagree</u> .	71	33
A church should not only be concerned with its own members but also with social, economic and political policies to deal with such problems in the country - agree.	84	55

As a matter of principle, Grace Bible Church respondents expect their government above all to be honest. Interestingly, they consider integrity and economic development to be far greater priorities for their government than equity issues.

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
<i>In the present situation what is the most important thing the government should achieve?</i>		
Complete honesty in government	51	27
Effective economic development	21	20
Enforcement of the law	18	21
Efficiency of administration	8	19
The right proportion of races in all positions	2	13

Grace Bible Church members consider the gap between rich and poor to be far wider than any other difference in South African society including the racial, religious and ethnic ones. At the same time they also appear to be prepared to make their individual contribution to alleviating poverty and underdevelopment in their own community.

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
<i>Which difference do you consider to be the widest in South Africa?</i>		
Rich and poor	65	32
Blacks and whites	13	30
Christians and others	19	18
Language groups	4	19

Almost all, some 97% of respondents of Grace Bible Church members give to their church - regularly or sometimes - compared to only 78% of other Gauteng respondents. Some of these church funds will go to charity and to the church's education and skills training programmes.

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
<i>Do you give donations to your church?</i>		
Never	3	22
Sometimes	63	53
Regularly	34	25

Not only do Pentecostal/Charismatic church members give, they are also convinced that charity is not enough. They believe the church should also assist the poor to help themselves. Or as the senior pastor of the Grace Bible Church put it: If people help us because we are poor, they should meet us when we are already halfway there.<sup>16</sup>

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
The church should help the poor not only by charity but by helping the poor to help themselves - agree.	99	82

## Social Capital and Outlook on Life

We have demonstrated that members of a Charismatic/Pentecostal church expect their church to take the lead in addressing some of the social problems in society. In turn, do members of a Charismatic/Pentecostal church have the drive and ambition to play an active role in this endeavour?

South Africa currently faces a number of serious problems. In addition to crime,<sup>17</sup> members of the Grace Bible Church identified unemployment and poverty as the most serious problems facing their country.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with senior pastor, February 2006.

<sup>17</sup> At the time of the survey in March 2007, crime was a major topic in the media. Many South Africans perceive a link between the country's high crime rates and its unemployment problem. In March 2007 the official unemployment rate was 25.5% according to the strict definition and 38.3% if discouraged workseekers were included.

A major obstacle to the creation of the jobs that would alleviate poverty in South Africa is the shortage of suitably qualified persons to drive the economy. The skills shortage is the legacy of the past; under apartheid blacks received an inferior education. Similarly, black entrepreneurship was stifled. The new South Africa is placing its hope in the youth to overcome these problems.

The question we ask here is whether members of the new Pentecostal/Charismatic churches perceive the new opportunities in their environment and are keen to grasp them. In short: Can we detect any differences in the outlook on life between the members of the Grace Bible Church and their regional compatriots?

The differences are quite striking: Respondents from the Grace Bible Church feel less powerless, are less afraid of the future, and are far more willing to accept change than the other Gauteng respondents. The teachings of the senior pastor of Grace Bible Church seem to have fallen on fertile ground. He explained the mission of his church in an interview in February 2006 along the following lines: "If people are filled with the spirit in a charismatic manner, we could have left it at that. But we also want them to gain more self-confidence to change their lives."<sup>18</sup>

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
There is very little a person like me can do to improve the life of people in my country - agree. <sup>19</sup>	33	55
I feel uncertain and fearful about my future - agree. <sup>20</sup>	16	46
If you try to change things you usually make them worse - agree.	13	44

On the other hand Grace Bible Church respondents tend to be somewhat cautious when it comes to taking risks and do not show a high level of trust in their social environment. They tend to feel closest to their co-religionists, their brothers and sisters in the church.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with senior pastor, February 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Among those who feel powerless are the less educated, the over fifties, and more women than men.

<sup>20</sup> Those expressing above-average fear of the future include the less educated and unemployed respondents.

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
One should be sure that something really works before taking a chance on it - agree.	90	67
One must be very cautious with people; you cannot trust the people who live and work around you - agree.	81	70
I feel very close to people of my own religion, whatever their education, wealth or political views - agree.	93	68

What do members of Grace Bible Church see as the most important ingredients of success? What ambitions do they hold for their future social status?

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
<i>In your opinion, which one of the following things is the most important for achieving success in life?</i>		
Education	44	22
Working hard for yourself	33	37
Working with others ... as a group	9	15
Experience	9	10
Religious belief	3	2
Other	2	14

Education and hard work are important factors for success in both surveyed groups.<sup>21</sup> However, twice as many Grace Bible Church members stress the importance of education. Interestingly, religious belief plays a minor role.

Members of the Grace Bible Church believe South Africans should be appointed on the basis of merit. They do not endorse affirmative action.

<sup>21</sup> Among the Grace Bible Church members, the older respondents (35-49 years and over fifties) tend to believe more in hard work, while younger respondents up to 34 years set more store by a good education.

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
<i>How should jobs be filled? According to the rules of affirmative action or by people who are best qualified?</i>		
In private business: By people best qualified	71	48
In government: By people best qualified	82	57

There is evidence of energy, drive and ambition among Grace Bible Church members in response to a number of survey items. Consider that respondents in the Grace Bible Church are currently less satisfied with their income<sup>22</sup> than members of the comparative group. However, Grace Bible Church members are also more confident that they will eventually get the education and job to which they feel they are entitled.<sup>23</sup> They continue to be optimistic when they think of the future of their children. In short, our Pentecostals/Charismatics are quite confident that they and their children stand a good chance of achieving their goals in life.

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
Of course, people always like to earn more, but I consider my income to be reasonable - agree.	41	66
Whatever my personal efforts, I will not get the education and jobs I am entitled to - agree.	21	45
Young men and women of a family like mine have a reasonably good chance of reaching their goals in life - agree.	96	71

There may be some fear of falling back down the social ladder given the high social status that members of the Grace Bible Church assign to themselves. They are likely to question whether the next generation will be capable of maintaining their high standard of living.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The unemployed and persons working in the service sector are least satisfied with their income.

<sup>23</sup> The oldest and least educated respondents are least confident.

<sup>24</sup> Here fear increases with age and declines almost linearly with level of education. This means better educated respondents (and also the ones with a good job) are less anxious about their children's future.



	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
I am afraid that our children might not enjoy as high a standard of living as we have - agree	59	49

In the new South Africa, there is a need for investment and small business formation to drive an economy that will create more jobs and secure livelihoods. If they had a windfall by winning the lottery, Grace Bible Church members state they would be somewhat more inclined than others to start a business or invest rather than spend the money. Owing to their better-off social status, they may have less need of using lottery money for their immediate needs.<sup>25</sup>

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
<i>Imagine that you are lucky and win a lot of money in the lottery. On which of the following would you spend it?</i>		
Starting a business	36	29
Investing in a bank with good profit	35	36
Other: Spend the money on family or home improvements	29	35

### Status Consciousness

Members of the Grace Bible Church declare themselves members of the privileged class. Their life circumstances have improved dramatically over the past ten years. Here we find a stark contrast between the Grace Bible Church and the comparative Gauteng group.

<sup>25</sup> It is mainly the under 35 years, the better educated, students, and persons with a good job who would invest their lottery money. The over fifties and the less educated would improve their housing.

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
<i>As regards your life conditions, are you better or worse off today than ten years ago?</i>		
Better	78	51
Same	18	26
Worse	4	23

In most social surveys, when asked about their social class, people tend to place themselves into the lower and lower middle classes. Not so the members of the Grace Bible Church. They clearly see themselves as middle class in contrast to the comparative group of Gauteng respondents and South Africans in general. This self-assessment may in itself inspire both confidence in the future and a sense of entitlement in the new South Africa.

Class self assessment	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
Upper	3	2
Upper middle	6	12
Middle	63	44
Lower middle	24	28
Lower	4	14

In short, members of the Grace Bible Church are self-confident people who feel their lives have improved over the last ten years. They also have the drive and ambitions that are conducive to improving their lot in life. Some of this energy seems to spill over into charitable works, community upliftment, and entrepreneurship.

## Political Orientations

In a country such as South Africa that has seen such dramatic political change over the past 18 years, it would be interesting to know if followers of one of the nation's youngest churches have different political attitudes than others.

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
Even if political leaders act in a way I do not understand or agree with I would still support them in an election - agree.	16	38

Only 16% of respondents of Grace Bible Church show unconditional support for political leaders<sup>26</sup> compared to 38% in our comparison group. More than three-quarters are willing to wait for the next election to effect a change of government (compared to two-thirds of the other group).

On the other hand, Grace Bible church members show greater respect for legitimate authorities (88% versus 74%). This is not a contradiction. Respect for the authority of persons occupying an office in government is a different matter from support for aspiring politicians in an election.

Do Grace Bible Church members accept other fundamental pillars of democracy such as free and fair elections, freedom of speech, separation of powers, and a free press etc?

Interestingly enough, here we find no significant differences between the two groups concerning the following items: Six out of ten are in favour of a multi-party system, four in five opt for independent courts of law, and six out of ten for a free press. Some 13 years since the first open elections, it seems that most South Africans are well versed in what constitutes the most important pillars of democracy.

However, there are significant differences in the following instances: Members of Grace Bible Church are considerably more in favour of a president who is accountable to parliament (88% versus 62%). Here we again find less unconditional support for a leader. Grace Bible Church respondents are also more in favour of decentralisation of authority (66% versus 44%).

When asked to assess a range of different political solutions, we find that 'majority rule' is considered by both groups to be the best solution for South Africa. However, respondents in the Grace Bible Church agree with 96%, the comparative Gauteng group with only 84%. A power-sharing solution of 'joint government' is considered the second-best option by both groups but here the other Gauteng respondents are slightly more in favour (72% versus 64%). Members of Grace Bible Church are least likely to accept 'partition' of the country (16%); which is acceptable to a quarter of the other group.

When asked their views about the single *best* political solution for South Africa we get the following result:

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
Majority rule	57	43
Joint (power-sharing) government	28	25
Single party without opposition	7	7
The numerically strongest group rules	4	8
One group rules	3	8
Partition	2	9

<sup>26</sup> Only 7% of men but 18% of women.

Although both surveyed groups show similar tendencies, Grace Bible Church members are more in favour of 'majority rule' and least in favour of 'partition'.

Given the strong views on morality in Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, one would expect Grace Bible Church members to condemn violence and disrespect for the rule of law in a democracy. Such sentiments were put to the test in our survey in the following items:

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
Violence and killing can never be justified, no matter how important the struggle - agree.	74	67
It is acceptable to break the law if it is in the interest of my family - agree.	6	43
In the present conflicts of our country all sides concerned should seek compromises and try to find agreement - agree.	98	84

While almost three-quarters of Grace Bible Church respondents think that violence is never justified, two-thirds of the other respondents are of the same opinion. Only 6% of Grace Bible Church members find it acceptable to break the law in the interest of their own family while 43% in the other group do. In the Grace Bible Church we seem to have a peace-loving and law-abiding community which is also determined to keep the peace: 98% of its members favour the search for compromise in conflicts in South Africa compared to 84% among the Gauteng respondents.

## Outlook on the Future

The new South African government has sought to provide a 'better life for all' by raising the material living standards. As we have seen, while catering for the spiritual needs of the emergent black middle class and those who aspire to join this group, Grace Bible Church has also awakened social responsibility and the courage to address the economic and moral challenges facing society.

Earlier studies found that the majority of black South Africans were dissatisfied with their lives although they were optimistic that things must get better in future. In contrast, the minority of economically better-off South Africans expressed satisfaction but projected pessimism and anxiety about what the future might hold. This unique constellation of being 'satisfied at present' combined with 'optimism for the future' was characteristic of the emergent black middle class. Like the Grace Bible Church respondents in our survey, this black middle class in the earlier survey reported that their lives

had improved in the past ten years. It is likely that this sense of success fuels their confidence in the future.<sup>27</sup>

Members of Grace Bible Church exhibit precisely this unique combination of current and future life satisfaction along with a sense of accomplishment that is characteristic of South Africa's new black middle class.

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
<i>Better off today than ten years ago</i>	78	51
<i>Taking all things together, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?</i>		
Very satisfied or satisfied - <i>now</i>	65	44
Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied - <i>now</i>	11	36
<i>How do you think you will feel in ten years' time?</i>		
Very satisfied or satisfied - <i>in future</i>	92	55
Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied - <i>in future</i>	2	26

This positivism on the part of the Pentecostal/Charismatic church along with its energy and exuberance may well constitute an important driving force that propels South Africa's young democracy to achieve its goal of becoming a model society.

## Conclusion

The new South Africa likes to present itself as a multi-racial, non-racist country. Looking at the following items, members of the Grace Bible Church appear to have internalised these principles and made them their own. Survey results show that they accept the ethnic plurality of their country to a much greater degree than their compatriots.

They believe cultural diversity is an asset rather than a liability. Friendships can bridge cultural divides. They strongly support language rights and mutual respect for their compatriots.

<sup>27</sup> Møller 2004.



	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
A good friend is a good friend whether he is called Jannie, Sipho, Michael or Mohammed - agree.	98	79
Ethnic diversity makes a country culturally richer and more interesting - agree.	93	68
(Support) a government which gives everybody the full right to use his/her own language in public, in offices, courts and parliament.	96	26
Even very different ethnic groups living in one country can accept each other as they are and respect each other's mutual rights - agree.	78	72

Grace Bible Church respondents are better equipped to cope in a competitive society as they are, as we have seen, far more self-confident than other Gauteng respondents, and positive and optimistic. They do not approve of reliance on affirmative action to achieve one's goals. For them the colour of one's skin is not an issue; a good friend is a good friend regardless. Importantly, they stick to their moral principles.

Finally, our Grace Bible Church members are the strongest supporters of the concept of the 'rainbow-nation', which helped their country, especially during the first years of the new South Africa, to overcome the shadows of the past.

This is the survey question we asked for the first time in May 1994, one month after the first free elections:<sup>28</sup>

*Over the last years a lot has been said by religious and political leaders about the rainbow, symbol of peace, and about a new covenant with God as a sign for the future of South Africa. People differ in what they think about this. Which of the following opinions is closest to yours?*

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
For me, it has no meaning at all.	5	18
For me, the covenant is a religious matter only and should not be used in politics.	12	21
I believe that God has offered to all South Africans, black and white, a new covenant for a peaceful life in a common nation.	83	60

<sup>28</sup> See Dickow 1996: 261; Dickow/ Møller 2002: 175-202; Møller/ Dickow/ Harris 1999: 245-280.

Over eight in ten members of Grace Bible Church believe in the rainbow symbol. And they are far more worldly and interested in politics than one might expect: Not even three out of ten<sup>29</sup> are convinced that you should keep out of politics to find peace and have a clean conscience. It seems that our Pentecostals/Charismatics are ready to play their part in taking responsibility for a new South Africa.

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<sup>29</sup> Here it is the women who state a preference to stay out of politics (33% of women versus 19% of men, 29% total).

## Appendix

	Grace Bible Church respondents %	Reborn Gauteng respondents %
<i>Age group</i>		
Up to 24 years	23	30
25 - 34 years	23	25
35 - 49 years	29	30
50+	25	15
<i>Gender of respondent</i>		
Male	27	40
Female	73	60
<i>Highest level of education</i>		
Up to Grade 11	33	55
Grade 12	43	31
Grade 12+	24	14
<i>Occupational level</i>		
Higher professionals, executive	3	4
Middle, semi, lower professionals	11	8
Clerical, sales	20	12
Skilled manual	3	3
Semi-, unskilled	12	17
Economically inactive	51	56
<i>Read newspaper</i>		
Yes	87	83
<i>Watch TV-programmes</i>		
Current affairs and information	30	21
Religion	8	1
<i>Have access to personal computer</i>		
Yes	41	19
<i>Have a personal cell phone</i>		
Yes	77	68

# Religions on the Move: The Shaping of Christianity and the African Diaspora

ROSWITH GERLOFF

## Introduction

Contemporary studies in anthropology and sociology of religion speak of '*religions on the move*', or the process of transmigration and transculturation, as it refers to dynamic, reciprocal, transitory and multidimensional creations in shaping a "poly-contextual world."<sup>1</sup> This implies that religions have to be regarded as cultural and spiritual phenomena whose 'taken-for granted' essence has resulted from transcultural and transnational processes of mutual influence, interaction and continuous adaptation to new environments, developments and encounters. The emphasis here is on "a new model of understanding religion which emphasizes process and practitioners over form and content".<sup>2</sup> Religions, including different forms of Christianity, respond to ever changing circumstances and play a role in constructing and re-constructing cultural and national identities.

The continent of Africa, with its traumatic experience of the transatlantic slave trade as an unprecedented mode of forced exile, the apartheid history of Southern Africa, and the development of an accelerated intercontinental African migration in the context of globalisation in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is a case in point. Africa has gone through numerous phases of internal and external migration which has also affected the arrival and settlement of larger or smaller African groups in Europe and the Americas and, in fact, the presence of religious traditions quite alien to western established religion. Today, the western world is faced with the arrival of indigenous

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<sup>1</sup> Hock 2002; Warner/ Wittner 1998: 15.

<sup>2</sup> Yawney 1999: 185.

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religions in cross-fertilisation with contextualised Christian interpretations on its own shores.

Moreover<sup>3</sup> the historical circumstances surrounding colonialism, the partition of Africa, and present political and economic upheavals, have generated intended and unintended consequences for Christian mission in contemporary Africa, in the diaspora, and also within the spiritual maps of the globe. As Africa was divided not only into artificial boundaries to facilitate subjugation and exploitation, the partition transcended geographical, political and economic terrains to include religious divisions. African philosophies, cultures and indigenous religions were suppressed, ignored and often ridiculed. European missionaries became largely streamlined among new boundaries on the levels of nationality and denominational affiliation. In the transmission process, western denominationalism which marked European Christianity became one of the discreditable legacies of mission-oriented Christianity in Africa. Yet, the indigenous communities on the grassroots of diverse regions - caught up in the tension between imperial powers and the quest for freedom, socio-cultural control and resistance to domination, the colonial face of mission, and the tenacity of religion as understood by Africans - continued to shape people's identities, developments and expressions in the struggle for survival in human dignity. Their desire to "speak for themselves" and to reject being jeopardized by past western confessional disputes, grew proportionately to the struggle for social and political emancipation. Hence current manifestations are *not new* but have had precursors in a multi-faceted history, stretching from the 'Middle Passage' and religious responses to it in the 'new world' in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (widely overlooked in both historical and theological studies which would give credit to this unique experience), to the process of increased Africanization of Christian churches from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. So the complexity of *contemporary* trans migratory processes from and to Africa, the Caribbean and America must be considered in the light of this history of western colonial expansion and the western missionary movement; and vice versa the turbulent history is also now discovered as facilitating a global transformation of modern Christianity not only in the South, but now also affecting the northern hemisphere. Cross-cultural transplantation from either side, and the capability of Christianity to re-interpret faith in diverse contexts, have forged an understanding in which traditions and activities overlay one another, overlap, blend, create new forms on the margins and therefore challenge the validity of all boundaries, exclusivist doctrines and centres.

Or with Ogbu Kalu, in the context of an assessment of the impact of Pentecostalism on Africa today:

It is the claim of Pentecostal faith and the warrant of Pentecostal ministry to insist that the Bible provides the materials out of which an alternately construed world

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<sup>3</sup> Parts of the following two paragraphs are taken from the joint "Introduction" by Adogame/ Gerloff/ Hock, to be published in 2008: 8-10, the outcome of the Third African Christian Diaspora Conference, Berlin-Hirschluch, 2003, with 26 contributions of authors from several European as well as African regions (including A. Heuser and R. Gerloff).



can be properly imagined. Pentecostalism is, therefore, a child of the demise of modernism, a product of the great shift in interpretive practice which asserts that in the post-Cartesian situation, knowing consists not in settled certitudes but in the actual work of imagination.<sup>4</sup>

### Excuse

The concept 'African Diaspora'<sup>5</sup> has become, at least for those once forcibly removed from their homelands, and their descendants, a viable instrument of *empowerment*, based on the biblical imagery of Exodus and Pentecost, and the history of endurance, survival and perseverance of human values. There are European scholars of religious studies who question the term 'diaspora' because of the historical difference between the past enforced exile and present voluntary migration from Africa; and because the concept can exegetically and linguistically provoke negative connotations of persecution in Jewish history. Yet, we give priority to the *self-expression* of blacks who, inspired by liberational biblical stories, for centuries identified with Israel seeking the 'Promised Land' and developed physical, cultural and spiritual means to resist bondage. For the slaves and ex-slaves, in particular with the development of strong *Ethiopian* ideas in the Caribbean and North America in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and their transmission to West and South Africa by means of a "Black theology of missionary emigrationism and racial destiny", based on an "aggressive thrust of black folk-religion",<sup>6</sup> the concept *African Diaspora* confirmed *continuity in variations* (Aleyne);<sup>7</sup> granted Africans access to alternative interpretations of power and destiny; and can therefore be used as the description of past and present processes secular and religious processes. Among others Martin R. Delaney and Edward W. Blyden laid the ground-work for Pan-Africanists such as Garvey, Padmore and Sylvester-Williams and later for the Rastafari movement. Significantly, African and Caribbean youths on both side of the Atlantic today are increasingly guided by similar concepts and values spelt out in Pan-Africanism and Afrocentricity.

## Black Christianity in Europe

The following is a summary on *Black Christianity in Europe*, which will be published by Blackwell's in the *Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization*.<sup>8</sup>

South has come North. Mass immigration from the Caribbean to Britain began in 1952, followed by immigration from Africa in the 1960s. Ever since there has been a

<sup>4</sup> Kalu 2000: 108.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Gerloff 2006: 220-221.

<sup>6</sup> Wilmore 1998: 134.

<sup>7</sup> Aleyne 1988.

<sup>8</sup> Gerloff 2008.

steadily growing influx also from sub-Saharan Africa to the European continent. It swelled in the eighties and nineties by the flow of refugees and asylum-seekers from troubled countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Nigeria, Togo or Eritrea, into diverse European regions. In Britain, the Caribbean community originally consisted of ex-servicemen and labourers, and the African community of male students and seamen; but over five decades, as families arrived and children were born, there has been a major shift to long-term migrants or settlers. Societies and churches are faced with a "staying power"<sup>9</sup> with people who will, voluntarily and involuntarily, remain: the old, who more easily still relate back to their original cultural and spiritual traditions, and the young who search for a new 'Black European', 'Black British', 'Black German', 'Black French' or 'Black Dutch' identity without being yet fully accepted as co-citizens by the indigenous populations. Over years, the position of all these has become even more precarious under governments who have cut back aid, introduced restrictive regulations on immigration, employment and education, made the entry of refugees and asylum-seekers electoral issues, and have begun to query the very concept of 'multiculturalism'. Additional predicaments are economic imbalance, unemployment, new poverty, cultural exclusion, and endemic racism in Europe, political instability and deprivation in Africa, and an overall lack of preparation and recognition by European institutions (including the churches) that the historical relationship between the 'first' and the 'third' worlds has changed profoundly. In the third Millennium, with the expansion of the European Union, the debate about the Reform Treaty, and disagreements about Europe's self-image as a Federation of nation states, a Super-state, or rather a union of most diverse cultural, linguistic and religious identities, the issues of human rights, religious freedom, racial equality, and social justice play a decisive role. However, it appears, this is even less than before recognized as such by populations and politicians alike. In this, the position of the African Diaspora from both sides of the Atlantic, especially the legal status of youths, women, refugees and asylum seekers is crucial, as the relationship of 'whites' to people of colour, and the east/south connection are put to the test. And as religion "forms the foundation and the all-governing principles of life for Africans",<sup>10</sup> the commitment of Christian churches, white and black, western and eastern, is highly significant for determining the relevance of Christianity in post-modern times. The black-majority churches in Britain, and African communities in Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Scandinavia, Ireland and other regions, contribute greatly to the social life, cultural protection, religious revival, growth and consolidation of Christian congregations in the inner cities. Indeed, many have bought and refurbished redundant church buildings and rededicated them to their original purpose. In some places they begin, in number and enthusiasm, to outgrow the indigenous church-goers.

Next to the intentional expansion of religious movements by mission, peaceful or forced *migration* is one of the most significant factors bringing about religious disper-

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<sup>9</sup> Fryer 1984.

<sup>10</sup> Abiola n.d.

sion. The intercontinental departure of black populations to other geo-cultural regions in the context of globalisation has effected, we said, the arrival and settlement of larger or smaller black migrant groups in Europe and the western world, and with it the presence of new religious traditions. Hence practitioners as well as scholars of religious, anthropological and theological studies are *compelled* to acknowledge these 'religions on the move' in their midst: In many parts of Europe, independent churches, the majority pentecostal/charismatic, grow in number and self-confidence, reflecting a worldwide phenomenon. They "do not take a backseat any more",<sup>11</sup> but gain steadily in assertiveness and evangelism in societies that lost faith in two world wars. Some attract white Christians who, in situations of crisis and exclusion, ask for prayer and healing rarely offered in historic churches.

At stake are two items, the inevitable process of adaptation and *contextualisation*, and the concept of *mission*, managed (as in western Christianity) mainly by agencies and based on pre-fixed strategies, *or* - not separate from the political realities of xenophobia, racism, violence and issues concerning minorities! - open to challenge and change. As African missions do not distinguish between the spiritual and the material, they base, at least in the diaspora, evangelism on spiritual empowerment as well as on social care. They try to respond to human social and political circumstances in diverse, flexible and adaptive ways. Different from western-style linear structures, they travel along pre-existing social relations such as family, friendship, village or island community, trade and work comradeship. They rest on charismatic leadership, communicate in songs and signals, and understand the human person in his or her relationship to community. They rely on the Holy Spirit as the ordering principle of personal, communal and international life and strongly believe in the eschatological renewal of the earth. Thus faith becomes the light, reliable and comforting baggage in the process of migration and extremity. It testifies to a God who wanders with people through the wilderness. It believes in mutual respect and sharing. It turns individual witnesses into vehicles for the proclamation of the Gospel. Yet, European institutions, including the churches, suffer from wide-spread ignorance, paternalistic attitudes and behaviour, exotic and derogatory images of Africa, and an overall lack of interest in a fair assessment of her historical and contemporary development. Hence the western indigenous populations remain largely unprepared and tend to interpret the new black presence as a cause for concern rather than as a social, cultural and religious enrichment.

A brief overview shows the following:<sup>12</sup>

*Britain*, with her colonial past in the aftermath of World War II, was first in mass migration to Europe. Most Caribbean immigrants to the U.K. after 1948, ironically, saw themselves as "children of the motherland": British citizens who had fought fascism in

<sup>11</sup> Pastor L. Bailey of the New Testament Church of God, Harehills, Leeds, UK, quoted by: Gerloff, 2000: 276.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. also International Review of Mission 89 (354), "Open Space", July 2000, 434-483; Gerloff 2001: 276-289.

the army, were invited by London Transport, the Restaurants' Association and the National Health Service to help rebuild the national economy. This process, caused by unemployment and disasters in the Caribbean, became accelerated by legislation which effectively closed doors to North America. Comparable developments took place in migration from francophone Caribbean to France. Anywhere the new arrivals underwent a culture shock, facing racial discrimination in housing, labour, education and churches. Black Christian congregations responded to this experience of rejection by offering people a 'spiritual home', self-respect, life in 'holy' discipline, confidence, and overall protection. Sunday worship became the joyful party before the Lord - a celebration of blessings amidst the hardships during week. Some blacks in the established denominations joined independent groups or held dual membership. Essentially, they saw themselves as part of an *expanding movement*, kept alive by constant traffic across the Atlantic, and counter to English monoculturalism. They created a symbolic space in which the 'saints' could find an identity, different from "the one historically imposed by British society as not derived from particularity but a common humanity".<sup>13</sup> So, Black grassroots theology in Britain has never been simply an offshoot of American evangelicalism, but a genuine creation which had weathered the storms of time.

From 1952, we find twelve quite different traditions or theological families, turning the British Isles into a unique meeting place for contextual theologies, besides the influence by Garveyism, black liberation theologies, black power, and (later) the Nation of Islam: - AME and AMEZ churches, the oldest independent African churches in North America; - Revivalists and Spiritual Baptists from the Caribbean; - Sabbatarian movements (Seventh-day Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, Seventh-day Pentecostals); - Holiness congregations grounded in abolitionist theology; - three types of (classical) Pentecostalism: Trinitarian Pentecostals and the Church of God movement, Oneness (Apostolic) Pentecostals, and Charismatic Healing groups; - Anglo-Catholic traditions mingled with pentecostal features; the Ethiopian Orthodox (Oriental) Church organised in England by Rastafari; the African Instituted churches (AICs) from Nigeria (e.g. Aladura, Cherubim & Seraphim), Ghana (e.g. Musama Disco Christo Church); Asian independent Christian fellowships; - and, in the context of globalization, the ever growing African Charismatic movement as part of the 'third wave' of global Pentecostalism with an emphasis on healing, success and deliverance.<sup>14</sup>

Initially, movements were closely connected to their motherland, but soon the process of adaptation to new contexts set in, with congregations desiring autonomy and others separating on racial or gender grounds. Only those already fully indigenized 'at home' succeeded in consolidating work in Britain. Caribbean organizations began to contest the white supremacy of American headquarters in favour of true 'internationalization'. Following civil unrest in the inner cities, African and Caribbean Christians organized regional and national councils such as the Council of African and

<sup>13</sup> Chivallon 1997; cf. Chivallon 2000.

<sup>14</sup> See Gerloff 2003: 407-408.



Allied Churches, or the African Caribbean Evangelical Alliance. They interact with local and national authorities, and, denominationally speaking, with Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, and ecumenical bodies such as Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and the Evangelical Alliance, and do this by sustaining their particular cultural or theological traditions. Bridge-building between African and Caribbean Christians leaves much to be desired; as some Caribbean Evangelicals regard the AICs as too steeped in African traditional religion. Radical black scholars utilize the African heritage in Caribbean history and theology, but seem to avoid getting involved with contemporary Africans. Dialogue between the British churches and the African Diaspora, such as promoted by the Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership (CBWCP) from 1978, has not progressed as hoped, as culturally and theologically white churches have stayed within their domain, and black churches have begun to imitate western denominationalism. Different from the European continent, there is growing political involvement of black Christian leaders who share a common vision for social significance and prospective transformation of the U.K. society. A critical academic Black theology develops which draws its impetus from liberational theologies, but grounds itself firmly in the British context. It regards itself "as a radical re-interpretation of the revelation of God in Christ, in light of the struggles and suffering of black existence ... a form of black theology in operation in Britain since the operation of slavery."<sup>15</sup>

On the *European continent*, from the 1980s, we find a growing number of both anglophone and francophone African churches mainly of the new pentecostal-charismatic type. The francophone African Diaspora in France, Belgium, Switzerland and parts of Germany hail mainly from the Congo (Baptists, Kimbanguists), Togo, Senegal, Madagascar, and the French Caribbean; the anglophone in the Netherlands, Scandinavia and Germany mainly from the Horn of Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Angola, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Mozambique, Kenya, Liberia, and to a lesser degree from East Africa (Ugandans in Sweden), South Africa, and African America.

In *France* they have organized La Coordination des l'Eglises Africaines (Paris), in Belgium a Congolese Pastorate with participants from other EU countries (Brussels), and in Switzerland a Council of African churches (Geneva). These function as supportive structures in conflict situations, partners to European churches in solidarity with the continent of Africa, and instruments for developing a "professional code of ethics for God's servants", and for raising "collective awareness of the missionary role of the Christian diaspora in Europe".<sup>16</sup> Mark Spindler speaks of an "ecclesiogenesis"<sup>17</sup> or the creation of new churches of migrating communities which, whether active in "pastoral services" and intercultural ministries within Catholic or Protestant churches, or as free self-regulating groups, are not tied to traditional systems. However, there is also the risk of confusing the Gospel with culture, setting apart personal salvation from social justice, yielding to American entrepreneurship, or ignoring the history and values of the

<sup>15</sup> Jagessar/ Reddie 2007: 1.

<sup>16</sup> Kabongo 2000: 457-458; Dibudi Way-Way, email 31 January 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Spindler 1998: 6, 9f, 11.



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European environment. "Evangelism cannot - anywhere in the world - begin with a *tabula rasa* approach. If African missionaries make the same error in the west as western missionaries in Africa, they will deserve the same condemnation."<sup>18</sup>

In *Germany* and the *Netherlands*, anglophone African congregations gather mainly in the large industrial conurbations, either renting or buying traditional church premises or meeting in the 'underground' of inner cities. This points to a close interaction between religion, ethnicity and social politics. In the Netherlands, there are at least two inter-church networks, one being SKIN in which 54 Christian migrant groups work together, the other GATE ("Gift of Africa to Europe") active in the field of evangelization.<sup>19</sup> In Germany,<sup>20</sup> a number of regional councils have been formed, in the North (Hamburg), the West (Rhineland), the East (Berlin) and the South, in connection with the ecumenical bodies of the land. In Hamburg, the Ghanaian pentecostal-type groups prevail, one with British links, but there are also American links and the 'African Christian Church' sponsored by the German Protestant church. In the Rhine-Main area, we find besides the Coptic, Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox churches and, again, an African congregation sponsored by the Protestant church, genuinely independent groups such as the Church of the Lord (Aladura), Celestial Church of Christ, Church of God in Christ, and various refugee congregations from war-stricken nations. In Berlin, besides the oldest Oriental churches, there are Adventist, Pentecostal, Charismatic-Evangelical and 'ecumenical' congregations from fifty-three nations. Those which define themselves more or less interculturally, use besides the colonial languages the vernacular (Twi, Lingala, Amharic etc). In Berlin, we also observe sectarian tendencies among African Pentecostals who, keeping aloof from ecumenical and social affairs, appear to be led by a deep-seated (partly justified) mistrust of established Christianity and want of contact with worldwide Black Pentecostalism.

In *Scandinavia* (Sweden, Denmark) and also in Finland gatherings with Baptist, Pietist and Pentecostal-style backgrounds develop in the larger cities. As the Lutheran state religion in Sweden is a rather cold affair for most Africans, and distances are far, there is a want of regular worship and a desire to invite international African evangelists.

*Southern regions* of Europe such as Italy, Spain and Austria are under-researched, as is the European East. Wide-spread xenophobia, especially in East Germany, may prevent Africans from settling there. Generally speaking, missing altogether on the continent of Europe - in contrast to increased research undertaken in Britain and the Americas - is the scholarship and intellectual analysis from an *African perspective* of the black religious presence on the continent of Europe.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Spindler, quoted in: Gerloff 1999: 115-120.

<sup>19</sup> Hoekema 2008: chapter 25.

<sup>20</sup> For Germany, see also Gerloff 1998: 199-223.

<sup>21</sup> There is, regrettably, an overall lack of funding for research from migrant churches' perspectives, in this case from the 'insider-position' of Africans and their social and theological analysis.

The overall scene demonstrates a reticulate (or net-) structure - the vast variety and pluriformity of Christian families including African traditional elements which overlap denominationally, culturally and linguistically. This phenomenon of increased superabundance of different activities and traditions, and 'overlays' of African with western concepts, has been described as a kind of Christianity that "was and is created and re-created at the margins, the boundary, the periphery; and so doing challenges the validity of all boundaries and peripheries."<sup>22</sup> They form the 'tip of an iceberg', or better, waves of a new 'post-denominational' understanding of religion and faith from other continents. Historic confessional structures and their past arguments give way to the presence of the Holy Spirit in every-day life and to self-expression. In this way, Christ's church in a particular cultural context meets the church in other cultures and socio-political milieus. On new shores people must relate to their own heritage as well as to the conditions and values of the new environment.

## Global Stature of African Christianity

The relative success story of Christianity in Africa and African Christianity<sup>23</sup> is not unconnected with its translatability and vernacularization, or what some African Christians describe as 'power-in-participation' in the Spirit. The emergence of African Instituted churches (AICs), the rise of Pentecostal and charismatic movements, their encounter, and their interface with Islam and other religions, generates a level of action reaction and tension. On the other hand, it produces a certain degree of mutual influence and accommodation, even respect and a degree of acceptance.

This is reflected in the global stature of contemporary African Christianity. It portrays how world Christianity must be realised in local contexts, as local contexts are now reckoned as the qualifier of world Christianity, both in Africa and in diasporic movements. While the significance of Africa as one of the new Christian centres of gravity cannot be underestimated, we should equally attend to the ways in which African Christianity has joined other religious traditions in the religious diversification of western societies. As an example, the claim of a 'reverse-mission' or the re-missionization of Christianity in the secularized west is fast becoming a major feature of their evangelistic strategies and mission agendas. With the conscious appropriation of new media technologies, participation in both theological and public discourses, the engagement in intra- and inter-religious links and networks, these varieties of African Christianity are systematically inserting themselves into global religious landscapes.

Notable here is the tendency of migrant communities, the longer they reside in a western society, the more they become more politicised and involved in social affairs. This is obvious in Britain where black churches of all traditions, especially black

<sup>22</sup> Ward 1996: 2.

<sup>23</sup> The next 2 paragraphs are taken again from the joint "Introduction" by Adogame/ Gerloff/ Hock 2008: 10-12.

Pentecostals, engage themselves with the racial and social issues that inflict the country; and black leaders of various backgrounds meet with representatives of the government and local authorities. This is especially true for London and the West Midlands. This development, however, stands in stark contrast to the European continent, especially Germany, where many African charismatic congregations develop their spirituality without involvement in socio-political affairs and social analysis. This, of course, can be attributed to a number of factors, the overall powerlessness in a majority culture, the influence of a global charismatic theology that locates salvation mainly in the spiritual belonging to an alternative community, and also to the disillusionment with the rather rigid German legal system which gives little recognition to other patterns of social formation.

This paper has concentrated on the African diaspora in *Europe* after World War II, without taking sufficient account of the history of slavery, enforced exile, the partition of Africa, and the development of global African migration to other parts of the world. Inevitably, this was done in terms of sample illustrations from different European countries only. Therefore, in conclusion, I may add at least some, even anecdotal, observations from the African continent. My frequent visits to especially South Africa, Ghana<sup>24</sup> and (to a lesser degree) Kenya made me discover similar developments there. With Tinyiko Maluleke of UNISA (with whom I discussed the development of African theologies and churches, and who insists that African Christianity is "not defined as mere translation, inculturation or even contextualization, but ... touted as something new altogether - new in Christian tradition and new in African religion"),<sup>25</sup> we agreed that in view of the steadily growing charismatic movement on the African continent, we must more vigorously inquire in their significance and attraction for the generation of educated young Africans, especially in the context of battling with the spiritual, material and psychological violence Africans had to endure and the worsening economic tensions. As A.P. Nkwoka wrote with reference to Nigeria:

The Pentecostal theology as it concerns work ethics has made a significant social impact. The concept of work as God-given for which everyone is accountable not so much to the employer as to God poses a great challenge to the social norms of selfishness, corruption, laziness and eye service.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Visits to South Africa in 1997, 1998, 2000, 2005; and to Ghana in 2001.

<sup>25</sup> Maluleke 2003: 293.

<sup>26</sup> Nkwoka 2005: 173. The author refers to M.A. Ojo (1996), pointing out to four distinctive approaches of charismatics to work: "First, they are prayerfully selective of the kind of work they do. They would rather remain jobless than accept an employment fraught with corruption...Second, secular employment must be done 'as unto the Lord' devoid of gratifications, kickbacks, partiality or pilfering stationary for personal use. Third, as a follow-up to avoidance of corrupt practices, 'the born-again' Christians are dutiful, conscientious and hardworking. One's seniors whether good or bad must be respected and prayed for. As one's promotion comes 'from the Lord', eye-services or lobbying for positions has no place in the working agenda. Finally, every believer must find something doing in the light of Paul's

This clearly resonates with the lively conversations I had with my host in Centurion, Sibusiso Mazibuko (son of the late Bongani Mazibuko) who after many years of unemployment now works with a small black company, has joined a charismatic church, Bethesda Christian Centre, and receives from this church a sense of belonging, moral support, confidence in life, and faith 'in the Lord'. In his company,<sup>27</sup> I enjoyed the thousand young people gathered, their music and worship, and the practical, outspokenly economic, advice offered by the resident pastor. I equally became concerned about the white American preacher of the day, who, obviously only faintly acquainted with South African history and culture, branded "ancestor worship" and admonished the congregation "to forget about the past", in open contrast to the official governmental policy of remembrance. When hesitantly I mentioned my reservations, I found a critical mind and open ear and understood that the young South African would not easily be taken in by what does not apply to his situation.

This tendency to chose what might be useful,<sup>28</sup> I also made out years ago in a weekly healing campaign in Venda when the presiding pastor not only attracted at night a large rural community, including whole families and children, but in a splendid bi-lingual performance together with a Venda-speaking companion successfully addressed their social problems, economic damage, superstition and individual inertia of the listeners. Or similar in Garankuwa near Pretoria where in an evangelistic campaign hundred young people not only prayed hour-long for the social and health predicaments of their township, but also volunteered practically to help solve these problem. Or again in Accra where Mensah Otobil, the influential leader of the International Central Gospel Church, opts for equipping his congregation to share their wealth and material means with the poor of society and to adjust to changes in society. As he said in an interview: "Time and again we have to *refocus* in view of new developments and crises!"<sup>29</sup>

Young Africans today, in my experience, seek solutions for society's instability, cultural paradoxes, generational conflicts, unemployment, poverty, exclusion, environmental changes, rural-urban tensions, health hazards (including HIV/AIDS), violence and wars. Hence research in the role of African religion, especially in a conference on Africa's "Frontiers and Passages", is needed on a large scale, not only in Christianity, but also in Islam and Traditional Religion. With regard to charismatic movements, two directions must be taken, to equip members of African congregations with critical theological and social tools, and at the same time counteract generalisations and prejudices fashionable among the older denominations and western mass media.

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directive to the Thessalonians that anyone who would not work should not eat (2 Thess. 3:10). No one should be a parasite on his neighbours or other Christians." (ibid.)

<sup>27</sup> Bethesda Christian Centre, Centurion, Sunday morning service, June 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Visits to Thohoyandou, Venda, and Garankuwa, Pretoria, February 1997.

<sup>29</sup> Mensah Otobil, Pastor of the International Central Gospel Church, Accra, in an interview with the author, April 2000.

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## Conclusion<sup>30</sup>

The growing influx of African charismatic Christianity both on the continent and in the diaspora, has on one hand globalized the movement in terms of putting it into a worldwide framework of commonly shared concepts and songs beyond boundaries. On the other hand it demonstrates that contextuality supersedes theological import, and new religious identities and landscapes are shaped afresh in response to local conflicts, power relations and shifting boundaries. Social and migratory patterns stimulate contextual enterprises and trans-national networks. The struggle for freedom and emancipation creates a new role for church and religion in such a transformation process. It shows how especially Pentecostalism and the charismatic movements serve as catalysts for closer identification with the spiritual and physical needs of Africans. Hence the future criterion of interdisciplinary research is to engage in critical discourses, how movements respond (or fail to respond) to the need for consistent socio-political and economic analysis and action. Regarding theological/missiological and intercultural considerations, it means to deconstruct colonial mission in favour of a gospel transmitted by cultural means. Africa as the "laboratory for the world"<sup>31</sup> carries a potential for the renewal of contemporary Christianity, the 'rebirth' of African theology, and the lived-out diasporic conviction that our universal humanity counts more than any nation state.

Summing up, I quote here from some "urgent issues facing black majority churches in Britain to be tackled in future",<sup>32</sup> which I left with black friends when departing from Britain:

- The unity of black theology and black empowerment (contextual, experiential and working for change)
- The development of an intercultural *theology of hope* across denominational, cultural and racial boundaries, healing the wounds inflicted by slavery, racism, injustice and ineptitude to dialogue.
- The rediscovery of the *emancipatory ideas* that marked Caribbean and African Christian history (hermeneutic of Scripture), and the revolutionary potential in early Pentecostalism which could help formulate an alternative theology.
- A redefinition of syncretism, or *contextual approach* to theology (*all* theologies!), a process to be learned by all Christians including evangelical-pentecostal-charismatic groups tied to fundamentalism.
- The claim by African and Caribbean Christians of a *reverse mission* to the West, expecting to be 'recognized as gifts of the Holy Spirit for today's society',

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. "Introduction" by Adogame/ Gerloff / Hock 2008: 14.

<sup>31</sup> Bediako 1995: 252.

<sup>32</sup> Gerloff, "Some urgent issues facing Black majority churches in Britain", cf. Celebration, Clapton New Testament Church of God, London, 21 July 2007.



and 'living communities which long for unity in mission and evangelism in today's political world';<sup>33</sup>

- Fostering an *open-ended identity*, exploring the Christian faith as a vehicle for constructing and re-constructing identities in transitory and transcultural processes, especially among youths who have to live in a polytextual world.

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